

**Ephesians 4:**

**“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

**Hebrews 11: “ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. 4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

# The One Faith

**In entering chapter four of Ephesians we have studied the first four of seven givens or unities that the Apostle reminds us of before teaching us and our church about our life and our practice.**

**We have considered how we are part of the one body, empowered and comforted by the One Spirit, Who teaches us about our One Hope in Christ who is our One Lord the Creator of all things.**

➤ **Now we come to one faith and again must ask what faith the Apostle Paul has in mind!**

**You will find the word faith used almost four hundred times in most Bibles and yes a quarter of those are in the Old Testament, where the writer of Hebrews goes to draw up his hall of faith there in chapter 11. So that could create quite a word study and/or a good series of character studies!**

➤ **And such studies are important because we need to be familiar with our Old Testament to rightly understand what the writer of Hebrews is teaching us about faith!**

**So what is the one faith that the Apostle Paul has in mind? Let me begin with the short passage I read from Hebrews which is often considered the classic definition of Biblical faith:**

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***[remember our focus on God as the Creator?]* Then we read at verse six: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, & that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

**We must also remember the Apostle’s own teaching here in Ephesians where he has already made reference to the one Faith: Paul addresses them as faithful Saints and states at verse 15, “Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus,... Which led us to those familiar verses of chapter two where we read: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”**

And finally we see the practical applications in chapter 3 where Paul writes at verse 12: “in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” And again at verse 17: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;”

- Let me say up front that Jesus and all of the New Testament authors stress that saving faith, the one faith, must be a living and active faith as we shall see.
- The first question we must ask is whether the one faith is a faith given to us by God or a faith that we exercise on our own?

I think you can see from what I have already quoted that saving faith has to be a gift from God and also the faith that we put in God. It is actually the Apostle John who most clearly solves the puzzle of which is more important when he clearly teaches us in his first Epistle that we love God because He first loved us.

I am going to be a little overly simplistic for a moment for the sake of our children and those who may be new to this question of one faith, but I can assure you after some 45 years of study and discussions, it is pretty close to the reality. As usual, there are two sets of errors we can fall into, or as we call them the ditches on either side of the road of Biblical truth!

- Both are the result of man wanting to play too big a part of their own salvation!

The Biblical road is pretty straight forward with Paul declaring back in chapter two that “8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Who prepared the good works that we should walk in? Who is to walk in those good works?

Pretty simple and why we see it again in Colossians 2:6 “6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,”

How did you receive Christ? How do you walk in Him?

I don't want to get side-tracked with Romans, but I think this is why the Apostle begins his very long discussion of the power of the Gospel by saying: “17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

So if the Biblical road is that we are saved by the one faith and walk by the one faith, what are the errors we must avoid. First we are tempted to want more credit for this one Faith than we deserve. Today you might hear a modern evangelist say, ‘God has voted for you and Satan has voted against you so now you must cast the deciding vote. Man's part is very important to them.

This modern problem has ancient roots in men like Arius and Pelagius and thus the early church fathers had to hold firm to the reality of how lost man really was after the fall and how Great God's Grace truly is.

And here is the simple point to remember: IF you think that you came to Christ using you own faith, then you will be left to walk with Christ in that same faith, which is a recipe for failure & a miserable walk with the Lord!

- So please avoid that ditch, but there is also a related one on the other side of the road, and again it relates to man's pride.

As the Roman Church grew more and more powerful, they began to add faithful works to salvation by Grace as a type of merit. And not faithful works that Paul and James had in mind, but works that we were expected to do in our own strength.

- Do you see the similarity with the other ditch?

Sadly, both errors result in the same frustrating and miserable life where one is striving to do in the flesh what can only be done in the Spirit. The Reformation restored the great doctrine of salvation by Grace alone which we are very thankful for! Of course our danger is to now think that our works that Christ created us to walk in are wholly unimportant.

- That is what we addressed many years ago in my short series on James.
- What James taught in chapter two is vital to any church, reformed or otherwise as he calls the true Saints to obedience
- James focuses on practice and not just theory, which is where Paul will soon take us here in Ephesians.
- This is why James asks an important question 2:14:  
“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”
- James asks a very simple question and then gives a very simple and direct answer down in the verse 26:
- “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”

Sadly this straightforward answer has often been controversial!

In fact, there is so much controversy in some reformed circles today that you can get in trouble just using the words ‘faith’ and ‘works’ in the same sentence!

I mentioned those 45 years that I have been a Christian, so I can remember the battles that raged in evangelical circles debating whether you could have Jesus as your Savior and not as your Lord.

- Back then many insisted that IF you said someone must bow the knee to Jesus as Lord by keeping His commandments if they were truly saved, then you were adding works to salvation by grace!
- Today in some circles, if you say that those who have faith will obey Jesus, doing the good works they were created in Christ Jesus to walk in, then you are denying the great reformation doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

In both cases I believe the confusion comes from not remembering, or believing, what the Bible means when it says someone is born-again or saved by faith.

When Jesus, Paul or James talk of saving faith, the one faith it is clearly:

- NOT some sort of faith we have produced on our own
- NOT some sort of decision we have made & nothing more
- NOT some sort of human will-power to overcome sin & temptation
- NOT some list of faithful works we do to merit or earn salvation

- **Our salvation is the result of our sovereign God graciously giving us new hearts by which we repent and are justified, what Jesus described as the new birth.**
- **The gracious gift of salvation is the result of God’s love & actions from start to finish!**

**As Paul said in Romans, from faith to faith the just shall live by faith, saved and walking by faith which is clearly implied when Jesus He tells His disciples, and all of us, IF you love Me, keep my Commandments.**

**Going back to the simple question that James asked in verse 14, he presents someone with empty faith: “if someone says he has faith but does not have works, Can this faith save him?”**

- **Or more plainly, can this dead faith save him?**

**James is NOT saying works in anyway save the sinner or earn his righteousness before God:**

**But saving faith is an obedient faith, which of course includes confessing our sins when we fall short: That is certainly one of those ‘good works’.**

**James as he always does, goes on to give a very clear and easily understood example which confirms that this is what he is asking and teaching.**

**Verses 15-17: “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”**

**It would be difficult to give a simpler example or have the lesson be more clear:**

**With this simple example, James says that empty faith is... EMPTY!**

**James uses compassion to illustrate saving faith: I announce to the world that I am a compassionate person: Is this true?**

**The test comes when I encounter someone in need...**

**Do I give them what they need?**

**Or do I simply SAY be comfortable and have a nice day!**

- **Such “compassion” is empty compassion and James teaches that faith which does not result in good works is empty faith.**
- **How does one explain or show that they have true saving faith?**

**Jesus said “ whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock!”**

- **We hear & do by the One Faith!**

**We see the same as Jesus gives us the Great Commission:**

**“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”**

**Now let me ask a simple question: What is the most important way that we teach others to observe all things that Jesus has commanded?**

- We must be a good example!
- To a watching world and to our children!

**This is exactly what we see after the Apostle Peter’s great sermon at Pentecost:**

**“42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”**

- In other words, those who receive the gift of faith respond with repentance and trust but also with the works they were created in Christ Jesus to do!

**Those who do not show works have an empty faith, & James compared them to the demons!**

**“You believe there is one God.**

**You do well” [the doctrine is right] BUT James adds: “Even the demons believe & tremble”**

**A “decision” for Christ or the “right theology” is NOT enough.**

- Many times those who cling to a decision card or statement of faith today do not even bother to tremble!

**You see, Biblically, the Evangelical conflict over having Jesus as Savior or as Lord was a false dichotomy:**

- You must have Jesus as Savior AND you are to serve Him as your Lord!

**I will leave you to ponder again what Luther said about the one faith in his introduction to the book of Romans: “Oh, it is a living, active, energetic, mighty thing, this faith, so that it is impossible that it should not work what is good without intermission.**

**It does not even ask whether good works are to be done, but before one asks it has done them, and is ever doing. But he who does not do such works is a man without faith...”**

**May we be those who live and walk in the one Faith, which of course we celebrate with the singing of The Faith of Our Fathers in just a moment...**

## **Communion Meditation: Acts 2**

**46 “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”**