



## TIME OF GRACE®

# *Churchy Words Explained (and Why You Should Care): Faith*

## Study Notes

### *Summary*

Most people today are familiar with faith. Christians have faith. Buddhists have faith. Atheists have faith in science and humanity. But what does the Bible mean by faith? If we are saved by grace through faith, what are we actually saying? What is faith, where does it come from, and what does it mean to walk “by faith”?

- **Ephesians 2:8:** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith.
  1. Faith is \_\_\_\_\_ in something.
- **Ephesians 2:8,9:** <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.
  2. Faith is a \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
- **Romans 10:17:** Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.
  3. Faith is gifted through \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Ephesians 2:10:** For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
  4. Faith wants to \_\_\_\_\_.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Ask a friend who/what they have faith in/what they rely upon/what they trust in to bless them in this life. Discuss why some people/things are more worthy of our faith than others.
2. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 12:3. What connections do you see between that verse and today’s message on faith?

3. Evaluate: When you truly believe that grace is a gift, salvation is a gift, and even faith is a gift, it makes you want to give in return. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 if you want Paul's answer.)
  
4. Read Romans 10:1-17, where Paul explains the process that God uses to bring people to saving faith in Jesus. What do these words have to do with your life as a Christian?

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read Colossians 1:13,14.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Churchy Words Explained (and Why You Should Care): Faith**  
Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 10:17  
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*Pastor Mike Novotny*

My family and I took a pilgrimage to one of the most faith-filled places on planet Earth. You know what that place is? Disney. Have you been there before? To prove that we were good parents, my and I wife decided to spend way too much money, stand in very long lines under a very hot sun, and paid about \$10 per mediocre corn dog. I hope our children appreciate us. We sacrificed much. And when we took the trip to Disney, I had never really thought of it as a place of faith. But after just a day, maybe two, there was no denying it. Like if I had a dollar for every time I heard through the park speakers the promotions and the videos and the little plays that they put on. If I had a dollar for every time they used words like faith or trust or just believe. I would have had enough dollars to buy another corn dog, I think. I mean it was incredible.

Everywhere we looked it was just like this place where faith was at the center of it all. In fact, in this one moment I remember sitting on the curb in front of the Magic Kingdom and it was the incredible light show and Tinkerbell was swirling around the castle. And she was kind of preaching this sermon and the theme of the sermon was, just believe. Just believe. Just have faith. I mean you think of Disney, right, one of the biggest companies on planet Earth. The best, most inspiring message, the thing that you pay crazy dollars to experience that they want you to go home with is faith.

It is pretty interesting though because it is not just Disney. Have you ever noticed no matter where you go, whether you are in a church or outside of it how often words like faith, belief and trust show up? You know like those football movies or those of you who played football in high school, right above the locker room door before you run out of the tunnel and unto the field. Every player has to slap the big sign that says, believe. And when teachers want to encourage little kids, they get down on one knee and they say things like I have faith in you.

Or maybe you kind of had the plan, you know, I am going to graduate high school. I am going to get into this school. I am going to get this job and it is going to be really rewarding. I am going to make my mark and change the world, but stuff happens, stuff you could not foresee. And you start to realize whether it is with friends, with your parents, with your own relationship, with your career plans, that when Disney tells us just believe and the world tells us to slap the sign and have faith, it is not quite that simple.

Faith is incredible and I would propose to you that it is necessary but to just believe in anything or anyone is not enough. It does not work and it does not give anyone lasting peace or rock-solid

joy. You need to have the kind of faith that is in the right thing. And that is what I want to share with you today; just a quick crash course on what the Bible has to say about faith. It is probably not a shock to you that we call this whole thing that we are doing the Christian faith. Christians call themselves people of faith. The Bible talks about on tons of pages the word faith and trust and believe and rely upon. But today I want to unpack that. I want to slow down and make sure we all know what that means. because the Christian faith is very unique, it is very powerful, it is very specific, and it might just be the one thing in this whole crazy world that you can rely on and find lasting peace.

So, we are going to open up to one of the best pages in the whole Bible, Ephesians 2. And here the apostle Paul is going to crash course on the topic of faith. He writes, "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith." If you are taking notes, let me start with a very simple definition of that essential word. When I think of the word faith I define it this way, I think of faith as trust in something. Whenever you see that word faith you should think of trust. And it is not just generic I think that is where Disney gets it wrong. It is not just believe. The sentence can never end with believe, period. Your brain should always say okay, believe in what? Trust in whom? Biblical faith is always specific and it is never generic and this is what makes it so good. You do not have to be a Bible scholar to guess or to figure out that the Christian faith is about trusting in Christ. So, when Paul says here that it is by grace that you have been saved through faith, what he is saying, what I believe and what many of you who are Christians rely upon, is that Jesus is the one that rescues you from danger.

Christians are not people who rely on themselves. We do not believe in our general morality. We do not trust in the fact that we have behaved well enough to be part of God's family. Our entire alliance, we put our whole weight upon Jesus. Kind of like this stool I am sitting on, right, I put all -- I was going to tell you how much I weigh but I realize that is probably a bad idea. I put all of my poundage right on here, trusting that this could hold me. And that is what Christians think of faith. Like all of my salvation, all of my acceptance, all of my place in heaven and in God's family, it is all about Jesus. It is not like half me, half Jesus. It is all him. Paul says we are saved by grace and through faith. And if you are living like I am in 21st century this is the really kind of sobering, humbling part of the Christian faith and the really beautiful part. The humbling part is that Christians do not believe that we should believe in ourselves. We are way too unreliable for that. Some days do we do well? Sure. Other days we do totally botch it? Yeah. Some days do we keep our promises? Absolutely. Some days do we totally forget about the promises we made? Absolutely. And so as Christians, we do not look in a mirror and put our faith in ourselves. Instead, we look at a cross and put all of our faith in Jesus. We have trust, and it is trust in Christ alone.

That is why when I was a teenager my pastor put it this way. Alright this is a -- shoot, what is this thing? Yeah, a football, that's right. Sorry, I play soccer. That was my bad soccer joke for the day. When I was 13 my pastor used to say, I lived in Green Bay by the way, so, all the pastor's analogies involve football. And he said this football is a lot like Jesus. He said that God loved the world so much that he handed every man, every woman and every child his one and only son. And Jesus is so loving and sufficient that he gave everything, his whole life that we could win a victory over sin, over guilt, over death and over shame.

It is like God in this incredible grace and love, he is handing you Jesus. And what is faith? Faith is just grabbing on to Jesus. Like faith is crossing the end of your life that goal line. Trusting in Jesus. So, you get the points, you win the victory. It is not about how good you look, how fast you are, how are strong you are, the only question is are you holding on to Jesus because we are saved by grace and through faith. What I remember about my pastor teaching me that was the one time he said, you know some people have really strong faith in Jesus. It is like they do not worry, they do not get anxious, they do not freak out, they just wholly trust he has got a plan for me, he loves me, I am saved, I am not worried about that. And other people he said kind of have faith like this. Right? Not the strongest faith in the world. But my pastor said in a football game if you pass the goal line like this, do you know how many points you get? The same as this. And I remember that because he was trying to teach us that the best news of Christianity is not how tightly you are holding on to Jesus. The best news of Christianity is that you are holding on to Jesus.

And so, Paul gives us some incredible news, he says it is by grace that you have been saved through faith. And in a second, he expands on his teaching. Jump back to Ephesians 2 for a second. Paul says, "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no can boast." Now if you put me on the spot, I would say to you that that what I just read, what you see on the screen is probably one if the top five passages in all the Bible. I am curious for some of you who grew up in church like I did, how many of you had to memorize this before you got to high school? Yeah, look around for a second. Keep your hands up. It is a lot of people from a lot of places. Raised by a lot of pastors and a lot of parents who told them do not miss this one because this is what our faith is all about.

And that was not foolish of our parents and our pastors. Because Paul is just relentless here with the good news that all of our faith and trust is in Jesus. Did you catch his repetition? He says this faith thing, this salvation he says it is not from yourselves, which means it is not you. It is the gift of God which he says next, which means it is still not you. It is not by works he says third which also means it is not from you. So no one can boast. Why cannot you boast about it? Because it is not from you. Like the whole thing. The whole shebang, start to finish. From this goal line to the other one it is all God, it is all a gift, it is all of his work, all of salvation, 100% Jesus on the cross saying it is finished. And Paul says that is really good news. God giving you his son. Jesus giving you his life. And even the fact that we hold on to Jesus and faith. It is all God.

Even faith itself is a gift that God and in his generosity and kindness gives to us. And if you have read Ephesians 2, this makes total sense. Here the apostle Paul, some of you will remember from last week, he said that before Jesus and before faith we were dead in our sins. Alright, think about that. If you said to a dead person, just believe. Just hold onto Jesus, it will be rather challenging, right?

Ok, let me show you a picture actually. I love how this picture describes it. There is Jesus and if you can just hold on to Jesus you would be saved, you would be part of God's family, you would make it to heaven. But if you are spiritually dead, shown with that skeletal hand, how does a

dead person take hold of Jesus? I love how this artist puts it. That is God. The Holy Spirit in the Bible is sometimes depicted as a dove. And Christians over the years have called him the giver of faith. Like we were dead and the Spirit himself made us alive. Like we did not deserve anything, we could not have done anything. But God, in his great love, did not just send Jesus and then make us believe. He sent his son Jesus and then gave us the gift of faith.

So if you are taking notes in your program, here is point number two in our study of faith. And we know that faith is trust in something. Point number two I would tell you this that faith is a gift of God. It is not my work. Paul says it is not from myself. It is the gift of God so that no one can boast.

Okay let us jump to point number three. Two points down, two to go. So how does it all happen? Alright, like you are dead, you do not believe, you trust in yourself, you think you are a figuratively good person. I should probably go to heaven, right, because I am not Hitler and I am not terrible. How do I go from that to trusting in Jesus? To relying upon Jesus? Do you just wake up and boom, you have faith? Nope, there is actually a beautiful process. Here is how the apostle Paul puts it in Romans 10. He says in verse 17, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." He says faith comes from hearing the message.

And so if you want to hold onto Jesus and if you want your faith to get stronger in Jesus, what you need is to hear about Jesus. And I wonder have any of you ever noticed this? That when you come here to our church on a Sunday, in part after part after part after part of the service we are talking about Jesus. It is like you get to hear the message way before and way after the official thing that we call the message. And when I get up here to talk to you and encourage you in your faith, do you know what you will find time and time and time and time again in my message? The message. In fact, let me write you a check that you can always cash here at the CORE. If you ever come to church and I say amen without opening that book and quoting the message I give you full permission to slap me in the lobby. And I am not talking lightly. You full on -- you need to wind up. Forehand, backhand. You can do whatever you want because this is not a place of inspiration. This is a place of transformation. This is a place where I just do not want you to laugh or cry. I want you to be strong in your faith.

And Paul knows faith comes from hearing the message. Right? It is all throughout. And after I say "amen" we are going to say a prayer called the Lord's Prayer, which comes directly from the message. And I am going to meet you at a coffee shop and I am going to bring my little Bible so whatever you are going through I can share with you the message. And you are going to come in for counseling and the Bible is going to be right next to me because I am just waiting and listening and trying to think of the right passage to give you more of the message.

And then we are going to say you should really listen to Christian radio when you are in the car. Why? Because you get more of the message. Have you heard about that Bible app? You can start a plan. You can read it with us. What is the whole thing about? Like our whole mission, our whole vision. It is all about getting you as constantly connected and plugged into the message.

Why? Because Paul says Romans 10:17, faith comes from hearing the message. So write this down. Yes, I say amen to that too, little man. Alright so faith comes as a wonderful gift we learned. And where does it come from? Write this down. It comes from God's word. That is how God gives the gift. Faith comes from hearing the message.

Now before I jump to my final point let me make a plead to those of you who are between the ages of 13 and 20. Can I see your hands today, if you are between the ages of 13 to 20. You are like seven, why are you raising your hand? Mom and dad, we are going to pray for you for that one. Yeah. Okay, if you are between 13 and 20. If you are kind of high school, college age let me save you from losing your faith. This is like classic Christianity. Kids are born and raised in really solid homes that are frequently connected to the message. Mom and dad took me, sometimes they had to drag me, sometimes they had to bribe me. But they kept me close to the message. And you get to that point between your middle school and maybe high school. For sure when you get off to college where you feel like your faith is really strong. And I will grant you that it might be. But guess what happens if you get into high school or you go off to college and you stop hearing the message? You start to lose that strong grip on your faith. But you do not stop hearing any kind of message. You hear other messages about what life is about. What death is about. And the answers you would have been hearing constantly if you were connected to the message, that will be a distant echo in your mind. And you will be in serious danger. Alright, like one tragedy, one really persuasive professor, one relationship with someone who is not really passionate about the message. Thank God we can be saved with weak faith but if our faith gets weak and we get hit by life, we can lose the message.

So let me encourage you. Let me beg you. If your faith is strong right now as a teenager, it is probably because you have been hearing the message. And two years from now if you want your faith to be just as strong, you need to keep hearing the message. Faith is an amazing gift from an amazing God and according to Paul that faith comes from hearing the message. Here, the apostle Paul says, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." If you are taking notes write down this final point. That faith wants to work. If God has given you the gift of faith, then even though it is difficult and even though you will do it very imperfectly, there is something inside of you where the Holy Spirit dwells that wants to work. I want to love God. I want to do the right thing. I want to keep forgiving. I want to be patient. It is complicated, it is messy. God forgive me when I get it wrong. But if you have faith in Jesus, you want to.

So if my math is right, our church is about 12 years old. I am really curious how many of you were here when our founding pastor, Pastor Ski was around? Yeah, bunch of hands. Pastor Ski, he laid a great foundation for our congregation. And one of my favorite, favorite passages he quotes is this, "It is not a have to. It is a get to." That was Pastor Ski's way of saying if you have faith you want to come to church. Do I have to? No, but faith says church is where I get to hear lots about the message. Where the Holy Spirit is going to keep my faith strong in Jesus. I am not afraid so I do not worry about life. That is not a have to. You do not have to twist my arm for that. That is a get to. That is a want to. That is a I cannot wait to.

Give money? Do I have to? Faith says, no wait, God gave me his only son. That son gave the only life that he had. The Holy Spirit gave me the gift of faith. No, God, I want to. I get to. I get to be part of the work you are doing in our community and in our world? Forgive the person who has hurt me. Do I have to? No, I have to. No, faith says I have been forgiven a million times over. God left all 7 billion stones that I threw at him alone. I get to forgive. I want to forgive. It is not going to be easy. I am going to try to forgive. This is what we call the fruit of faith. Faith wants to work. And yes, we struggle and yes, we sin because of our flesh. But there is something within people of faith that want to. Not because if we do enough works we are going to get saved, but because we have already been saved by grace and through faith.

So put all that together and what have you got? You got a great teaching about faith. Faith in the Bible is trust in Jesus. It is a gift from God. It is given through God's word and that faith wants to work. Friends that is the Christian faith. When I think of faith I think of Stephen Colbert. Know that name from Comedy Central? There was this epic interview I think back in 2010 where Stephen Colbert was interviewing a Reggae artist named Jimmy Cliff. And if I have to start right Jimmy Cliff was a little bit older, he had experienced a lot of different kinds of faith and religion. He was kind of done with it, right? He was moving past his belief in everything else. And as they are talking about it, Jimmy Cliff said to Stephen Colbert, you know, if there is something like a judgement, if I have to stand in before some kind of God, I would prefer to be judged by truth and facts. And Stephen Colbert with his, you know, incredible wit and timing, he looked back and he said something that Christians noted and then they quoted. Stephen Colbert said, "Truth and facts? I will take faith and grace." Me too. For it is by grace that you have been saved. Through faith. This is not from yourselves it is the gift of God. That is faith.

Let us pray.

Dear God, thank you so much for the fact that we can totally rely upon you. You are the only completely trustworthy person in the universe. So when we put the full weight of our eternity on your son, we do not have to worry and we do not have to wonder.

I thank you God for your word which is so clear that is it finished, the work is done and for everyone who has faith in your son Jesus there is no reason to be afraid. I pray specifically today God for every teenager who is listening. Jesus you once said that faith as small as a tiny mustard seed can move a mountain. And it was the small faith of the thief on the cross next to you, who cried out remember me. And that was enough.

Thank you so much God that even though we struggle, and we stumble to fully trust and rely upon you that we are okay. We are safe and we are saved. Because it is by grace that we too have been saved through faith. We love you God. We rely upon you, and we pray that you will be the object of our faith in the days to come. We ask this in Jesus' name. And all God's people say, amen.