

Personal Faith in Christ

Deuteronomy 6:1-8 Heb 11:1-6 Matt 15:21-28

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When the Bible talks about faith, it speaks about it in an **objective sense** and in a **subjective** sense¹.

The **objective sense** is “**The** Christian Faith”; it is the truth God reveals to us; the body of doctrine and the teachings that God gives to us in Holy Scripture. This is outside of us; this is an objective reality whether you believe it or not. St. Paul summarizes “**The** Christian Faith” like this:

There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Eph 4:4-6

This passage summarizes the objective sense of the word “faith”. This is “**The** Christian Faith”– the truth of God and His Kingdom; it is the true reality -- and it is outside of ourselves.

The Bible also talks about a **subjective use** of the word faith². This is your **personal** Christian **faith**.

You **believe** what God promises and you **trust** His Word. It’s personal. This use of the word **faith** is what connects you to the Savior Jesus Christ. Your personal Christian **faith** is a gift from God that was given to you through the power of the Word, and the water of Holy Baptism.

¹ In theology, this is expressed with the Latin terms *fides quae* and *fides qua*. *Fides quae* means “the faith which is believed” – the objective sense of the word “faith”. *Fides qua* means “the faith which believes” – the subjective sense of the word “faith”. *Fides quae* is **THE** Christian faith; *fides qua* is your personal faith that makes you a Christian.

² Faith is the assurance and confidence of the heart in those invisible and spiritual things promised to us by God in His Word and Gospel. The believer not only knows the promises of his God, but there is in his heart an emotional response; they affect him; he wants them, he lays hold of them, and he applies them to his personal need. A

Summary Of Christian Doctrine, E. W. A. Koehler, p. 139 adapted

Your personal Christian **faith** connects you to Jesus; the object of your faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. **Faith** clings to Jesus and doesn't let go.

But we live in a day and age where you have to be very careful to clarify "**which Jesus**" you believe in! There are so many false teachings about Jesus – *inside* the Holy Christian Church -- that you have to be very careful. For instance ...

- ⇒ Jesus is **not** *angry at you* and you do not have to appease Him by doing good works or praying to His mother --> that's a false Jesus
- ⇒ Jesus is **not** your *spiritual guru* who will teach you to be healthy and wealthy so that you can "live the dream" --> that's a false Jesus
- ⇒ Jesus is **not** a *flag-waving, American patriot* --> that's a false Jesus
- ⇒ Jesus is **not** your *boyfriend* whom you sing love songs to while waving your hands and "accepting Him into your heart" --> that's a false Jesus
- ⇒ Jesus is **not** your *genie in the bottle* who makes your wishes come true so that you can "have your best life now" --> that's a false Jesus
- ⇒ Jesus is **not** your *life coach* who gives you permission to sin and overlooks your rebellion --> that's a false Jesus

Your **personal Christian faith** connects you to the Jesus of the Bible, not these false Jesuses. The Jesus of the Bible is the **Son of God** and the **Savior of the world** who was **crucified, buried and rose from the dead on the Third Day for you.** The Biblical Jesus is the One God sent to rescue you from your sin. *It is extremely important that you do not get misled about who Jesus is or what He has done for you.* **Jesus is the Crucified one.** He died on a cross for you. He shed His blood to give you life. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This Jesus calls you to repent! He calls you to stop sinning, to confess your sins to God, and to believe that you are forgiven because of His death, burial, and resurrection!

The false teachers deny, neglect, minimize, or plain just don't understand the cross and its significance. They turn Jesus into some kind of a tolerant, diverse, and *anything-goes*-type of Jesus. Do not get caught up in that! Your faith, given to you as a gift from God, connects you to the crucified, buried, and risen Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. In Him, and in Him alone, do you find forgiveness of sins, peace with God, no condemnation from God's law, and eternal life. Don't be misled! Don't be deceived!

There are many false teachers peddling all kinds of false Jesuses!

Personal **faith** connects you to the Biblical Jesus; it is personal, it is inside you, it is a gift from God to you. And this **faith** you have is **in Christ**. It means that you have heard His promises of eternal salvation, you know that they are true, and that you are included. **Faith in Christ is personal**. You are saved by **faith alone** in the Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus Christ!

This personal **faith** in Christ that you have can waver and fluctuate³... so God has given us **His Word** and the Sacrament of **Holy Communion** to strengthen it and keep it strong. Remember that faith is a gift from God; only God can nurture it and strengthen it. He does that through **His Word and His Sacrament**. That is why worship is so important to us each week, because the Word and the Sacrament are at work in your life to strengthen your personal **faith** in Christ. One way to think about it is that in worship, **The Christian Faith** (the teachings of Christ in Holy Scripture) strengthens your **personal faith** in Christ!

Your God given faith in Christ connects you and unites you to the Savior Jesus Christ and all of His gifts of salvation. This gift was given to you by the power of the Word, and the water of Holy Baptism. As you live your everyday life, your God given **faith** in Christ also connects you to the promises of God's love and care in your life. You live your life by **faith**; each day we look to Christ and His promises; we are always aware of God's presence and power in our lives. *That's walking by faith and not by sight*. That's your personal **faith** connecting you and uniting you to the promises of God so that you know that they are

³ “Faith in the grace of God is not of equal strength in all believers, nor does it constantly maintain a uniform strength in the same individual; but it varies and fluctuates between a feeble longing for forgiveness and the firm assurance of possessing forgiveness. While a person’s faith may be strong with respect to one promise, it may be weak with respect to another . . . These fluctuations of faith do not affect its saving power, because both, the weak and the strong faith, trust in the same promise and receive the same grace and forgiveness. The difference lies in the hold each has on the promise; the strong in faith have a firmer hold than the weak in faith, and are not likely to lose it. . . . However these fluctuations are reflected in the sanctifying power of faith, which consists in this that faith enables to lead a holy life. The strong in faith are more able to resist temptations, are more fruitful in every good work, enjoy a greater measure of peace of conscience and joy in the Spirit than those who are weak in faith..” A Summary Of Christian Doctrine, E. W. A. Koehler, p. 140ff

true and that they apply to you. In **faith**, you are always aware of God's Promises at work in your life! For instance

- ⇒ **Watch over your life** Psalm 121
- ⇒ **Defend you from all evil** Psalm 97:10
- ⇒ **Provide your daily bread** Matthew 6:11
- ⇒ **Make all things work for good in your life** Romans 8:28
- ⇒ **Listen to and answer your prayers** Psalm 5:3
- ⇒ **Strengthen you when you are weak** Isaiah 41:10
- ⇒ **Comfort you when you mourn** Psalm 34:18
- ⇒ **Guide and direct every step of your life** Proverbs 3:5-6
- ⇒ **Give you His Holy Spirit** Luke 11:13
- ⇒ **Empower you for godly living** Romans 8:11
- ⇒ **Assure you of His love and forgiveness** Hebrews 10:22
- ⇒ **Give you hope, peace and security each day** Psalm 62:1-2
- ⇒ **God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in times of trouble!**
Psalm 46:1

All of these promises apply to you! Your **faith** is created and strengthened when you hear these promises and you **believe** that God is telling you the truth. You **trust** God because He is true and trustworthy!

The only way we can have a relationship with God is through **faith** in His Son Jesus Christ.

1. Your personal **faith** connects you to Jesus, the crucified and risen One, who has rescued you from your sins by His death and resurrection.
2. You now live your life each day by **faith**, trusting in the promises of God that He freely gives you because of His Son Jesus Christ!

Faith is personal!

It's a gift that God has given to you!

Amen!!