

## Christian Growth Week 5: Faith

### Introduction

#### Key Romans passages on faith

Rom. 1:16,17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” (NLT)

Rom. 3:21-30 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses <sup>\*</sup> and the prophets long ago. <sup>22</sup> We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

<sup>23</sup> For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. <sup>24</sup> Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. <sup>25</sup> For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, <sup>26</sup> for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. <sup>28</sup> So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law. <sup>29</sup> After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn’t he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. <sup>30</sup> There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. (NLT)

Rom. 4:1-5 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. <sup>3</sup> What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>4</sup> Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. <sup>5</sup> However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. (NIV)

---

<sup>\*</sup> Greek *in the law*.

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (ESV)

Rom. 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

### **What is biblical faith?**

*Pisteuo* is the New Testament word commonly translated “believe” or “trust;” *pistis* is usually translated “faith.” (Jas. 2:19).

*Biblical faith is a willingness to **act** according to God’s will with **dependence** on God to perform his will through us.*

ILLUSTRATION: A tight-rope walker strung a wire across the Niagara Falls.

ILLUSTRATION: In Lk. 1:26-38

How does Mary’s faith exemplify Romans 6?

- 
- 
- 

### **Justification and sanctification occur by the same dynamic: Faith**

Col. 2:6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

Gal. 3:2,3 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Faith and Justification:

E.G. Francis Schaeffer and the “empty hands of faith.”

Faith and Sanctification:

Sanctification occurs as we learn to *depend* completely on Christ’s power to change our lives, rather than trying to change our lives through our own moral will-power.

But we must *actively* appropriate God's power for sanctification.

*But whereas justification is appropriated once for all time by one act of faith, sanctification must be continually appropriated by ongoing decisions of faith.*

Sanctifying faith is described in two ways in the New Testament:

- Walking by/according to the Spirit
- The New Testament's letters' use of indicative and imperative.

## **Sanctifying Faith and Walking by the Spirit**

Rom. 8:4-6\*\* . . . so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

*“Set your minds the things of the Spirit.”* The “things of the Spirit” refer to the things of God—especially what He has freely given us through Jesus .

1 Cor. 2:12 And we have received God’s Spirit (not the world’s spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. (NLT)

Col. 3:1-4 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (NASB)

- This emphasizes the “dependence” aspect of faith
- HOW? Primarily through the “means of grace/growth”
  - 
  - 
  -

Gal. 5:16-25\*\* But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. <sup>19</sup> Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk (literally “keep in step with”) by the Spirit. (NASB)

“*Keep in step with the Spirit.*” “Keep in step with” (*stoicheo*) refers to responding to a superior’s direction.

- This emphasizes the “action” aspect of faith:

As God’s Spirit personally convicts us of sinful, selfish attitudes and/or actions, we are to *actively* cooperate with Him.

Ps. 32:8,9 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. <sup>9</sup> Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you.

1 Jn. 1:6,7 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

As God's Spirit personally leads us to give His love to other people, we are to *actively* respond to His leadership by serving others in the specific way He is directing.

- HOW? Primarily through the “means of grace/growth,” including reaching out to non-Christians.
  - 
  - 
  - 
  -

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>SET YOUR MIND ON<br/>THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT</b> | ↔ | <b>KEEP IN STEP WITH<br/>THE SPIRIT</b> |
| The “dependence” aspect of faith                     | ↔ | The “action” aspect of faith            |
| Seeks and focuses on God's love                      | ↔ | Obeys God's direction into love         |
| Primarily via MOG (devotional)                       | ↔ | Primarily via MOG (ministry of love)    |
| This only: Leads to “Rust out”                       |   | This only: Leads to “Burn out”          |

### Summary:

“Walking by the Spirit” is just another way of saying “live every day of your Christian life by faith in Jesus:” keep *depending* on His love for you, and keep *acting* to give His love others.

### Sanctifying faith and “indicative and imperative”

Another way of describing sanctifying faith is by exploring the New Testament pattern of indicative and imperative.

- “Indicatives” refer to (indicate) what God *has* done, *is* doing, or *will do* for us through Christ. They are similar to promises.

- “Imperatives” refer to *what God calls on us to do*. They are synonymous with commands.

Eph. 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

- How does this relate to sanctifying faith?
- What is the *relationship* between the indicative and the imperative?

In religion . . .

But in biblical Christianity . . .

*Practice on these verses; circle the indicatives and bracket the imperatives. Underline the indicative phrase; bracket the imperative phrase; circle the connector.*

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

Matt. 28:18-20 Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Phil. 2:12,13 . . . work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Eph. 5:1,2 Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us . . .

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

### **Faith and Christian experience**

Christians who live by faith live in increasing confidence in God’s love for them. They also experience God’s love, power, forgiveness, etc. on a relatively consistent basis.

- Indicatives remind us to *depend* on God, that sanctification is not on our own effort. Inadequate emphasis on indicatives is a form of legalism (see p. 9 CHART).
- Imperatives remind us to *act* on imperatives by faith, that our experience of God's blessing is often dependent on our willingness to act. Inadequate emphasis on imperatives is a form of licentiousness (see p. 9 CHART).

The experience of God's provisions *flow from* a life of faith.

The biblical/faith-walk order of events: LEARN-ACT-EXPERIENCE.

The modern person's order of events: LEARN-EXPERIENCE-ACT

*Practice identifying how acting on God's imperatives leads to experiencing God's blessing.*

Bracket the [imperative]; put the (blessing promised) in parenthesis.

John 13:17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Jas. 1:22-25\*\* But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

## Memory verses

Rom. 8:4-6\*\* Walking by faith entails setting your minds on the things of the spirit.

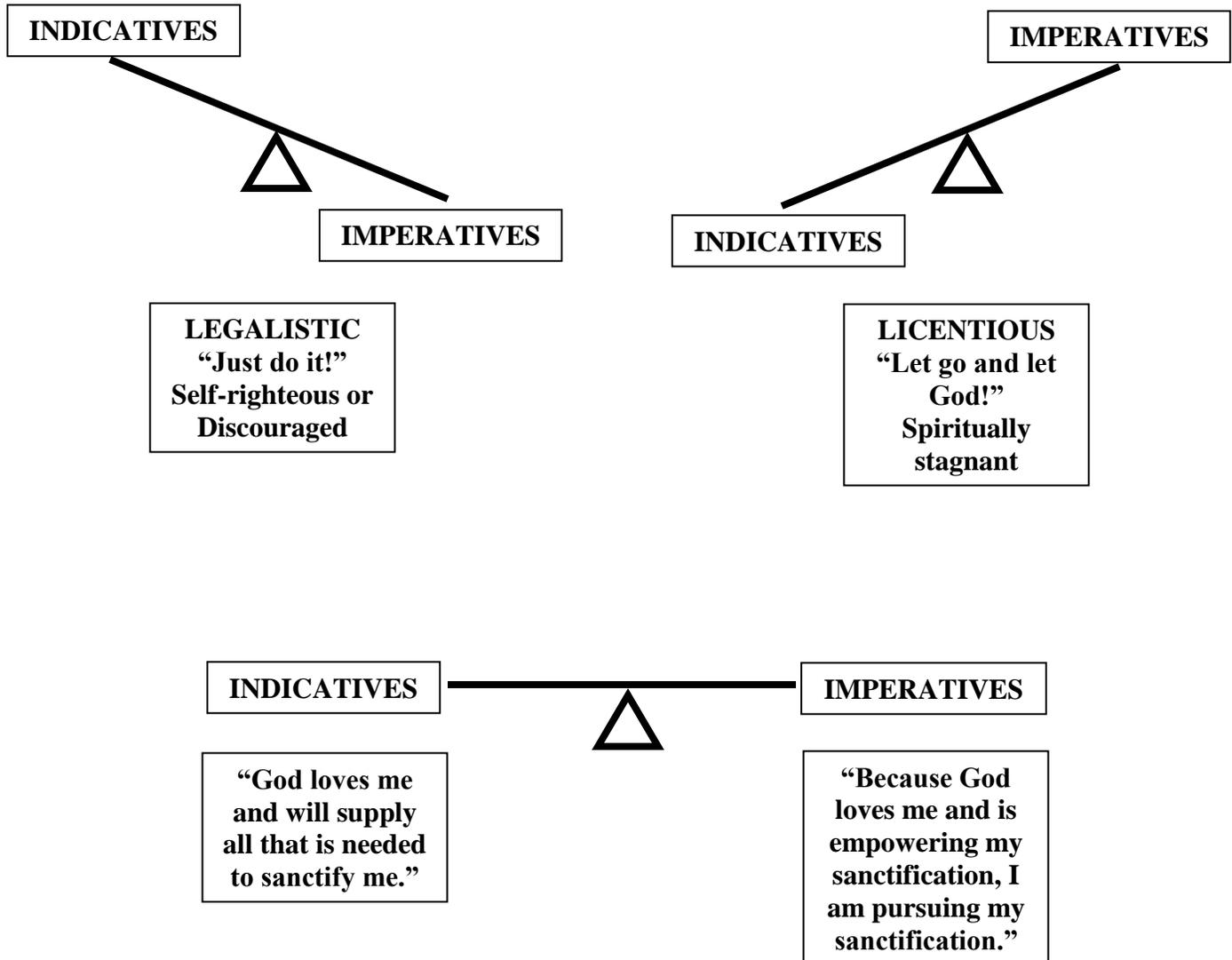
Gal. 5:16-25\*\* Keep in step with the spirit to bear the fruit of the spirit in your life. This is the action part of faith.

Jas. 1:22-25\*\* The experience of God's blessing *follows* acting on truth.

## Assignment

Read John White, *The Fight*, chapter on Faith (provided as handout). Make notes in margins and write a 1-2 paragraph summary describing *what* arrested you and *why*.

## Relating to God's Indicatives and Imperatives<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Because He Loves Me* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2008), p. 115.