

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1)

✠ Lecture IX: Faith in The Orthodox Concept ✠

For Orthodox Christians, justification by faith is dynamic, not static. Faith is living, continuous, never static or merely a point in time. Faith is not something Christians experience only at one critical moment, expecting it to cover all the rest of their lives. **True faith is not a decision; it's a way of life.** (The Orthodox Study Bible).

In what follows we shall examine the characteristics of the saving faith:

1. Sound Faith: → Apostolic Faith.
→ One Faith.
→ Biblical & Traditional Faith
2. Loving Faith.
3. Working Faith.
4. Faith that endures to the end.

✠ Sound Faith ✠

The Holy Bible states clearly that whoever follows a heresy⁺ **will not be saved:**

- “The works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, ..., **dissensions^{*}, heresies,** ...and the like of which I tell you before hand, just as I told you in time past, that those who practice such things **will not inherit the kingdom of God.**” (Gal 5:19-21)
- “There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in **destructive heresies.**” (2Pet 2:1)
- “Whoever transgresses and **does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God** ...If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for **who greets him shares in his evil deeds.**” (2Jn 9-11)
- “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, **contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.**” (Rom 16:17)
- “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, **knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.**” (Tit 3:10-11)

The following verses also illustrate the importance of sound doctrine:

- “Rebuke them sharply, that they may be **sound in faith.**” (Tit 1:14)
- “Speak the things which are proper for **sound doctrine.**” (Tit 2:1)
- “In doctrine showing **integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech.**” (Tit 2:7-8)
- “Hold fast the pattern of **sound words** which you have heard from me.” (2Tim 1:13)
- “**Take heed** to yourself and **to the doctrine.** Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1Tim 4:16)
- “For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine**, but according to their desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.” (2Tim 4:3)
- “A bishop must be blameless... holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, **by sound doctrine**, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” (Tit 1:7-9)
- “... You will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of **good doctrine** which you have carefully followed.” (1Tim 4:6)

⁺ A religious belief opposed to the Orthodox doctrines of a Church (Webster's New World Dictionary).

^{*} To reject the doctrines of an established Church (Webster's New World Dictionary).

✠ Characters of Sound Faith:

a) Apostolic Faith:

Our Lord said to the apostles, “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me” (**Lk.10: 16**). In other words, he who rejects the sound apostolic faith (found in the Orthodox Apostolic Church) rejects our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. St. Paul defended this sound apostolic faith saying, “If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we (the apostles) have preached to you, **let him be accursed**. As I have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, **let him be accursed**” (**Gal 1:8-9**).

The direct connection between the sound apostolic faith and salvation is obvious in the Holy Book of Revelation from St. John’s description of the heavenly Jerusalem, “Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and **on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the lamb**” (**Rev 21:14**). St. Paul said, “Having been **built on the foundation of the apostles**, and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself the chief corner stone” (**Eph 2:20**). In short, without the sound apostolic faith there is no salvation! ←

b) One Faith:

The saving apostolic faith is **one** as St. Paul said, “One Lord, **one faith**, one baptism” (**Eph 4:5**). Unity is an important characteristic of the sound faith. Therefore, we believe in **one** Holy, Catholic (universal) and Apostolic Church. Salvation is available **only** through this Church where the one sound faith is practiced, “The Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved” (**Acts 2:47**), “If he refuses to hear the Church, let him be to you like a **heathen** and a tax collector” (**Mt 18:16**).

c) Biblical & Traditional Faith:

The sound apostolic faith is based on Holy Scriptures and on the Holy Tradition of the Apostolic Church. → Details are available in the first section of these lectures. ←

✠ Loving Faith ✠

Faith is the first step toward salvation and is a great virtue, St. Paul said, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (**Heb 11:9**). Nevertheless, Love is greater than faith, “Now abides faith, hope, love, these three; but **the greatest is love**” (**1Cor 13:13**). St. Paul said, “Though I **have all faith**, that I could remove mountains, **but have not love, I am nothing**” (**1Cor 13:2**).

What is the nature of this love that is greater than faith?

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely; does not seek its own; is not provoked; thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity; but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things (from God), hopes all things, endures all things” (**1Cor 13:4-7**). It is not a surprise that **true love is basically good works** as St. John said, “Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (**1Jn 3:18**), “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (**1Jn 5:3**).

Consider the following verses:

- “Let us consider one another to stir up **love and good works**.” (**Heb 10:24**)
- “Remembering without ceasing your **work of faith, labor of love**.” (**Thess 1:3**)
- “God is not unjust to forget your **work and labor of love**.” (**Heb 6:10**)
- “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **faith working through love**.” (**Gal 5:6**)

+ This last verse will take us to the next character of the saving faith → Working Faith.

✧ Working Faith ✧

Without good works, faith is considered dead

- “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (Jam 2:17)
- “Faith without works is dead.” (Jam 2:20)
- “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (Jam 2:2)

✧ **Conclusion → Dead faith will not save anyone!**

Faith is made perfect by good works

- “By works faith was made perfect.” (Jam 2:22)

Faith is manifest by good works

- “Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” (Jam 2:24)

Justification is by faith & works

- “You see that a man is justified by works and **not by faith only.**” (Jam 2:24)

✧ **Remark → The last verse is irrefutable evidence that the Protestant teaching of salvation by faith ‘alone’ is fatally false.**

✧ Faith that endures to the end ✧

The Sound (Apostolic, One, Biblical & Traditional), Loving, and Working Faith should endure to the end or else **we may lose salvation:**

- “He who endures **to the end** will be saved.” (Mt 14:13)
- “We have become partakers of Christ **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast **to the end.**” (Heb 3:14)
- “Be faithful **until death**, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10)
- “Whose house are we, **if** we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm **to the end.**” (Heb 3:6)
- “For we have become partakers of Christ **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast **to the end**” (Heb 3:14)
- “We desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope **until the end.**” (Heb 6:11)

✧ In a Nutshell:

As an Orthodox Christian, when you read in your Holy Bible about “Faith”, understand that the Holy Bible is referring to the Sound, Loving, Working faith that endures to the end.

✧ Example ✧

It is written, “Without **faith** it is impossible to please Him.” (Heb 11:9)

This verse should be understood as follows:

- Without **Sound Faith (Apostolic/ One/ Biblical & Traditional)** it is impossible to please Him.
- Without **Loving Faith** it is impossible to please Him.
- Without **Working Faith** it is impossible to please Him.
- Without **Faith that endures to the end** it is impossible to please Him.