



# What is Faith in Jesus?

## Is there more to it than simply believing?

Probably the most recited verse in the New Testament is this one:

- **John 3:16** – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Seems simple enough – believe in Jesus Christ, go to heaven.

However, we later come across this passage which seems to contradict the notion of simply believing:

- **James 2:14-18** “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”

It’s not a contradiction. The idea that it is comes from a lack of an understanding of scripture. In the last verse, verse 18, “Show me your faith without works” he’s talking about works of the law, trying to “earn” your way in heaven. However, Jesus made salvation by works obsolete. Salvation now comes through Him, because of His sacrifice on the cross. When he then states, “I will show you my faith by my works”, he is talking about how he lives his life, a life with Christ.

### So, what does this all mean?

We have to look at the wording of John 3:16, specifically “whosoever believeth in Him”. The phrase “believeth in” (believes in) means:

- To have faith or confidence in the existence of something or someone
- To have trust in the value or goodness of something
- To have trust in the goodness or ability of someone

The key words in these definitions are faith and trust, which are synonymous with each other in this context. Believing in, having faith in, Jesus means trusting, or trusting in, Him. Trusting in Him means we take His teachings and commandments to heart and follow them, follow Him.

- **Matthew 7:21** – “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”
- **Matthew 7:24-27** - “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

In these two passages Jesus is talking about works of faith versus the works of false prophets and/or works of the law. He uses fruit trees as a metaphor.

**Matthew 7:17** “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” He goes on to say that trees bearing bad fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire.

- **Matthew 11:28-30** – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
- **John 14:21** – “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

Jesus tells us His “yoke is easy” and it is. Accept Him as Lord and Savior, as the Son of God and man. “Learn” from Him and keep His commandments. That’s all there is to it.

We can also look at what Paul says about grace vs works or grace vs grace plus works.

**Romans 4:4-5**, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

**Romans 11:6**, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

Now we can go back to James’ statement about faith without works. He goes on to explain further:

- **James 2:19** – “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

He then refers to Abraham, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar.

- **James 2:22-24** – “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

Abraham was doing what God had instructed him to do, sacrifice his son. Isaac questioned his father because they had no lamb for the sacrifice. Abraham told his son God would provide the sacrifice. Just as Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, an Angel of the Lord stopped him. Abraham looked behind him and saw a ram caught in a thicket. He took the ram and offered it as a sacrifice instead. It was Abraham’s faith and obedience (works) that saved his son from the altar.

We have two choices as a result of free will. We either accept Christ as Lord and Savior, believe in Him, or we don't. Faith in Christ produces good works on its own. Good works, following His commands and His teachings, is a natural extension of Faith in Christ. It should happen automatically, so to speak, as we learn and grow. Works of Faith are done because we want to do them, not because we have to do them to earn salvation.

**Ephesians 2:7-8**, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The phrase "not of yourselves" means "not of what you do."

Like Abraham, we must do what God commands of us, follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and practice what he teaches in our daily lives. In other words, learn from Jesus and keep His commandments. Simply believing is not enough, we have to act on that belief. Otherwise, our faith, our belief, is empty and meaningless, it’s not faith at all.