

Biblical Faith

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (Ephesians 1:19).

Faith is one of those words used by many with little understanding. This is so obvious when out knocking on doors to invite folks to church and they exclaim that they are of another faith. But even Christians often fail to understand what true faith is all about. Faith as described in God's Word is both simple and complex. It is simple in that it is readily understood, clearly communicated, and sharply focused on an object. Even a child can exercise genuine faith. Faith is complex in that it has many dimensions to it, touching the intellect, the human will and the emotions. Intellectual assent and personal trust are both essential in genuine faith.

- The noun translated faith (pistis / πιστις) occurs 244 times in the New Testament.
- The verb form translated believe (pisteo / πιστευω) occurs 248 times in the New Testament. This is an action word involving believing or entrusting one's spiritual well-being to Christ.

I. The Definition of Faith

- A. Dictionary: Belief, trust, fidelity, or loyalty to a creed or religion.
- B. Faith is **believing** - simply taking God at His Word and acting upon it.
- C. Faith is the assent of the mind to truth of which we may not have an immediate conception. Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible. Faith is the link to every promise of God.
- D. Faith is choosing to believe in the faithfulness of God.
- E. *A steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which, being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit* (John Calvin).
- F. *The response of the total person to God as a Person, in loving submission, trust and obedience, in and through the Person of Jesus Christ as the Revelation of God and Redeemer of mankind, Who as the Sovereign Lord offers Himself to the believer, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Scripture as his daily sufficiency* (Dr. Victor Matthews).
- G. Faith is depending on the reality of things being hoped for, being convinced of those very unseen things (Hebrews 11:1).
- H. *Faith is confidence in God that leads to obedience to God* (Warren Wiersbe).

II. The Demand of Faith

- A. We cannot please God without exercising faith (Hebrews 11:6).
- B. Without faith, salvation would be impossible (Acts 16:31; 27:25). Many will call Jesus Lord and do His works and still not be redeemed (Matthew 7:21-23). II Timothy speaks of those who have a form of godliness but deny its power (II Timothy 3:5). They are religious but lost! Sadly, many people today are victims of the same deception. Jesus speaks of those who honor Him with their lips, but their heart is far from Him (Matthew 15:8), indicating that true faith is far more than just intellectual assent. Saving faith is the unqualified acceptance of and dependence upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross to secure God's mercy and forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 2:8).
- C. Faith is essential for worshipping God (Hebrews 11:4).
- D. ***"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"*** (Romans 14:23). Faithless living is sinful living. To depend on works or anything we might do for forgiveness is the same as unbelief.
- E. Faith is necessary for living the Christian life (Colossians 2:6) and walking with God (Hebrews 11:8-9).
- F. Faith is not static or passive but is dynamic and active, always reaching out to obtain and make the object of faith one's own.
- G. Faith is not to be thought of as merely an event in the past but as a continuing attitude throughout life.
- H. Faith makes it possible to obtain God's promises (Romans 5:2).
- I. Faith is necessary for waiting upon God (Hebrews 11:10-12).
- J. Faith brings to the believer an incredible amount of understanding. For example, the secular world wants us to believe evolutionary theories concerning the creation of the universe and

of man and it is all shrouded in mystery. However, for the believer, in exercising faith in God, there is no mystery. By faith, the believer accepts without question that God created all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).

- K. It is not enough for the believer to know about the provisions God has made for daily living. He must also know how to appropriate those provisions and how to put them into practice.

III. The Direction of Faith (True faith must have an object)

- A. The Person of God (Acts 16:31; 27:25; Hebrews 11:6). Faith in itself is nothing. It cannot function without an object.
- B. The Word of God - the Bible. Faith accepts the statements in the Bible as being the revealed Word of God. The Bible is the basis of the believer's faith (Hebrews 4:1-3; John 17:17, 19, 20; Hebrews 10:23). God is the One Who guarantees His Word. Faith is sometimes used as a general description of the entire Gospel revelation (I Timothy 4:1; 5:8; II Timothy 4:7; Jude 3).

IV. The Distinguishing Characteristics of Faith

- A. Submission to God, His work, and His Word. For the early followers of Christ, it was a way of life (John 14:6; Acts 9:1-6; Colossians 1:18). Faith produces good works (James 2:14-20; Ephesians 2:10). Jesus said - ***"By their fruits ye shall know them"*** (Matthew 7:20).
- B. The practice of obedience to God and His Word (John 14:21; James 1:22-27; I John 2:4).
- C. Trust: Depending on God to keep on fulfilling His word.
- D. Faith is not and never will be a feeling. It is a decision, a choice to believe (trust) God, to take Him at His Word and to act upon it in spite of how one might feel.

V. The Durability of Faith

- A. Faith is necessary for an intimate relationship with God (John 14:21; I John 4:19) and a genuine love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Galatians 5:6). ***"And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee: for Thou, Lord, has not forsaken them that seek thee"*** (Psalm 9:10). True faith rests upon Who God is and often precedes full knowledge. Knowledge on the other hand precedes complete trust. Recognize here that knowledge in Scripture contains the components necessary for personal experience. One who has faith that is genuine is referred to in Scripture as being faithful (Matthew 25:21; I Corinthians 4:2; Revelation 2:10).
- B. When our relationship with God is strained because of sin, it is difficult to exercise genuine faith, however, we don't lose our faith.
- C. The Apostle Paul challenged those who said they were believers in Corinth to examine their faith. They were to examine their conduct, their lifestyle, their way of life and their practical sanctification to make certain that they were in the faith (II Corinthians 13:5). Genuine faith will endure throughout this life into eternity.
- D. Faith is like gold, for it will stand the test of fire, no matter how hot it might get (I Peter 1:7). When it is tested, it produces perseverance or staying power (James 1:3, 12). Every true believer can be certain that his faith will be tested in the crucible of life in a secular world.

VI. The Dividends of Faith

- A. We are saved by faith (Genesis 15:16; Romans 3:28; 4:3; 5:1; John 1:12; Galatians 2:16; 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- B. We are sanctified by faith (John 17:17; Acts 26:18; I Peter 1:22).
- C. We are kept by faith (I Peter 1:5).
- D. We have rest by faith (Hebrews 4:3).
- E. We have power to live the Christian life and to serve God by faith.

VII. The Denial of Faith

When a person refuses to believe God's Word, it is an indication on his part that the content of faith is not true, that God is not worth trusting and that He is a liar (I John 5:10). Jesus commanded, ***Have faith in God*** (Mark 11:22). Hebrews 3:12 gives a strong warning against unbelief.