

What is Faith?

We had a little vocabulary test a couple of sessions ago and one of the questions was:

Define faith:

- A. A belief in God
- B. A trust in God
- C. A hope in God
- D. It is something that a person does.

The most common answers were either a belief or a trust. Most people think that faith is either a synonym for belief or trust.

If I believe something it is faith. If I trust God, it is faith. If I believe and trust hard enough it will change the heart of God and it will be made so.

Others link faith with determination. If I am determined enough I will develop faith and with that faith I can move mountains.

Perfect picture of "white-knuckled Christians". They clench their fists in a strong desire to believe something is so and then they can have what they want. If I hang in there long enough and with enough belief and trust and determination, God will provide.

I have heard preachers and laymen alike to tell the afflicted they are not healed because they don't have enough faith, or their prayers are not answered because they don't have enough faith. We aren't into the power of positive thinking, but what we are into is much better.

I have heard an illustration of having faith that a chair will support your weight allows you to confidently sit in it. But the problem with that all chairs are not constructed well and some break. Well what happens to your "faith" when the chair breaks? As we will see, sitting in a chair and riding in an airplane are not acts of faith, but rather acting upon our experiences in the world.

As Christians we should never use the word faith for a worldly based event. We should say that we have confidence that the chair will support us based upon our prior experience, we have confidence that the airplane will safely get us to our destination, we have confidence that sky will not fall tonight.

So what is Faith?

Bible is the source of our understanding.

Start with a very good definition in Heb 11:1

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen".

Faith is a conviction that we have regarding something that allows us to be able to act on it as if it were assured of happening. But where does such assurance come from?

Where does faith come from? Two answers are usually offered up:

1. "I don't really know"

2. It comes from within with the implication that faith is something we develop ourselves or something you do. "I'll just faith it."

Bible study time:

Hebrews 12:2 ***Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith***

Romans 12:3 ***God has allotted to each a measure of faith.***"

Where does it come from God. It is not something that we do or a presence of mind that we develop, but that faith is a gift from God.

Rom 10:17 ***faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.***

1. Faith is a gift from God
2. We receive this gift.
3. It comes from the from the word of Christ.
4. It is allotted, given out as needed from the hearing process.

2 Cor 10:14-15 Paul has hope that as the gospel of Christ is lived Faith grows.

Rom 5:1 says, ***justified by faith***

Rom 4:5 ***his faith is counted as righteousness***".

Eph 2:8, 9 ***For by grace you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as result of works that not one would boast.***

1. that salvation is surely not from works.
2. "it" refers back to faith

So we see that faith is a free gift from God and comes to us at our salvation (Rom 5:1 and Rom 4:5).

In Acts 14:27 we read that Jesus had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles meaning that salvation was now freely available to all through Christ.

Acts 17:31 having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." The underlined two words come from the same Greek word that is elsewhere interpreted as faith but in a different tense. PISTIS Thus it is like a verb and could read " ... having faith to all men ..." When God gives faith to people, He faiths to us the absoluteness of the truth of Christ.

This brings back to prayer.

Matt 21:21 ***Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you sat to this mountain, 'be taken up and cast into the sea' it will happen. And all these things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.***

Is there a way that our prayers are answered?

1. First it has to be based on faith and we have seen the origin of faith is God and not us.
 - a. So first God has to tell us something will come to pass.

- b. Then we act on that faith with a believing heart and we can do so without doubt for God has said so,
- c. Then the event will come to pass.

This type of input is in seen in the Old Testament when God first told His people that the battle had been won, and all they had to do was act it out.

Faith and Belief

The above scripture also contrasts faith and belief.

Faith is not the same as belief. Must have faith and belief.

It means that we must be firmly rooted in our faith. Having faith means that God has given us **His** insight into something and we are not to doubt it but believe that this faith is of God.

REMEMBER: insight comes from the Bible's revelation of the character of God and not from any other source.

Sometimes we want something so badly for ourselves that it is very difficult for us to believe that God does not want it for us also.

When we will are aligned with the will of God and not with our will then we called on to believe. It is easy to get cause and effect mixed up and that is what happens with a lot of people regarding faith and belief.

Belief is only efficacious when coupled with God given, God in sighted. We can believe because we have faith that came from God. Without faith from God, we cannot believe. **Faith is the cause and believe is the effect.** A great definition of faith is the empowering of God. God empowers us to believe, trust, repent, hope, etc.

Do all have the same amount of faith?

Can our faith be increased? Remember Heb 12:2 says "...Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" so Jesus position to perfect our faith.

1. Some are given more faith than others.

Rom 14:1 ***Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but for the purpose of passing judgement on his opinions.***

Rom 12:3 ***For through the grace given me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgement, as God has allotted to each measure of faith.***

2. I want more. I want as much as everyone else. Don't try to second guess God for He had His reasons for giving more faith to some than to others.
3. We shall each have to give an account of ourselves to God (Rom 14:12) and "to whom much is given, much is expected (Luke 12:48). Our increase in faith will come at God's timing and not by our works or at our insistence.

4. We can also stray away from the faith by becoming too caught up in the search for knowledge rather than for the wisdom, which increases our faith.

1 Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy, protect what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and absurdities of so-called "knowledge." By professing it, some have strayed from the faith. Grace be with you all.

Many theologians have become caught up with their pride of intelligence and understanding and so many false theologies have been surfacing lately.

5. When is our faith completed? Eph 4:11-16 tells us that God gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers in order to build up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man.

Definition of Faith: Faith is the enabling power of God. It totally eliminates a man-based origin and applies well to all of the above.

Justification is by the enabling power of God.

Sanctification is by the enabling power of God.

Glorification is by the enabling power of God.

God gives to each a measure of the enabling power of God. (Rom 12:3 paraphrased)