

What is faith?

By

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Faith is a complete trust or confidence in something or someone. To live in this world, you need to have faith. You board an airplane for example because you trust the pilot to take you to your destination. You agree to surgery because you believe the doctors have your best interests at heart and are competent to perform the procedure. In such situations, you are never 100 per cent certain that things will turn out well, but you make a choice based on the information you have and then choose to trust that things will turn out well. When the Bible talks about faith, it is mostly not about everyday matters but about our trust in God and His promises. Some of those promises concern our life here and now, but most are about life after death. Promises about the future, made by a God we cannot experience with our sensory organs, require faith. Hebrews 11:1 puts it this way: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”.

In what or whom do you believe

For a while, 'having faith' was not very popular in our western society. People valued scientific evidence and rational explanations more. Anything that could not be proven scientifically was considered implausible or irrelevant. This attitude has changed in recent years. However, it is important to define exactly what we mean by the assumption that 'having faith' is gaining ground again. The great Christian writer and thinker A.W. Tozer has this to say about faith: "I do not recall another period when 'faith' was as popular as it is today. If only we believe hard enough we'll make it somehow. So goes the popular chant. What you believe is not important. Only believe... What is overlooked in all this is that faith is good only when it engages truth; when it is made to rest upon falsehood it can and often does lead to eternal tragedy. For it is not enough that we believe; we must believe the right thing about the right One." The object of our faith is thus most important. Jesus says: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me" and "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:1; 14:6). Unless our

faith is in God through Jesus, we do not have the right kind of faith.

Complete trust and confidence in God

For the Christian, faith is a complete trust and confidence in God and what He has done through Jesus. There is no fear or doubt in faith. Hebrews 11:1 tells us, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” Faith is not guesswork. It is not a blind leap in the dark. It is based upon clear, historical evidence. For example, the apostle John wrote an entire book on Jesus’ words and deeds “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). His fellow-worker Luke did the same: “Since many have taken to hand an account of the things which have perfect certainty among us, as those who have been eyewitnesses and servants of the Word from the beginning have handed down to us, it has also pleased me, having carefully examined everything from the beginning, to describe it for you in an orderly manner, esteemed Theophilus, that you may know

the certainty of the things in which you have been taught” (Luke 1:1-4). Yet in the end faith remains a step of trust. Accepting bare facts is not enough, because those facts are only part of the biblical message. Much of the Bible cannot be verified that way. To accept the core of the Gospel – that every human being is sinful, but that through faith and grace we can come to terms with our Creator again – you have to trust the Lord God. And you can do that when you get to know Him personally.

Active obedience to God’s Word

What faith produces, is active obedience to God’s Word. Faith is not just an intellectual decision; it is a complete change of life. Once you become filled with God’s love, it permeates your whole life. Faith leads to obedience to God and love for your fellow men; it is a spiritual conviction that prompts you to act, to work and to live a life that honors God. On this, read James 2:14-26: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead”.

Faith is rewarded

The great thing about faith is the ‘reward’ that it brings: eternal life in God’s presence. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

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