

Source night

Topic-
Faith

What is Faith? Hebrews 11 v1-3

In the Old Testament the word 'faith' doesn't really exist, Habakkuk 2 :4 is the nearest we have.

Word 'faithful' is used more frequently. However, concept is clearly there e.g. Abraham in Genesis 15 :6

In the New Testament, both faith and belief are generally translations of the Greek word *Pistis*.

People who live by faith as followers of Jesus Christ are called "believers" Acts 5:14.

In the N.T. the main way word 'faith' used is by trust or reliance. It is more than just intellectual belief

In Gk, it has a sense of confidence in a person & their testimony based on knowledge of them. 2 Cor 4 :13

In popular understanding, faith is something done in ignorance or belief without evidence, however true faith is based on true information about Christ. Romans 1 :20, 10 :17 1 Thessalonians 5 :21

In fact more we know about God the easier it is to trust him.

Faith is rational (Romans 1 :20) but it requires a step beyond.



John 20 :29

Our faith starts with God Eph 2 :8 A gift given 2 Peter 1 :1, Philippians 1 :29 Acts 3 :16

Applied Faith

'Faith that...' based upon truth. John 8 :34

'Faith in...' based in a person. Is the size of our faith that matters, or **who** we put our faith in? Luke 17 :6

Saving Faith The whole topic of salvation (How someone becomes a Christian) is called Soteriology and involves a negative and a positive. Negative, repentance, and the positive, faith. Acts 3 :19, 20 :21

The faith element leads to 'Justification by faith' John 3 :16, Romans 3 :22-30, 5 :1, Ephesians 2 :8

A prayer of repentance and faith is helpful to people, but saying words alone does not save, it is a genuine response of the heart that counts. Proverbs 3 :5-6, Ephesians 5 :6

Justification does not just involve our sins being forgiven, it also means we take on the righteousness of Christ in God's eyes. Romans 4 ;5, Titus 3 :5

Faith and Works

The issue arises because of two errors; a) Easy Believeism (Say a prayer, and you're in, live how you want)

b) Works is part of what justifies us.

Since the days of the early church there have been those who have taught that faith has to be supplemented by works. The Early Judaisers, tried to get gentile believers to obey Jewish law in addition to faith.

Galatians 2 :16, Romans 3 :28,

Works do not save us, however they are the evidence that faith has taken root.

Matthew 3 :8, Titus 1:16, James 2 :14-26

Religion teaches Works → Salvation. (earned) The Christian teaches Salvation → Works (Grace)

Historic view of Faith

Pre-reformation

Early Christians accepted that faith was the foundation of being a Christian

St. Augustine taught faith as an intellectual thing but should lead to self surrender, love, and good works in general. Thomas Aquinas "Faith causes the intellect to give its assent to things that are not seen."

There was a general view that you belonged to 'the faith' meaning the Church, with less emphasis on a person's own individual faith.

Reformation

There was renewed emphasis on faith needing to not just to be part of our thinking but also our wills, to trust.

John Calvin described faith as 'revealed to our minds, and sealed in our hearts'.

The Reformers stressed that faith was the key to opening up the work of Christ on the cross to ourselves, however our faith isn't our own work, it is a gift of God.

20th/21st Century thinking

(Remember three main strands of those that call themselves Christian: Evangelical (Bible based), Liberal, Liturgical (e.g. RC))
In Liberal circles, personal faith is not a major issue, as no Hell. Right actions are more important than right belief.
In Roman Catholic circles, justification comes at baptism, when in later life they sin, they need to take the sacraments.
Among evangelicals there is clear teaching on the need to have faith and repent, but there is discussion: does regeneration come before faith? Ephesians 2 :5, 1 John 5 :1 Can a 'dead person' believe?

Or does faith come first? John 1 :12

The 'Word Faith' Movement

There are many high profile Christian speakers in this, such as; Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen

They teach that we can have health and wealth by speaking out words of faith (Name it, claim it!)

They look at scriptures such as Isaiah 53 :5 however context is spiritual disease. Matthew 16 :19

However Romans 9 :15-16 Prosperity teachers use often talk about planting 'Seed' Mark 4 :8

Kenneth Copeland - "Faith is a force" False - Faith is trust in God not a 'force' to be used.

Some say we can speak things into existence like God. Creflo Dollar claims Christians are

'little gods'. Genesis 3 :5 One of many criticisms of the movement is that it is 'Me' centred, my wants, my needs, rather than Christ centred. Instead of focusing on Christ, it elevates humans to the level of Christ.



Faith and doubt

Many at times struggle with their faith e.g. The father Jesus met Mark 9 :23+

Faith comes by hearing Romans 10 :17 So listening to God's faithfulness in the past & promises for the future can help us work through times of doubt. Matthew 11 :4-5

Remember, faith doesn't have to be an emotional response, it can be an act of will.

Living by Faith on a day to day basis

We are called on to live by faith not sight 2 Corinthians 5 :7 How do we do this?

1. Keep our focus on God, include in our day, reading, listening, watching things that help us do that. Proverbs 3 :5-6, Hebrews 12 :2, Matthew 6 :33
2. Don't focus on 'earthly things' Matthew 6 :19-20 2 Corinthians 4 :18, Colossians 3 :2
Assess our 'wants' list, to see if we can justify or it is just a whim!
3. Focus on the end game Revelation 22 :12 Romans 8 :24
4. Think of God in the everyday things of life 1 Corinthians 10 :31
5. Focus on what we can do for others Ephesians 4 :28, James 2 :17-18
6. Obey his commands John 14 :15
7. Get encouragement from other Christians Hebrews 10 :26
8. Be thankful 1 Thessalonians 5 :18
9. Assess our attitude, how vain and self obsessed are we? Philippians 2 :3
10. Give God what is his! 1 Peter 5 :7



Life Group Discussion Questions



1. How is your faith in God, similar and different from your faith in people?
2. Which comes first repentance or faith?
3. What are the dangers of the Word Faith movement?
4. How can we see our faith grow?
5. Are doubts natural or just unspiritual?
6. When have you had moments of strong faith ?