

What is Faith?

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”. Hebrews 11:1

Acknowledging God's existence does not magically produce a right relationship with Him.¹ To believe in God is only the starting point of faith.¹ Belief in God is profitable, but incomplete.¹ "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" James 2:19. We must go beyond the level of the faith exhibited by demons.¹ We are called not only to just believe in God but to **believe God**.

Faith is confidence in the trustworthiness of God. It is the conviction that what God says is true and that what He promises will come to pass. Faith is knowing that God is real and that you can trust in his promises.² You cannot trust someone who isn't there, nor can you rely on someone whose promises are not reliable. This is why faith is talked about as the substance of things hoped for and as the evidence of things not seen.² Both words carry with them a sense of reality. Our hope is not wishful thinking.² Faith does not make God real.² On the contrary, faith is the response to a real God who has made Himself known to us.²

The Christian is called to see things as they really are, and not as he would simply like them to be. We trust in a God who has revealed Himself. We believe because He is real.

If we want to exercise biblical faith--Christian faith--then we ought first to find out how the Bible defines faith.³ The clearest definition comes from Hebrews 11:1. This verse says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."³ Biblical faith contains conviction, trust, assurance, confidence, evidence and finally...action.

That's why biblical faith is not just intellectual assent.³ It's not just acknowledging that certain facts about Jesus, the Bible, the resurrection, or whatever, happen to be true.³ Faith is not just knowing. Faith is also acting. ³ Biblical faith is a confidence so strong that it results in action.³ You're willing to act based on that belief, that faith.³ It's taking your life and putting it on the line based on your confidence in those facts.³ Not only to trust God with our lives, but to do His will. It is the practical submission of the entire man to the guidance and control of such truth; i.e. exchanging our will for His.

That's why the Christian faith cares about the evidence...the truth.³ For the biblical Christian, the facts matter.³ You can't have assurance for something you don't know you're going to get.³ You can only hope for it.³ This is why **the resurrection of Jesus is so important**.³ It gives assurance to the hope.³ Because of a Christian view of faith, Paul is able to say in 1 Corinthians 15 that when it comes to the resurrection, if we have only hope, but no assurance--if Jesus didn't indeed rise from the dead in time/space history--then we are of most men to be pitied.³ That's what he says: We are of most men to be pitied. ³

¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 1 Corinthians 15:13-19

And lastly but most important...faith clearly is the instrument by which we receive the righteousness of God, the redemption which is by Christ...*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9...*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Romans 10:17

1.<http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets/LF/whatisfaith.htm>

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3.<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5242>