

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT FAITH

by Chris Reeves

Finding out what the Bible says about faith is very important. Why? A few reasons come to mind: First, faith is often defined in a number of different and conflicting ways by religious persons. If we want to know how God defines faith we will have to go to the Bible. God's definition of faith takes precedence over man's definition of faith. Second, there are all kinds of faith in the world -- even the demons have faith (James 2:19) -- but only one faith is true. If we want to have true faith (2 Timothy 1:5), we will have to let God tell us what true faith is. Third, faith is necessary to please God (Hebrews 11:6). If we want to please God we need to know about the faith that pleases God. Fourth, faith is necessary for salvation (Ephesians 2:8). If we want to be saved we need to know about the faith that saves. Fifth, there are many people who do not have faith (John 6:64) -- at one point even Jesus' own family did not believe in Him (John 7:5) -- and God destroys people who do not have faith (Jude 5). If we don't want God to destroy us, if we don't want to die in our sins (John 8:24), we must believe. Finally, there are those who have faith but they are letting their faith slip away (2 Timothy 2:18). If we don't want evil forces to overthrow our faith we need to know how to keep our faith strong.

This brief article is not intended to be an exhaustive study of each occurrence of the word faith in the Bible. Many verses in both the Old and New Testaments could be used to illustrate each point below but only a few have been chosen. This study is confined to the New Testament. The references listed below are examples of the verb form of faith (Greek pistuo, usually translated, believe), and the noun form of faith (Greek pistis, usually translated, faith). I would suggest that you take time to look up each reference listed below that is not quoted for further study on each point. You may also want to use your Bible Concordance to find other examples of the word faith. No matter what verse you locate on the faith of man, you will find that it falls nicely into one of the categories below. Let us now examine what the Bible says about faith so that we can have the faith that God wants us to have.

OBJECT OF FAITH. The Bible teaches that the object of faith (who or what is believed in) is God and His Son Jesus Christ. There are many persons, places and things that we could put our faith in during our lifetime, but we must prioritize our life, and put our faith in God and Jesus Christ above all else. Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). We are not to put our faith in that which is false (Matthew 24:23,26). Unless our faith is in God and His Son, we do not have the right kind of faith. For Further Study: Mark 11:22; Acts 14:23; 19:4; 20:21; Galatians

2:16; 2 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 6:1; 11:6; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 John 3:23; 5:1,5,10.

SUBJECT OF FAITH. The Bible teaches that the subject of faith (who or what has faith) is man himself. Man is the only creature of all of God's creation who can believe. What flower ever believed? What rock ever believed? What animal ever believed? Take a look at the great men and women of faith in the Old and New Testaments and see what they accomplished "by faith." For Further Study: Hebrews 11:1-40.

SUBSTANCE OF FAITH. The Bible teaches that the substance of faith (what faith is) is belief; a complete trust, assurance or confidence. There is no fear (Mark 5:36; Luke 8:50) or doubt (Mark 11:23-24) in faith. The writer of Hebrews wrote: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Unless our faith is complete trust, we do not have the right kind of faith. For Further Study: Mark 9:23-24; John 6:69; Acts 17:31; 27:25; 2 Timothy 1:12.

PROOF OF FAITH. The Bible teaches that the proof of faith (what faith is based on) is evidence. Faith is based upon strong, clear, logical, true, historical evidence. Faith is not guesswork. Faith is not a blind leap in the dark. Faith is not grounded in subjective feelings. God provides the objective, rational evidence for belief; man provides the belief based on that evidence. The Bible does not teach that God gives man his faith. John wrote: "but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ..." (John 20:31). Paul wrote: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Unless our faith is based upon sound evidence from God's word, we do not have the right kind of faith. For Further Study: Mark 1:15; 16:15-16; Luke 8:12-13; 24:25; John 4:39-42; 5:46-47; 8:30,46; 9:35-38; 17:20; 19:35; 20:24-31; Acts 4:4; 8:12-13; 9:41-42; 11:19-21; 13:12; 14:1; 15:7; 17:11-12; 18:8; 24:14; 26:27; Romans 10:8-21; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 3:5; 15:1-2,11,14,17; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:11-13; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 5:13.

FRUIT OF FAITH. The Bible teaches that the fruit of faith (what faith produces) is active obedience to God's word. The Bible does not teach that man is saved by faith only. Faith is not just a mental thought; it is a mental thought that leads a person to act, to work, to obey. The outward acts of faith can be seen (Matthew 9:2). Faith takes steps in obedience (Romans 4:12). Unless our faith produces active obedience to God's word, we do not have the right kind of faith. For Further Study: Mark 16:16; Acts 11:21; 19:18-19; Romans 16:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Titus 3:8; James 2:14-26; Revelation 2:19.

CONSEQUENCES OF FAITH. The Bible teaches that the consequences of faith (what faith leads to) are enormous. First, faith leads to unity. Luke records: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44). Second, faith leads to proclaiming the gospel. Paul said: "But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13). Third, faith leads to persecution. Paul wrote: "because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for in his behalf" (Philippians 1:29). Unless our faith leads to unity,

proclamation and persecution, we do not have the right kind of faith. For Further Study: John 12:42-43; 17:20-21; Acts 4:32; 22:19.

REWARD OF FAITH. The Bible teaches that the reward of faith (what faith accomplishes) is eternal life. Our faith results in eternal life (salvation) given to us by God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Unless our faith accomplishes eternal life, we do not have the right kind of faith. For Further Study: John 3:14-16,36; 5:24; 6:40,47; Acts 10:43; 13:39,48; 16:31; 26:18; Romans 1:16; 3:28,30; 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 3:24; 1 Timothy 1:16; Hebrews 6:11-12; 1 Peter 1:5-9.

"Do you now believe?" Jesus asks (John 16:31). Now that you know more of what the Bible says about faith what do you plan to do? Will you begin to put more faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ? Will you put away any fear or doubt that would keep you from serving God with a sincere faith? Will you spend more time with the Bible evidence that God has provided in order to build a stronger faith? Will you begin to produce more fruits of faith in your life by your obedience to God's word? Will you be ready to accept the enormous consequences of your faith, difficult as they may be? If the answer to these questions is yes, then the Lord has promised you a great reward for your faith, eternal life.

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