

BIBLICAL FAITH

Faith and *belief* (in its various cognates) are among the most frequently found words and concepts in the Bible. They are also among the most misunderstood and abused Biblical words. Without controversy, the Bible requires that all who would be saved from the condemnation of sin must possess faith in God and His Son:

And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him (Heb. 11:6).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

For except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Biblical faith involves belief, trust, and conviction. The nearest thing in the Bible to a definition of faith is the following: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1, KJV). Substance and evidence are powerful words of certainty regarding our faith in God and His son, although we cannot now experience Them empirically (i.e., by one of our physical senses).

Nevertheless, sufficient evidence exists to prove that the hoped-for things are real. God does not ask us to “believe” in eternal and spiritual verities merely because we want them to exist. God never asks anyone to believe anything He has said without providing adequate evidence to warrant the investment of our faith. In light of these thoughts, consider the following:

- Biblical faith is **not** mere wishful thinking, wherein one wishes for something so much he convinces himself it exists. This concept is one of “pie-in-the-sky,” “leap-in-the-dark” desire with no reason or evidence for it.
- Biblical faith is **not** merely suggesting the probability that God exists, Christ is the Son of God, or the Bible is the Word of God. This approach is sheer agnosticism.
- Biblical faith is **not** belief in something (or someone) **in spite of** contrary evidence. Rather it rests upon credible evidence.
- Biblical faith is **not** distinct from knowledge, as if “faith” begins where “knowledge” ends and proceeds into an unknowable “twilight zone.” Rather, Biblical faith is another **avenue** of knowledge.
- Biblical faith, in relation to salvation, is **not** mere intellectual acceptance of one or more Biblical doctrines (e.g., the Deity of Jesus). Such conviction is the **beginning** point of salvation—not its end. **Saving** faith is always **obedient** faith. Jesus said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

The source of evidence for Biblical faith is the Bible: “So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). John specifically pinpointed the evidence for our faith in the Christ:

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name (John 20:30–31).

—Dub McClish
Denton, TX

[Note: I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, December 7, 2014, of which I was editor.]