

Faith in the Bible

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Faith is one of the most frequently found words and concepts in the Bible. It is also one of the most misunderstood and abused Biblical words. Without controversy, the Bible requires that all who would be saved from the eternal consequences of sin must believe (i.e., have faith):

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).

Likewise, Jesus said, "For except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24), and "...he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16b).

Biblical faith is **not** mere wishful thinking, wherein one wishes for something so earnestly that 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 mere probability that God exists, Christ is the Son of God, or the Bible is the Word of God; such thinking constitutes agnosticism. Further, Biblical faith is not belief in something (or someone) despite contrary evidence. Rather, *faith* as used in Scripture rests upon credible evidence.

Biblical faith is therefore not distinct from knowledge, as if "faith" begins where empirical "knowledge" ends and then proceeds into an unknowable "twilight zone." *Faith* in relation to salvation and becoming a Christian does not end with mere intellectual acceptance of one or more Biblical doctrines (e.g., the Deity of Jesus [John 8:24]). Rather, such conviction is the **beginning** point of salvation. Jesus said: "He that **believeth and is baptized** shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16a, *emph. DM*).

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 strong words of certainty regarding our faith in God and His Son, though we cannot experience them empirically now. 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 sufficient evidence to warrant our faith.

The source of this evidence regarding the identity of Jesus of Nazareth is the Biblical record, particularly that of the first four books of the New Testament. These unimpeachable inspired witnesses provide "eye-witness" evidence in their records of Jesus' innumerable "...mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him..." (Acts 2:22). Near the close of the book that bears his name, John pinpointed this faith-related purpose for which he wrote:

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written 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).

Though not as specifically stated, Matthew, Mark, and Luke also wrote to the same end.

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