

8 February 2015

Faith – what is faith? (Pt 1 Faith)

Introduction.

* This is a new study on the topic of faith. The word “faith” occurs 247 times in 231 verses and only twice in the Old Testament (OT). The word “faithful” occurs 82 times in 78 verses. The word “faithfully” occurs 8 times, and “faithfulness” occurs 19 times, all of which are in the OT, and “faithless” occurs 4 times and all of those are in NT.

Three points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

1. To have faith is to believe God, and
2. To have faith is to believe what we do not see, and
3. To have faith is to wait in hope for that which we cannot see.

Meanings and or occurrences of key words.

i) From the Greek.

“Faith” also translated hope, assurance, belief, believe and fidelity.

ii) From the Hebrew.

“Faith” is also translated; set office, stability, steady, truly, truth and verily.

iii) Summary meaning from the Greek and Hebrew.

Faith means: to believe, to hope, and have assurance.

Our three points in more detail.

1. In the Scriptures faith is to believe God.

Supporting Verse.

Rom.4: 5 “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Paul is writing to the Gentile church at Rome of which we are members of the same body today. Our preceding verses 2 & 3 say, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God; and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Then verse 4 “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” Next we have our verse (5) where Paul is talking about believing on Christ (who justified the ungodly), his faith (which is his believing) is counted to him for righteousness.

* Verse 6 Paul uses another Patriarch David who described the blessedness of the man, unto “whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (see also verse 8).

* Verse 9 says “faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness,” hence, when when we compare verse 3 to verse 9 we affirm that faith is believing in God, because both faith and belief were counted for righteousness.

Other scriptural support.

Jn 20: 27 and Rom.4: 19 & 20

Scriptural examples.

* Within the context of our verse 5 Paul uses the example of Abraham and David.

Application of verse today.

* Our verse is as much applicable to the first century church as it is to the church today. It is recorded that Rom.5: 1 was the verse that Martin Luther read, following which he departed from the Whore of Babylon, Roman Catholicism (Rev.18: 4). Today, a man is to believe God, he is to believe God’s spokesperson for this age, and His gospel, and then his belief, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. There is **no** works to earn Christ’s righteousness, he can only believe, only have faith in God.

Illustration.

* A friend of my parents become a Presbyterian minister and after I came to the knowledge of the Bible issue, I popped over to see him. I asked him “had God preserved His words as we believe He will for the soul of each believer?” He replied: “God has told me which Bible to use”.

This man appeared to love the Lord, believed he was going to heaven because the Bible says, but chose not to believe that God has preserved His words, or that they are perfect.

Learning from our Illustration.

* Did the Presbyterian minister believe God or not? The Scriptures do not say that we are to believe every word of God before we have sufficient faith to receive Christ's righteousness!

But it would seem logical to a simply mind like me, that if a man believes God, if a man has faith in God, then he believes **all** that He says, whether about His own eternal inheritance or the words of God being preserved.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* How does a person that says they believe God, they are a Christian, choose not to believe God has preserved His words? How does he compartmentalise his faith? How does he choose to believe some of what God says, and put other words in a box or a different compartment and choose to not believe those words?

* Let us show the young and those in the body who choose to believe some of God's words and not others, that believing **all** of God's record enriches our faith, brings great joy and blessing, exhibits belief and obedience to all of God's record (1Jn,5: 10). Let us have faith and show the young that faith is believing God, not just in the words we want to hear, but in **all** of His words.

2. In the Scriptures to have faith is to believe what we do not yet see.

Supporting Verse.

1Pet .1: 7 & 8 "That the trial of your faith...might be found unto...glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing."

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Verse 3 speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ having "begotten us...unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

* Verse 4 continues "To an inheritance incorruptible...reserved in heaven for you." A believer hopes in that which he cannot see, he cannot see his inheritance in heaven, but rather believes it by faith.

* Verse 7 points out that a believers faith will be "tried with fire that it might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

* Verse 8 explains that the believers have not seen Christ, yet they love him and believe him. Hence, for a man to have faith he believes what he does not yet see.

Scriptural examples.

* Heb.11: 9 Abraham was used as an example of faith where he was called by God to go to a land that he knew nothing about, believing that God would give his descendants the land because he had faith in His promises.

Application of verse today.

* Believers today have not seen the Lord, yet they love Him, and believe Him, hence the faith that they exhibit is shown by their belief in Him whom they have not yet seen.

Illustration.

* Have you ever tried to prove to a lot man that your sin is on the Saviour? Have you have ever tried to prove to yourself that your **all** your sins are on Christ at Calvary? You may find some historical evidence that Christ lived, that he was crucified, and that is where the earthly evidence stops.

Learning from our Illustration.

* Your sin being on the Saviour (not washed away by communion wine) is believed by the Christian by faith, by believing what they cannot see. Their belief that Christ Jesus was raised from the dead is also by faith, believing what they cannot see.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* A Christian does not believe in Christ because of signs or man's wisdom (1Cor.1: 22), but because he has faith in the gospel of Christ (1Cor.1: 23), and therefore in the Scriptures. Let us be ever vigilant to not get entangled in signs and wonders, or seeking to prove Christ's resurrection,

but rather let us preach Christ crucified (1Cor. 15: 1-4), that those who believe may do so by faith in God whom they do not yet see.

3. In the Scriptures to have faith is to wait in hope for what we cannot see.

Supporting Verse

Heb.11: 1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Chapter 11 in Hebrews is commonly known as the "faith chapter" with historical recordings of some of the key Old Testament Patriarchs, "the elders" that gives the reader an understanding of what is faith. This is the only verse that says "faith is" and provides a meaning.

Other scriptural support.

* Gal.5: 5 "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith", and Rom.8: 24 "For we are saved by hope."

Scriptural examples.

* Simon was waiting for the "consolation of Isolation" in Lk.2: 25, and the nation of Israel was and still is waiting in hope for their Messiah.

* A believer waits for his long-home (heaven), and the of Lord coming in the clouds.

Application of verse today.

* Given that a believer in the church age is saved by faith only according Eph.2: 8, then this point is applicable to believers today.

Illustration.

* Israel as a nation required a sign before they would believe, but then in the early church we see that signs were given during the period when Paul went to the Jews first, but just as they did not believe the Lord Jesus' signs, neither did they believe those from the hand of Paul and others in the early church. Yet today for those Jews who say they read their Bible and believe in God, they would say that they have faith, as they wait in hope for their Messiah, who they cannot see.

Learning from our Illustration.

* Do those in Israel that say they believe the Hebrew Scriptures and wait for their Messiah have faith? The same could be said for the Muslim, when he says that he has faith as he hopes in spending eternity with one thousand virgins when he dies. Does he have faith?

* Paul answers this question in 1Cor.15: 14 - "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (see also verse 17). Therefore, our faith is to be placed on, our hope is to be in, that which is truth, otherwise our faith is vain.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* There are those in the Scriptures who are recorded as having faith, yet the Lord Jesus was there with them?

* There are those in the Scriptures who are recorded as having faith, yet would not believe the risen Lord was who He said He was, until they could put their hand in his side (Jn.20: 27).

* There are those in the Scriptures who did not see the Lord, did not see his death or Him risen, yet had faith because they were waiting in hope for that which they could not see. Each example is of a man who had faith, they believed God's words given by His spokesperson.

* Do you believe God, do you believe that all of your sin is on Christ, do you hope for that which you cannot see? To do so is to have faith in God, let us encourage each other to have faith, to wait in hope for that which we cannot see.

Summary of our three points.

1. To have faith is to believe God, and
2. To have faith is to believe what we do not see, and
3. To have faith is to wait in hope for that which we cannot see.