

Salvation Series

Lesson #012

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What is Faith?

Forsaking oneself for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion; it is the *sine qua non* of saving faith. (GAJ, 135)

Faith as He [Jesus Christ] characterized it is nothing less than a complete exchange of all that we are for all that He is. (*GAJ*, 135)

The faith God begets includes both the volition and the ability to comply with His will (cf., Philippians 2:13). In other words, faith encompasses obedience. Berkhof sees three elements to genuine faith: an intellectual element (*notitia*), which is the understanding of the truth; an emotional element (*assensus*), which is the conviction and affirmation of truth; and a volitional element (*fiducia*), which is the determination of the will to obey truth.

Modern popular theology tends to recognize *notitia* and often *assensus*, but eliminates *fiducia*. Yet faith is not complete unless it is obedient. (GAJ, 173).

And so the faithful (believing) are also faithful (obedient). “Fidelity, constancy, firmness, confidence, reliance, trust, [and] belief” are all indivisibly wrapped up in the idea of believing. (GAJ, 176)

[Faith] is the *inward conviction* that what God says to us in the gospel is true. That and that alone is saving faith.

This is astoundingly inaccurate. *Assensus* is *not* an “emotional element,” and *fiducia* means trust and *not* a “determination to obey the truth.” (AF, 207, f. 5)

False faith lacks the elements of true repentance and submission to God. Thus, saving faith ought not to be defined in terms of trust alone, but also in terms of commitment to the will of God. In the absence of this kind of submission, they insisted, one could not describe his faith as biblical saving faith. ~MacArthur

Do these basic facts about the Gospel require only a casual, academic, or intellectual acceptance in order for one to be saved? Not if one defines *faith* as the Greek dictionary does: “be convinced of something” or to “give credence to.” Specifically to believe in the Gospel is “to put one’s trust in the Gospel”.

Being convinced of something or putting one's trust in the gospel could hardly be said to be a casual acceptance of something. When a person gives credence to the historical facts that Christ died and rose from the dead and the doctrinal fact that this was for his sins, he is trusting his eternal destiny to the reliability of those truths. (SGS, 30)

Faith means “confidence, trust, holding something as true.”

Certainly, faith must have some content. There must be confidence *about* something or *in* someone.

To believe in Christ for salvation means to have confidence that He can remove the guilt of sin and give eternal life.

It means to believe that He can solve the problem of sin, which is what keeps a person out of Heaven.

Berkhof does not inject or speak to the issue of the mastery of Christ over one's life when discussing these three elements of faith. His third aspect, *fiducia*, concerns the involvement of the human will in personal trust in the Lord for salvation, not commitment of the years of one's life to His mastery (contrary to MacArthur's misrepresentation of Berkhof).

No one is saved simply by believing facts. ... The object of saving faith is not a creed; it is Christ Himself. True faith embraces the person of Christ, not just the data of the gospel.

~MacArthur

Salvation is a gift, but it is appropriated only through a faith that goes beyond merely understanding and assenting to the truth. Demons have that kind of “faith” (James 2:19).

~MacArthur

The Bible knows nothing about an intellectual faith as over against some other kind of faith (like emotional or volitional).

A. Prayer is that grace provision of the royal priesthood whereby the Church Age believer has access and privilege to communicate directly with God; the purpose of this communication is to acknowledge our sin, express adoration and praise to God, give thanks, intercede for others, and convey our personal needs, petitions, and conduct intimate conversations with God.

Matt. 6:5, “And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

Matt. 6:6, “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

Matt. 6:7, “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.”

John 15:7, “Jesus said, ‘If you abide in me [fellowship] and my words abide in you [doctrine] then ask what you will and it will be done unto you.’ ”

**Psa. 66:18, “If I regard wickedness
in my heart, the Lord will not
hear;”**

Prov. 15:29, “The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.”

John 16:23, “And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.”

John 16:24, “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.”

John 14:13, “And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

**John 14:14, “If you ask Me
anything in My name, I will do it.”**