

# DOCTRINE OF FAITH

- I. Introduction and preliminary considerations.
  - A. There are four basic systems of perception by which mankind makes determinations in regard to how it finds and what it accepts as truth.
  - B. These include rationalism, empiricism, intuition, and faith.
  - C. Rationalism is the theory that the exercise of reason, rather than experience, authority, or spiritual revelation, provides the primary basis for knowledge.
    - 1. Since the rationalist believes that human reason and logic are the primary sources of truth, anything that conflicts with that is often rejected.
    - 2. Therefore, they are disposed to reject experience, authority, and Scriptural revelation; they tend to base their theological views upon their own reason and understanding.
    - 3. Those that embrace rationalism generally reject the supernatural; however, when confronted with the supernatural, they may seek to provide what they consider to be something consistent with their rational view.
    - 4. Rationalism has some inherent problems that limit the perception of truth.
      - a. It rejects that which it cannot explain, which involves supernatural activity.
      - b. It often relies on and is limited by one's level of intelligence, which varies from person to person.
      - c. It rejects Divine revelation if it is not consistent with the pre-existent reasoning.
      - d. It fails to take into account the reality that mankind has been contaminated with the sin nature, which precludes absolute objectivity. Jer. 17:9 *"The human mind is more deceitful than anything else. It is incurably bad."* NET
    - 5. One should recognize that God created man with the intellect, understanding, reason, and logic for the purpose of seeking the truth. Gen. 1:26-27, 2:19; Isa. 1:18
  - D. Empiricism is the theory that truth or knowledge is only gained by what one can observe and perceive through the senses.
    - 1. Theologically, this type of person bases their views on their own personal, verifiable experiences; however, they may not accept the experiences of others.
    - 2. The modern scientific method synthesizes rationalism and empiricism; the logic of the rationalist is combined with the observational experience of the empiricist.
    - 3. However, there is a consensus that empiricism is the main emphasis; no matter how much logic and reason is used, at some point the world must be checked for the confirmation of the belief.
    - 4. The problems with this system include:
      - a. The rejection of the experience or findings of others.
      - b. The limitations of a single human experience, which is normally about 70 years, as opposed to 6000+ years of human history and experience.
      - c. Rejecting known facts and revelation when either contradicts personal experience.
    - 5. God does not expect man to disregard his experience in the pursuit of the truth; in some cases, man's experience can be an advantage in accepting the truth. Matt. 24:6; Jn. 20:24-29

- E. Intuition is defined as the act or faculty of knowing or sensing something apart from the use of inference, reasoning, logic, or revelation; it is an immediate insight or impression without discernable proof.
  - 1. This knowledge is instinctive more than anything else; it is insight or apprehension that occurs suddenly for no apparent reason.
  - 2. In that regard, it is differentiated from reason, logic, and speculation.
  - 3. Philosophically, it is the proposition that there are self-evident truths that are known instinctively; these truths form the basis for human knowledge.
  - 4. Problems with this system of perception include:
    - a. The fact that men do not always agree on the exact nature, quality, and quantity of what these “self-evident” truths are.
    - b. The fact that intuition has been demonstrated to be accurate in some cases and completely unreliable in others.
    - c. It is the most subjective of all approaches to determining the truth, since opinions and conclusions are based on some subjective feeling, emotion, or flash of insight.
  - 5. The Bible recognizes that man does possess the power of intuition; he does know some things instinctively about the nature of truth. Rom. 1:19
- F. Faith is the fourth and most basic system of perception, something that is common to all mankind, and the means by which God has chosen to reveal Himself and His plan. Rom. 1:17
  - 1. While we will develop this more fully in the definition and description, faith is simply defined as believing what one is told, without empirical proof. Ex. 4:31; Jn. 2:22
  - 2. The problems with faith as a system of perception are two-fold; the first problem is that of placing one’s trust in the wrong object. IIThess. 2:9
  - 3. The second problem stems from human nature and the fact that people can be gullible and easily fooled into believing what is false. IIPet. 2:3
  - 4. Nevertheless, faith is certainly less subjective than intuition, does not require empirical proof, and does not reject supernatural events or revelation as rationalism does.

## II. Vocabulary.

### A. Hebrew vocabulary.

- 1. אָמַן (‘aman), verb, 106X, the basic meaning is to be firm, trustworthy, or safe.
  - a. In the Niphal stem, it is used of that on which one can rely, that which is trustworthy, sure, etc.
  - b. In the Hiphil stem it means to trust in something or someone, to confide in, to rely on, to believe in.
  - c. The participle is used in all stems to describe that which is sure, trustworthy, or faithful.
  - d. This verbal stem and its cognates demonstrate that the Biblical meaning of faith focuses on that which is certain, sure, reliable, or trustworthy.
- 2. אֱמוּנָה (‘emun), m.adj. 8X, faithfulness, trustworthiness.
- 3. אֱמוּנָה (‘emunah), f.noun, 49X, truthful, stable, loyal, conscientious, faithful.

- B. Greek vocabulary.
1. πιστεύω (pisteuo), verb, 241X, to consider something to be true and worthy of one's trust; to believe in someone or something, to have faith in someone.
  2. πίστις (pistis), f.noun, 243X, faith. This term ranges in meaning from subjective confidence (active faith, believing) to the objective basis for confidence (that which is believed, the object of faith).
  3. πιστός (pistos), m.adjective, 67X, this adjective pertains to that which is worthy of belief, faith, or trust. It is used as a substantive to denote believers.

### III. Definition and description of Biblical faith.

- A. Webster defines faith as "*accepting as true that which is not supported by rational proofs, empirical evidence, intuition, or accepting that which is indemonstrable.*" Heb. 11:3
- B. Similarly, the Bible defines faith as **the assurance or confidence of what is hoped for, the conviction or proof of things that are unseen.** Heb. 11:1
- C. God had to select a means of revealing His truth to man that was completely compatible with the principle of His grace. Rom. 4:16, 5:2
- D. Since it must be compatible with the principle of grace, it had to be a system that did not rely on human merit and/or works. Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9
- E. Faith is the most basic means of perception, it is something that is available to all men from the earliest part of life. Mk. 9:42
- F. Further, it had to be a system that was equally accessible to all normal people, or God would demonstrate Himself to be partial. Deut. 10:17; Rom. 2:11
  1. Rationalism is at least partially limited by the principle of intelligence; therefore, those with superior intellectual abilities would be at an advantage over other members of the human race. ICor. 1:26a
  2. However, the wise men of the world have demonstrated that their superior intellectual skills did not lead them to the truth of God's plan. ICor. 1:21
  3. God did not choose to use the experiential approach to revealing truth since the vast majority of mankind was not present at the First Advent or at any of the major events in the history of God's plan.
  4. Further, empirical proofs are often not accepted, even when they are factual and clearly perceived. Matt. 11:21-24; ICor.1:22
  5. Since intuition is not available to all men at all times in all circumstances, it could not be the means by which God revealed His plan.
- G. The efficacy of faith rests on the fact that the merit is in the object of faith, and not in the one exercising faith, which is a non-meritorious method of thinking.
  1. Jesus Christ is the only legitimate object in whom one can place his Ph<sub>1</sub> faith (saving faith). Jn. 6:29; Acts 4:12
  2. The Word of God is the object of Ph<sub>2</sub> faith, since that is what produces spiritual growth and sanctification. IPet. 2:2
  3. Biblical faith recognizes that the integrity that is inherent in the Word of God is based on the fact that the essence of God, who cannot lie, is the source of Bible doctrine. Tit. 1:2; Ps. 138:2
- H. Biblical faith is not based on mysticism or "blind faith"; it is based on the valid eye-witness testimony of men, which has not been (and will not be) effectively controverted. Lk. 1:2; Acts 26:16; IPet. 1:16; Rev. 1:19

- I. The Bible makes a distinction between active faith (believing) and objective faith, the content that which is believed.
  - 1. Subjective faith refers to the act of believing what one is told. IThess. 1:10
  - 2. Objective faith refers to the content of **the faith**. Tit. 1:3; Jude 1:3
- J. Active Biblical faith may be divided into two parts for the purpose of analysis.
  - 1. Inhale faith, which is actively believing the truth at the time of (or even some time after) its perception. Jn. 2:22; Rom. 10:17; IThess. 2:13
  - 2. Exhale faith is faith that is demonstrated by applying the doctrine that was initially believed to the situations in life. James 2:14-26
- K. Biblical faith may run the gamut from that which is considered **weak**, to that demonstrates **complete assurance**.
  - 1. Those believers that are weak in faith are characterized by a lack of knowledge (ICor. 8:9-11; Rom. 14:1-2) or by a lack of confidence in the doctrine at hand. Matt. 6:30
  - 2. Certain believers have demonstrated strong or great faith in time, and were considered worthy of praise. Matt. 8:5-10; Rom. 4:20
- L. Faith is classified as a basic doctrinal teaching. Heb. 6:1

#### IV. Biblical usages of faith.

- A. Saving faith (Ph<sub>1</sub> faith).
  - 1. The gospel supplies the content necessary for obtaining eternal salvation (Rom. 1:16); it makes very clear that faith in the unique person and work of Jesus Christ is the only means by which one can procure a relationship with God. Jn. 3:15-18; Acts 4:12, 16:31; Rom. 10:9; ITim. 1:16
  - 2. One can exercise saving faith from an early age; once one reaches God consciousness, faith becomes an option. Matt. 18:6
  - 3. Ph<sub>1</sub> faith is accessible to all normal men; there is no barrier based on age, race, national origin, sex, political beliefs, economic condition, cultural norms, or any other variable. Matt. 21:32; Jn. 4:39; Acts 10:34-35; Gal. 3:28
  - 4. No human works are necessary or allowed in Ph<sub>1</sub> salvation; therefore, boasting or pride in achievement is excluded. Rom. 3:20,27, 4:2
  - 5. Synonyms for saving faith include:
    - a. Receive Him. Jn. 1:12
    - b. Believe in Him/His name. Jn. 1:12
    - c. The work of God. Jn. 6:29
    - d. Comes to me. Jn. 6:35,37
    - e. Eats My flesh and drinks My blood. Jn. 6:54
    - f. Enters through Me. Jn. 10:9
    - g. The narrow gate. Matt. 7:13
    - h. Obey. Jn. 3:36
    - i. Does the will of My father. Matt. 7:21
  - 6. Saving faith secures numerous blessings for the Church Age believer, which include:
    - a. Imputation of righteousness; this is also known as Ph<sub>1</sub> justification. Rom. 4:3-6, 5:1
    - b. Imputation of eternal life. Jn. 3:16,36, 5:24, 6:47
    - c. Adoption. Jn. 1:12; Eph. 1:5
    - d. Regeneration of the human spirit. Tit. 3:5
    - e. A spiritual gift. IPet. 4:10
    - f. The indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Eph. 1:13-14
    - g. The guarantee of a resurrection body. ICor. 15:21

7. Saving faith is the basis for our Ph<sub>2</sub> victory over the cosmos, and forms the basis for our eternal confidence. IJn. 5:4; IPet. 2:6
  8. Failure to believe in Jesus Christ constitutes the unpardonable sin, which is also known as blasphemy against the Spirit. Matt. 12:31; Jn. 16:9
  9. The mechanic of salvation (faith in Messiah) is the same in all dispensations, with Abraham serving as the pattern for Old Testament believers. Rom. 4:1-3
- B. Active/subjective faith (Ph<sub>2</sub> faith).
1. Active faith is defined as placing one's trust, faith, or belief in the object of Ph<sub>2</sub> faith, which is the sound doctrine found in God's word. Jn. 8:31; IThess. 2:13; ITim. 4:6
  2. Active faith is constantly required of the believer if he intends to lead a life that is pleasing to God. Heb. 4:2, 10:38
  3. Saving faith is a single act in which one places his trust in Jesus Christ for salvation; it is complete in a single act the moment one believes.
  4. However, Ph<sub>2</sub> faith remains an ongoing challenge, since continued success in God's plan requires one to continue exercising faith in God's word. Lk. 8:13-15
  5. Testing in time provides the opportunities to the believer to demonstrate his understanding of the truth by applying faith to the issues that arise in his niche in the course of the angelic conflict. IPet. 1:6-7
    - a. The phrase **for a little while** draws attention to the relative brevity of suffering in comparison to the eternal potential for the positive believer.
    - b. Peter is not saying that Ph<sub>2</sub> suffering is near the end or of brief temporal duration; he is saying that the present ordeals are insignificant as compared to the blessings of the eternal future. Rom. 8:18; IICor. 4:17
    - c. The first class condition **if necessary**, which is assumed as true, indicates that suffering, testing, and temptation are not optional in the Christian way of life.
    - d. The verb λυπέω (lupeo) is used in an active sense of causing severe emotional or mental distress to another; in a passive sense, it means to experience sorrow, vexation, distress, or grief.
    - e. This deals with the mental and emotional stress that one experiences when he comes under the testing of his faith. IICor. 1:8; IThess. 4:13
    - f. The result clause, which is introduced by ἵνα (hina), asserts that the process of testing will demonstrate the genuine nature of Ph<sub>2</sub> faith as believers apply the doctrine to the test.
    - g. Peter is not questioning the genuine nature of their Ph<sub>1</sub> faith; he is informing them that the quality of their Ph<sub>2</sub> faith will be tested by these trials.
    - h. He indicates that the Ph<sub>2</sub> faith of the believer is viewed by God as something that is exceedingly valuable.
    - i. He includes a parenthetical comparison with the nature and value of **gold, which has been refined by fire**, and the nature and value of an imperishable faith.
    - j. He concludes with a subjunctive verb, which is designed to indicate that success under the testing of one's faith has some great eternal potential, but is not a forgone conclusion.
    - k. The blessings that come to those that succeed under the testing of their faith, which will be initially distributed at the Bema seat, include:
      - 1.) Praise—this will come in the form of verbal commendation for those that remained faithful under the testing of their faith.

- 2.) Glory—this will result in an overt condition in which the adjusted believer will be seen in a glorious condition, sharing the appropriate measure of the glory of God.
  - 3.) Honor—this will likely involve both verbal and overt recognition by God, which manifests His esteem for the believer that kept the faith; for others, there will be some shame. IJn. 2:28
6. Ph<sub>2</sub> faith and works.
- a. One must maintain a distinction between Ph<sub>1</sub> faith and Ph<sub>2</sub> faith, since the former brings justification from God completely apart from human works. Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16
  - b. James goes to some length to make it clear that Ph<sub>2</sub> faith must be characterized by certain works (applications) in order to be considered viable. James 2:14-26
  - c. While one may assert his faith in doctrine, James teaches that faith that does not result in the necessary applications is categorized as **inoperative, useless, or dead**. James 2:17,20,26
  - d. While the believer may pride himself on his acceptance and agreement with the doctrines of Scripture, it is evident that James taught that true faith in doctrine is not characterized by talk (James 2:14-16), but by action and application.
  - e. While John relates the application to the principle of love, he makes the same point that it is application that matters and not talk. IJn. 3:17-19
  - f. God not only evaluates individuals on their exhale faith (applications), He also evaluates churches corporately by the same standard. Rev. 2:2,19, 3:1,8,15
7. All of the men and women recorded in Hebrews 11 became great based on their faith in the doctrine they had learned, which they applied under the pressures of the angelic conflict; they did not concern themselves with self-preservation, but with faith in God's word. Heb. 11:32-39
8. Like hope, Ph<sub>2</sub> faith will not be an issue in Ph<sub>3</sub>. ICor. 13:13
- C. Objective faith, which is defined as the content of what is believed.
1. When used objectively, **faith/the faith** is used to refer to the body of teaching, the sum of the doctrines that comprise **the faith**. Jude 1:3; Acts 6:7; ITim. 4:6
  2. The Word of God supplies the content of the faith (Rom. 10:17), that which we are to believe and to which we are to remain loyal. Jn. 8:31-32
  3. Continued spiritual growth and success are contingent upon continuing to exercise faith toward Bible doctrine. Col. 1:23; ITim. 4:1
  4. The continued intake of **the faith** is the means by which one grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. IIPet. 3:18
  5. The indwelling of Jesus Christ comes about as the positive believer continues to grow in **the faith**, and **the faith** becomes part of him. Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27
  6. As we grow with respect to **the faith**, our faith in the truth will be reinforced, resulting in growth in both objective faith and subjective faith (greater confidence). IICor. 10:15; IIThess. 1:3; Rom. 4:20; IJn. 3:19
  7. However, one must be aware that all the sound teaching available will not benefit those that do not exercise active faith in doctrine. Heb. 4:2

V. Various observations of faith.

- A. Some people place their faith in the wrong object; since the merit lies in the object, faith in the wrong object can be disastrous.

1. Faith in the wrong object for Ph<sub>1</sub> salvation will result in an eternity apart from God. Jn. 3:36, 5:38, 8:24
  2. Failure to believe Bible doctrine will result in Ph<sub>2</sub> catastrophe for many believers, as per the example of the Exodus generation. Heb. 3:7-4:2
  3. Failure to place one's faith in the proper object of sound doctrine in time will result in eternal loss at the Bema seat as well. ICor. 3:12-15
  4. There are numerous examples in the Bible of people that placed their trust in the wrong object.
    - a. Military fortifications. Deut. 28:52
    - b. Close friends, who are treacherous. Ps. 41:9; Micah 7:5-6
    - c. Mankind in general. Ps. 146:3; Jer. 17:5
    - d. Wealth. Ps. 52:7; Prov. 11:28
    - e. Robbery and oppression. Ps. 62:10
    - f. Idols. Ps. 115:4-8
    - g. Religious reversionists. Jer. 7:4; cf. Rom. 16:17-18
    - h. Lies and deceit. Jer. 13:25
    - i. Beauty. Ezek. 16:15
    - j. Fame. Ezek. 16:15
    - k. One's own way of life. Hos. 10:13; Prov. 14:12, 28:26
    - l. Racial heritage. Matt. 3:9
    - m. Self-righteousness. Lk. 18:9
    - n. The lie. IIThess. 2:11
- B. Faith and prayer.
1. Faith is a necessary prerequisite to answered prayer. Matt. 21:22; Mk. 11:24; James 1:6
  2. Correct content, which is based on **the faith** or sound doctrine, coupled with active faith in God to hear and answer your prayers can achieve miraculous results. Matt. 21:21
  3. Believers are exhorted to make the prayer for wisdom a constant feature, and expect the promised results. James 1:5
- C. Faith and love.
1. Faith is designed to be demonstrated in the realm of Biblical love. Gal. 5:6
  2. In fact, Paul makes it clear that the value of great faith is overrated, if it is not exercised within the realm of love. ICor. 13:2
  3. Faith and love are consistently linked together throughout the New Testament. Eph. 1:15, 3:17; Col. 1:4; IThess. 3:6, 5:8; ITim. 1:14, 2:15; IITim. 1:13; Philemon 1:5
  4. Faith and love are qualities that the communicator seeks to maximize in the lives of those he teaches. ITim. 1:5
  5. Faith and love are part of the believer's defensive protection in the angelic conflict. IThess. 5:8
  6. The Law of Love is to take precedence over personal faith in matters that are non-essential to the Christian way of life. Rom. 14:1,15,22

## VI. Faith-rest.

- A. Faith-rest is another term that is used to describe the principle of exhale faith; it deals with faith that is exercised at the point of testing.
- B. The terminology expresses that faith-rest is the active form of non-meritorious thinking, by which the believer simply receives what God has promised in His word.
- C. Further, it involves cessation from labor.

- D. The believer is said to faith-rest a situation when he refuses to rely on his own wisdom, resources, power, energy of the flesh, etc. and chooses to rely on the promises and power of God.
- E. Faith-rest is not unique to the Church Age; it was also the basic system of spirituality in the Old Testament. Hab. 2:4
- F. Failure to faith-rest the tests of life may result in self-induced misery, and may lead to other sins such as fear, worry, revenge tactics, etc. Gen. 26:7; Ex. 15:22-24, 16:1-3, 17:1-3; Num. 14:1-4; Lk. 22:54-62; ICor. 6:1-8
- G. Further, failure to exercise faith in God and His word brings a certain amount of deserved suffering, which includes Divine displeasure and Divine discipline. Ps. 95:6-11

## VII. Conclusions.

- A. God has chosen faith as the system of thinking to access the riches of His plan since it is compatible with grace and equally available to all normal people.
- B. While many criticize faith as being foolish or without merit, Biblical faith is based on credible persons, historical evidence, eye-witness testimony, and the personal experiences that are documented within the Bible.
- C. The righteous shall live by faith; this includes Ph<sub>1</sub> faith for salvation and Ph<sub>2</sub> faith in the Word of God. Heb. 10:38
- D. The Christian way of life is characterized by living according to faith in the principles of doctrine and not strictly by what we observe in the temporal realm. IICor. 5:7
- E. Jesus both praised the presence and exercise of faith, and rebuked it absence during the Incarnation. Matt. 8:10, 15:28; Mk. 4:40; Lk. 24:24
- F. Those that have exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ will not experience eschatological disappointment. Isa. 28:16
- G. The negative volition of the many (refusal to exercise faith) will not affect the positive volition of the few. Rom. 3:3-4
- H. When we walk in fellowship, faith/faithfulness is one part of the fruit of the Spirit; this causes the believer to have greater assurance in his faith. Gal. 5:11
- I. When one exudes faith, as opposed to doubt or unbelief, this encourages others with respect to fighting the good fight. Rom. 1:12; IThess. 3:7
- J. Those that do fight the good fight are said to **keep the faith** (IITim. 4:7), while those that abandon the fight (their faith and the good conscience) are said to **suffer shipwreck in regard to their faith**. ITim. 1:19
- K. Periodically, each believer should examine himself in light of the doctrine that has been taught to make certain that we are sound in the faith. IICor. 13:5
- L. The pressures of the last days will cause many to become spiritual casualties; this was no doubt what Jesus was alluding to in His question about faith. Lk. 18:8

*“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He becomes a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*

*Heb. 11:6*

*“But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in Him.”*

*Heb. 10:38*