

Living by Faith

Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

(John 6:28-29)

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

(1 John 4:16)

Faith is an important issue for Christians.

- We are saved by faith.
- We are commanded to walk in faith.
- We are told that without faith it is impossible to please God.

A. What Is Biblical Faith?

1. It Is Rational, Based on Truth

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

- a. Are those rational thoughts that can be supported by evidence?
 - i. "He is."
 - a. This ontological statement asserts the existence of a being. Evidence may be presented to the mind to support such a claim.
 - b. We have examined the supporting arguments for this claim in other lessons. See *Philosophical Basis for the Existence of God and Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell.
 - ii. "He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."
 - a. This is a statement about the character of God. We can examine the writings of those who have had experiences with God to determine if this fits His character.
 - b. We have examined supporting arguments for this claim elsewhere. See *The Character of God*.
- b. Yet most don't believe in these things.

- i. So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." (John 7:16-17)
 - ii. Romans 1:18-25
 - c. So, faith is rational *and* a choice.
- 2. Faith Is Not a Blind Leap.
 - a. The world has lied about God, and we have believed their lie!
 - i. This is nothing new, the Devil called God a liar in the Garden and Adam and Eve believed him. Was he believable? No!
 - a. God had established His authority to speak truthfully about life and death, and it would be rational to believe Him, and irrational to believe the Devil.
 - b. They believed the Devil because they wanted to follow their selfish ambition in the face of the wisdom of obeying God.
 - b. Having declared that it is irrational to believe in God, or to know any absolute truth with our finite minds, unbelievers have declared that meaning can only be found in an irrational subjective experience. This belief is called "existentialism."
 - c. There was, in the 19th century, an existentialist who applied his ideas to Christianity. Søren Kierkegaard redefined "faith" to be that subjective experience by which we come to "believe" in God, thus introducing the world to the concept of "blind faith."
 - d. This concept of faith is readily accepted by those who believe in Calvinism and the teaching of efficacious grace, the idea that God *causes* sinners to believe and repent rather than showing us His love and leaving us free to respond.
 - i. Ephesians 2:8-9 is an example of a scripture they distort to support their view.
 - ii. They say that faith is the gift of God, rather than grace.
 - e. This turning off of the mind, and surrendering to the emotions, is no more virtuous than surrendering your body to lust, or to alcohol or drugs. This kind of self indulgence, that completely disregards truth, and our minds' ever-present imposition of the requirement for truth to live responsibly, is the kind of thing the Devil hopes for. It is the kind of tool that cults use to manipulate people. Mormonism is one example of this.
- 3. It Is Believing the Truth About God.
 - a. What truth, in particular?
 - i. Believing God's love for you.
 - a. Adam and Eve
 - i. Their Sin
 - ii. Their Covering

- b. Cain and Abel
 - i. offering “the fruit of the ground” versus
 - ii. “the firstlings of his flock.”
- c. Abraham believed God’s love.
- d. Jesus
 - i. We must believe that God so loved us that He sent His only son to die for us.
 - ii. That Jesus so loved us to suffer death on a cross for us.
- e. We must believe that God’s commands are good, and that if we keep them we abide in His love.

B. Walking In Faith

1. Faith in what? The short answer: God’s love.

- a. In the Father
 - i. In His name (character)
 - ii. Jesus shows us the Father’s character. (John 14:9; Colossians 1:15; John 1:18)
 - iii. “I have manifested Your name” (John 17:6); “and I have made Your name known to them” (John 17:26)
- b. In the Son
 - i. “that *everything* Thou hast given me is from Thee.” (John 17:7)
 - ii. “for the *words* which Thou hast given to Me I have given to them; and they *received* them, and *totally understood...*” (John 17:8)
- c. The Holy Spirit testifies about the Son (John 15:26); The Son glorifies the Father by saying what He says and doing what He does. So they are all united testifying of God’s love.

2. Abiding in Him

- a. Abiding in Him means living constantly putting our faith in His love.
- b. If we abide in him, i.e. walk by faith, we will not sin.
- c. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: Read the book of 1 John. Compare with John 17.

C. An Allegory of Faith (from Francis A. Schaeffer)

Take a group of people climbing in the Alps. They’ve been up there for a couple days when suddenly, a fog bank descends upon them. The guide tells the group that there is no hope, the ice is forming all around and by morning, they will all be frozen to death. To keep them warm for the moment, he keeps them moving until nobody has any idea where they are. They come to the edge, and one of the group asks the guide “If I were to hang and drop from this edge, and perhaps twenty or so feet down there is a ledge that I landed upon, if it was below the fog line, would I live?” The guide answers yes, *if* there was a ledge, and *if* it was below the fog bank that, yes, he would

probably survive. So without any reason or data to back up his action, one of the group hangs and drops from the edge. This is one type of faith, a leap of faith.

Now take the same group in the same predicament, climbing in the same Alps, coming to an edge, but instead they hear a voice. "Hello," the voice says, "I am on another ridge. I can tell where you are from your voices. You are in grave danger! If you don't get out of there, you will freeze to death. I was born and raised on these mountains and I know every square foot of them. Right now you are next to the edge. What you can't see is that twenty two feet below you is a ledge that is below the fog bank. You must hang and drop onto the ledge and my sons will get you in the morning.

Now I wouldn't hang and drop immediately, but I would ask this guy questions to see if he really knew these mountains as he said. He might tell me to climb ten paces north and eight paces east where there is a rock his initials on it. So I investigate, and sure enough, there is the rock with his initials, FAS on it. I might ask his name to be sure he wasn't an enemy who just wants to go through my pockets when I fall to my death. Time would be running out, and no response would mean death anyway, but I would ask enough questions until I was satisfied that I could trust him, and I would hang and drop. It is still faith, because I cannot see the ledge, but it is a reasoned, rational faith, with very little in common with the first type of faith.

References on Faith (New American Standard Bible)

Faith Is a Choice

John 7:16-17

So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself."

Romans 1:18-25

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²²Professing to be wise, they became fools,

²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Faith Is Not Blind

Hebrews 11:6

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

Faith in What?

John 1:18

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

John 14:9

Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

John 17:6

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

John 17:26

"and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Acts 3:16

"And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know;"

Colossians 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

John 15:26

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

Faith Is Not Works

Galatians 3:2

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the *works of the Law*, or by *hearing with faith*?

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but *faith working* through love.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 3:27

Where then is boasting? It is excluded By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

Romans 4:4-5

⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Romans 4:16

For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Glossary

faith

faith (fâth) *noun*

1. Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or a thing.
2. Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. See synonyms at belief, trust.
3. Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance: *keeping faith with one's supporters*.
4. Often **Faith** . *Theology*. The theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will.
5. The body of dogma of a religion: *the Muslim faith*.
6. A set of principles or beliefs.

— *idiom*.

in faith

Indeed; truly.

[Middle English, from Anglo-Norman *fed*, from Latin *fidēs*.]

ra-tion-al

ra-tion-al (ràsh¹e-nel) *adjective*

1. Having or exercising the ability to reason.
2. Of sound mind; sane.
3. Consistent with or based on reason; logical: *rational behavior*. See synonyms at logical.
4. *Mathematics*. Capable of being expressed as a quotient of integers.

[Middle English *racional*, from Old French *racional*, from Latin *rationâlis*, from *ratio*, *ration-*, reason. See reason.]

— **ra¹tion-al-ly** *adverb*

— **ra¹tion-al-ness** *noun*

fi-de-ism

fi-de-ism (fê¹dâ-îz-em, fi¹dê-) *noun*

Reliance on faith alone rather than scientific reasoning or philosophy in questions of religion.

[Probably from French *fidéisme*, from Latin *fidēs*, faith. See fidelity.]

— **fi'de-ist** *noun*

— **fi'de-is'tic** *adjective*

ex-is-tial-ism

ex-is-ten-tial-ism (èg'zî-stèn'she-lîz'em, èk'sî-) *noun*

Philosophy.

A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts. As a movement, existentialism began with the nineteenth-century philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, and literary figures such as Fyodor Dostoevsky also contributed to the movement.

Søren Kierkegaard

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (5 May 1813 – 11 November 1855) was a prolific 19th century Danish philosopher and theologian. Kierkegaard strongly criticized both the Hegelianism of his time, and what he saw as the empty formalities of the Danish church. Much of his work deals with religious themes such as faith in God, the institution of the Christian Church, Christian ethics and theology, and the emotions and feelings of individuals when faced with life choices. His early work was written under various pseudonyms who present their own distinctive viewpoints in a complex dialogue. Kierkegaard left the task of discovering the meaning of the works to the reader, because "the task must be made difficult, for only the difficult inspires the noble-hearted".[4] Subsequently, many have interpreted Kierkegaard as an existentialist, neo-orthodoxist, postmodernist, humanist, individualist, etc. Crossing the boundaries of philosophy, theology, psychology, and literature, Kierkegaard came to be regarded as a highly significant and influential figure in contemporary thought.[]