

The Elementary Principles of Christ (3) – Faith

Hebrews 6:1-3

Introduction

1. The foundation of **“faith toward God”** is incredibly important, but especially as we consider the influences of the philosophies of our culture (**cf. Colossians 2:8**).
 2. Paul wrote, **“we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen...For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7)**.
 - a. This flies in the face of the materialist philosophies that influence our time.
 - b. Worldly influences of human wisdom can affect how the Bible is interpreted.
 3. The foundation of **“faith toward God”** must be understood in a holistic way, else we fall into these traps that raise barriers when dealing with more complex passages, but also spiritual battles and circumstances we face in our lives.
 4. However, having the proper foundation of **“faith toward God”** laid, we are equipped to reach a true level of maturity and understanding that is not reduced to something intellectual or superficial, but is substantive, relational, and extremely practical.
- I. What is faith?
- A. Defined
 - a. *Pistis* – “persuasion, i.e. credence” (STRONG)
 - b. “(1) conviction of the truth of anything, belief; (2) fidelity, faithfulness, i.e. the character of one who can be relied on” (THAYER)
 - c. “GL(1) pass. sense, ‘trustworthiness, faithfulness, honesty, credibility’ ...act. sense, ‘trust, faith, confidence [in others]’; (2) in its earliest uses the word group appears in contexts having to do with an agreement or bond. The terms have a social orientation, indicating either honest conduct or the lack of it... it was necessary to make agreements pledging fidelity. Critical situations revealed fidelity or infidelity; (3) In the Hel. period, during the struggle with skepticism and atheism, *pistis* acquired the sense “conviction,” being applied to the existence and activity of the gods. This notion of faith in God was theoretical in character, but stress was laid on the view that life was constituted in accordance with such a conviction. To that extent, therefore, *pistis* could assume the practical features of *eusebeia* G2354, ‘piety’” (NIDNTTE)
 - d. Heb – (**Hebrews 10:38**) **Habakkuk 2:4** – *’emûnâ* – “firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, steadiness” (BDB)
 - i. “firmness, fidelity, steadiness.” (TWOT)
 - B. Demonstrated
 - a. Belief:

- i. **James 2:19; Matthew 8:29** – demonic belief – mental assent, credence, persuasion.
 - 1. Minuscule effort – **Psalm 14:1**
- ii. **Hebrews 11:6** – must believe that He is.
- b. Trust:
 - i. **Hebrews 11:6** – the belief that He rewards diligent seekers is more than simply mental assent.
 - 1. Reading of the rewards of the past given to those who seek Him may lead to persuasion, but it is recorded to provoke trust.
 - 2. **Hebrews 6:13-18** – the OT record exists to evoke trust in its readers.
 - 3. It manifests God's faithfulness, trustworthiness, etc.
 - ii. **1 Peter 2:6 (Isaiah 28:16)** – Heb. – 'âman – figuratively to render (or be) firm or faithful, to trust or believe, STRONG) – trust in the corner stone, which is rightly placed and doesn't lead to shame/disappointment/failure.
- c. Obedience:
 - i. **John 3:36** – belief set in antithesis to disobedience – **"does not believe"** – *apeitheō* – "as refusing to submit to authority" (ALGNT)
 - 1. **"but he who does not obey the Son will not see life" (NASB)**
 - ii. **"we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles" (Romans 1:5, NASB).**
 - iii. **Hebrews 11:8** – Abraham obeyed by faith.
- d. Fidelity (Faithfulness, Loyalty):
 - i. **Revelation 2:10** – faithfulness or loyalty even to the point of dying for the Lord.
 - ii. **Hebrews 10:35-39** – The whole context involves, not simply persuasion, nor just trust, and not even simply obedience, but constancy in all of these.
 - 1. Habakkuk's context is not one of initial persuasion, nor of simply trusting in God's plans. It is not considering an act of obedience, or a series of actions in obedience, but a faithfulness, loyalty, constancy of the prophet in relation to God.

II. Faith Toward God

A. Belief and Trust in God

- a. The persuasion and trust to which faith refers is based in God's word – **Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6** – a description of the function of faith, how it acts.
 - i. **(v. 3)** – persuasion that God is creator through His word.
 - ii. **(v. 6)** – persuasion that God is, and trust that He rewards those who seek Him.
 - iii. Both involve persuasion coming through hearing God's word, and corresponding trust – **Romans 10:17; 15:4**
 - b. John's gospel record leads to faith in the readers – **John 20:30-31** – reading the miraculous accounts persuades and evokes trust.
 - i. Persuasion – **"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"**
 - ii. Trust – **"you may have life in His name"** – *onoma* – "the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is roused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e. for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds, etc." (THAYER)
 - 1. I.e. persuasion that He is the Son of God naturally garners trust based on His nature that is believed to be Divine.
 - c. **John 14:6** – Believing the claim leads to trust in the One who made it based on the nature of the claim itself.
 - i. I believe you are the way, the truth, the life, and the exclusive way to the Father.
 - ii. Because I believe it, I trust in You to bring me to the Father.
- B. Obedient Faith to God
- a. The subjective feeling of trust, and the claim of trust is ultimately meaningless without a display of that trust.
 - i. **1 Peter 2:6-7** – the metaphor demonstrates that trust acts – builders trusting in the cornerstone would lead to them using it in the building project – **"will by no means be put to shame"** is the future evidence that the trust put in action was rightly placed.
 - b. **Romans 1:1-5** – apostolic ministry to preach the gospel, gospel presents Jesus as the Messianic seed of David and the Son of God by the evidence of the resurrection, apostolic preaching to bring about obedience of faith (NASB).
 - i. **(v. 5)** – demonstrates that the faith in Jesus meant to be produced by the gospel presented by the apostles was not simply persuasion or trust, but such that acted in obedience.
 - c. Biblical, saving faith is not one dimensional – **Romans 10**

- i. **(vv. 1-4)** – there is knowledge rejected by the Jews, i.e. they are unpersuaded, concerning righteousness provided by God apart from the Law through Jesus – the gospel shows Jesus as the goal of the law for the provision of righteousness.
- ii. **(vv. 5-8)** – righteousness according to Mosaic law requires doing it (perfectly), but righteousness of faith (through gospel) presents Jesus (His death and resurrection) as the righteousness the law pointed to.
 1. **“word of faith”** – i.e. the word which is meant to produce faith (**cf. Romans 1:1-5**).
 2. **“the word is near you...the word...which we preach”** – i.e. they have heard it, but don’t believe (have faith in) it.
- iii. **(vv. 9-10)** – hearing that **“word of faith which we preach”** is meant to persuade, or produce faith (**“word of faith”**) – confession is the verbalization (most basic level) of that persuasion.
- iv. **(vv. 11-13)** – **Isaiah 28:16** and **Joel 2:32** are quoted in context of faith because faith involves persuasion which evokes trust and is shown through activity – namely, building, and appealing to God on His terms.
- v. **(vv. 14-15)** – the Jews don’t lack faith for lack of hearing.
 1. **(vv. 18, 21)** – the problem was their obstinate heart, and disobedient disposition.
- vi. **(vv. 16-17)** – Their lack of faith is not simply a lack of persuasion and trust, but because of that a lack of obedience. (All were necessary)
- vii. **(vv. 19-20)** – the nation and people that found Him are the Gentiles, and the context implies that such included faith of the nature that was rejected by the Jews – persuasion evoking trust expressed in obedience – calling on His name. (**cf. Acts 2:21, 38; 22:16**)

C. Faithfulness in Relationship to God

- a. **“faith towards God”** can only be understood within the biblical context in reference to a covenant relationship, not merely some intellectual or mental threshold of conviction and trust.
 - i. There is an entry/beginning point – **Galatians 3:26-29**
 - ii. The entry/beginning is that of a relationship involving covenant – **Colossians 2:11-12** (**cf. Genesis 17:14**)

- iii. But, the entry/beginning point cannot be given such weight that it eclipses the faithfulness in the relationship itself – **Hebrews 3:1, 5-6** – a part of the covenantal household of God **“if we hold fast...”** – that’s a reference to **“faith toward God.”**
- b. Paul’s language, and reference to Habakkuk is telling – **Romans 1:16-17**
 - i. **“believes”** – verb, present, active – **cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13** – reference of a beginning, and a continuation.
 - ii. **(v. 17)** – **cf. Habakkuk 2:4** – He was told this as one who already believed God, and even trusted God – He had to be faithful to God in continuation.
 - 1. NOTE: **“faith to faith”** – evidence can be presented that this is **“faithfulness [of God] to faithfulness [of man]”** – i.e. like with Habakkuk, God’s faithfulness demanded, but also evoked faithfulness from the prophet.
- c. Paul’s use of Abraham demonstrates the emphasis of faithfulness/fidelity in relationship with God – **Romans 4:3, 13, 19-22**
 - i. **(v. 3)** – **Genesis 15:6**
 - ii. **(v. 13)** – **Genesis 12:1-3** – **“righteousness of faith”** already there.
 - iii. **(vv. 19-22)** – **Genesis 17:17**
 - iv. The faith he refers to with the **Genesis 15:6** quote is applied at 3 different points – it isn’t mere belief, but a constancy, faithfulness, fidelity to the God of promise.
 - v. **James 2:21-24** – **Genesis 22** – directly connecting **Genesis 15:6** to a specific act of obedient faith far in the future.
- d. The Hebrew writer emphasized the need for enduring faithfulness (**10:32-39**, i.e. not simply belief or trust), gave a host of examples, then concluded with the thought – **Hebrews 11:13, 39-40** – they **“died in faith”** after describing certain moments in time of obedient acts, but such that were continually followed by more – not mere belief, nor trust, not a initial moment, but the series as a whole representing the faithfulness in relationship (**“Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God,” v. 16**).

Conclusion

- 1. **“Faith toward God”** is a foundation which must be laid if we are to grow into the spiritual man God intends for us to be.
- 2. The concept is rich and practical, and cannot be reduced to any one facet, else the foundation will have a crack and be unstable for further progress.