

/ What is faith?

[Introduction]

If you had to sum up the entire bible in one word, what word would you choose?

From a God-to-man perspective, a good word would be 'love'.

But from a man-to-God perspective, a good word would be 'faith'.

Because the Christian life, from start to finish, is a life of faith.

And yet sometimes, we don't live and act as people who have faith.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that faith pleases God. It is impossible to please God without faith.

By all his examples of people who had faith he urges us to have faith ourselves.

'Faith pleases God!' he says, 'so do it; have it!'

But what is faith?

In v1 our writer gives us a definition or a description of faith...

Definition: Faith is being sure and certain (v1-2)

Our definition of faith consists of two parts:

(a) Faith is being sure of what we hope for

Faith is *sure* - it assumes a posture of firm confidence in what it hopes for; it is resolutely and calmly confident in God's promises.

(b) Faith is being certain of what we do not see

We can't see many things; because they are in the spiritual realm, or because they are in the future. But if we have faith we are boldly certain of these things. And this certainty causes us to act; to do things; to live in a certain way.

This faith is not taking a blind leap.

We trust God because He has told us about Himself in the bible; He has revealed Himself to us in Jesus; He has showed He loved us by sending Jesus to die for us; and because what we read in the bible about life and our world matches with our experience of life and the world we see around us.

In v2 the writer tells us that the ancient Jewish heroes were commended for having this kind of faith; God was pleased with their faith. The writer wants his original readers and us to have the kind of faith too.

'By faith' Example [1]: Creation (v3)

The writer starts at the very beginning: at creation. Creation is a splendid example of being certain of what we didn't see. God made the world and the universe out of nothing. How do we know for sure? By faith. God's amazing creation should help us put our faith in an amazing God.

And being sure of the unseen; of creation, affects how we relate to the seen. If we believe in creation we live as valued, dignified created creatures. And we also look forward to the promises *re-creation* of the world.

'By faith' Example [2]: Abel (v4)

Genesis 4 tells us Abel offered God a better sacrifice than his brother Cain. We don't know for sure why this was, and we don't really need to know. What is important is that Abel's faith affected what he did. It gave him a great concern to do the right thing.

True faith, faith as defined in v1 affects our lives. It causes us to want to do the right thing; to want to obey God.

v4 tells us that Abel still speaks today. He does. He asks us: "What does your faith *do*? Does your faith affect your life?"

'By faith' Example [3]: Enoch (v5-6)

Enoch didn't die. God took him straight to heaven. Why? Because he pleased God. How? We see in Genesis 5: He walked with God. That is, he enjoyed a close and harmonious relationship with God. Spiritually, he hung out with God.

Like Abel, Enoch's faith affected his life. It caused him to spend time with God; to walk and talk with God.

His faith changed his living.

That kind of faith, says v6, pleases God. It:

(a) Comes to God (approaches and delights in God)

(b) Believes God exists (is firmly confident He is there)

(c) Believes God rewards those who seek Him (in this life and the next)

What is your faith in God like? Is it strong and firm and confident and certain and sure?

How can we get that type of faith?

Always remember who our faith is *in*. It is in *God*.

God the mighty mega creator.

And God our father. Who loves us tenderly. Who gave us our better, more superior-to-anything Jesus.