

The Standard of Faith

By Al Felder

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

The importance of faith in the life of a Christian cannot be stressed enough. The Bible repeatedly mentions the importance of faith. Without faith we cannot please God according to Hebrews 11:6. The just are to live by faith according to Romans 1:17. As we read in our opening text, we acquire faith through the word of God. That means that the Bible is our standard for faith. For just a little while we would like to discuss this idea a little further.

The Bible depicts the Christian life as a pilgrimage. We are on a journey towards our true home. As is the case with any journey, we must have a guide of some kind to help us make sure that we are on the right path. The Bible, God’s word, is the guide that we have to help us along our way. If we ignore its instruction we will be lost just as any traveler would be lost who ignored all of the signs or instruction that were designed to help him along his way.

That being said, we need to make sure that our faith is valid. We must make sure that our faith can be justified and defended. It is possible for a person to believe in vain.

“¹Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:1, 2) The word vain means that a person has no basis for what he believes.¹

There are several reasons that a person’s faith may be in vain. A person can honestly and sincerely believe something that is false. A person may fool themselves into believing something because they wish it to be true, or believing it may serve some advantage to them. A person may believe something simply because others they know believe it, such as family members. How can we avoid all of these causes for a vain faith, and make sure that ours is valid?

Our faith must be based upon God’s divine word. Look at the context of our opening verse.

“¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord,

¹ Vine, W. E. 1996. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN : Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1996. p. 657.

who hath believed our report? ¹⁷So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:13-17)

God desires that all men be saved. Salvation can be attained by faith, and faith can only come from believing the word of God. When our faith is based upon God’s infallible word, it too is infallible.

Many people mistakenly believe that the important thing is to just believe in something. It doesn’t matter what you believe, just believe. If this were true than the simple act of believing would be sufficient for salvation. As we will see, however, it’s not believing in and of itself that saves; it’s what you believe. For faith to be valid it must be based upon the correct testimony.

If it didn’t matter what you believed so long as you believed something, then there would be no such thing as vain faith. Yet, Paul pointed out to the Corinthians that through their false doctrine they had made their faith vain. *“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” (1Corinthians 15:14)* Some were teaching that there was no resurrection from the dead. If that were the case, Paul points out that Christ could not have risen from the dead. This would mean that they were still in their sins, and there was no hope of salvation.

It does matter what you believe. *“¹¹And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie: ¹²That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12)* Those who believe a lie will be damned. If you want to please God and be saved you must believe the truth. His word is the basis or standard of truth.

Faith must also be placed in the right person. That person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” (John 14:1)* Jesus instructed His listeners to believe in Him as they had believed in the Father. He stated that He is the only way, not one of many. If a person does not believe in Jesus than that person will die in his sins.

In order for a person to truly believe in Jesus, they must also believe the things that He taught. It is difficult to understand how a person can claim to have faith in Jesus as the Son of God while at the same time reject His teachings. Yet, this is a common practice today. *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46)* Jesus Himself pointed out the absurdity of such a practice.

Our faith must be accompanied by the acts of obedience. *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (Romans 2:17)* We must realize that not just any kind of works will do. *“²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out many devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never know you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew*

7:22, 23) There will be many people on the Day of Judgment who will claim to have done all types of works in the name of Jesus. Jesus stated, however, that all they really did were works of iniquity. The word iniquity means without law or divine authority.²

In order for the works I perform to be pleasing unto God they must be authorized. *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”* (Colossians 3:17) The works that we perform in service to Jesus must be based upon His word. If a person does works for which he has no authority, those works will not be accepted by God.

My service to God must be based upon the teaching of His word. *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”* (Hebrews 11:4) Both Cain and Abel made a sacrifice unto God, but only Abel’s was accepted. The reason for this is that Abel’s was by faith. In other words, he had a basis for that which he did. God had told both Cain and Abel what they were to sacrifice. When Abel listened to and obeyed God he was said to have faith.

The only way to have a steadfast and enduring faith is for it to be based upon God’s word.

“¹Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. ²For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. ³For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, as I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all his works. ⁵And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest. ⁶Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: ⁷Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, today, after so long a time; as it is said, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. ⁸For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. ¹⁰For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. ¹¹Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Hebrews 11:1-11)

If my faith is not based upon the teachings of the word of God, then it has no foundation or substance. Such a faith will fail during times of adversity. The Bible warns about the Israelites who did not have faith. Many of the ones who left Egypt never saw the Promised Land because

² —. 1996. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN : Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1996. p. 326.

they did not believe. We should be mindful of their example. The promise is only received after we have done the will of God.

In closing, faith based upon the word of God is a precious thing. *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:7)

Neither gold nor all the precious jewels in the world can save a man’s soul. Nothing is more valuable than faith that comes by hearing and believing the word of God.