

Text: Various Bible Passages

Title: Faith and the Resurrection

Truth: The Christian's faith in the Lord is utterly convinced that Jesus has risen.

Date/Location: March 31, 2024 at FBC

Introduction

If there were no Bible, I venture to say there would be no Christians, no Christianity, no churches, no missions, no Bible colleges or seminaries, likely no United States of America, and no Easter holiday. But the reality is—uncomfortable though it is for some people—we do have a Book that claims to be from Heaven. It records for us specific prophecies over centuries that have specific fulfillments multiply attested by credible sources. One of the events described both long before it happened and as it happened is the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the grave on the first day of the week after Jewish Passover about the year 30 AD.

In large measure because of this lynchpin event—the most important event in all of world history—Christians are people of the Book. The Book, that is, the Bible, is the message from the God of Heaven to people on earth. It is the ancient yet ever-relevant guide to our belief and exercise of religion.

In this Book there is a close connection between the Christian teaching on faith and the Christian teaching on the resurrection. We *believe* that Jesus was raised bodily from among the dead, whence he had gone on the preceding Friday afternoon at the hands of Roman soldiers under the direction of Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. We believe it on good testimony and for good reason. We are justified in believing it, not guessing or hoping it is true.

1 Thess. 4:14—For if we **believe** that Jesus died and **rose again**...

Romans 10:9—If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe** in your heart that **God has raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved.

John 11:25—Jesus said to her, “I am the **resurrection** and the life. **He who believes in Me**, though he may die, he shall live.

1 Peter 1:17—[you Christians] who through Him [Jesus] **believe** in God, **who raised Him from the dead** and gave Him glory.

I. Wrong Views of Faith

- A. Faith is a crutch. Faith is for weak-minded people. God created faith to accommodate to our limitations or we evolved to have it so we can survive a difficult world.
- B. Faith makes something true. If you believe it, it will happen (or has happened). Faith is a religious form of wishful thinking.
- C. Faith covers a lack of knowledge. It spans an otherwise unspannable gap. It is a leap into the dark. It is for dumb and unsophisticated people. People of faith either do not understand science or just want to believe despite the facts.
- D. Faith is entirely subjective. It is a feeling of certainty in matters of religion, whether its object is provable or not. Some have faith “in faith.”
- E. All these descriptions miss the mark of faith as defined in God’s book.

II. Defining Faith the Christian Way, Part 1

- A. On the simplest level, we need to understand that faith is synonymous with the ideas of trust, belief, confidence, conviction, dependence. It is closely related to *expectation*. It gives certainty.
- B. Then we must know that *faith* in Scripture is primarily thought of as in a *Person*, not first in things or facts. Our faith does hold to *truths*, but faith is grounded in the reality that the truths come from a dependable Person in Whom our faith rests, namely God. Since God is trustworthy, we can believe the things He tells us. Following are a couple of negative examples, and then several positive ones, all showing that faith is *in* God.

John 16:9—[The Spirit of God will convict the world] “of sin, because they **do not believe in Me.**”

Psalm 78:21-22—Therefore the LORD heard *this* and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, **22because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.**

John 10:37-38—“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and **believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.**” (similarly John 14:10-12).

John 17:20—“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will **believe in Me** through their word.”

John 14:1—“Let not your heart be troubled; you **believe in God, believe also in Me.**”

Genesis 15:6—“And **he believed in the LORD**, and He [God] accounted it to him [Abram] for righteousness.”

John 3:16—“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes in Him** should not perish but have everlasting life.”

C. This notion of “personal faith” – that is faith of one person in another person—is very consistent with our life experience. We have a certain level of trust in people based on our connection to them, their credentials, their experience, our shared experiences, etc. We believe what many doctors say based on their superior knowledge. We trust our spouses because we know them well. We trust our parents have our best interest at heart because they have a lot of life experience.

When you cannot trust in these relationships, bad things happen, and probably those bad things that will happen are precipitated by bad things that have already happened. Our broken world makes for tough relationships that lack deep trust.

D. But Christians trust God deeply. They can do so because He keeps His promises; His knowledge is superior; His experience is more expansive; His power is complete; His wisdom is beyond measure; His justice is ultimately unimpeachable; His conduct is pure.

III. Defining Christian Faith, Part 2—Hebrews 11:1-3, 6

A. Faith is confidence of a future hoped-for thing, Hebrews 11:1a

1. Other words: assurance or being sure. Our assurance or confidence is a gift from God.
2. A distinction: Faith is not the thing itself that is out in the future.
3. A caveat: Faith does not make that thing real. Faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed. The idea of substance or reality indicates that the thing hoped for is not a shadowy, unreal thing, but in fact is real. It exists, or it will come or will happen.
4. In Christianity, final salvation is future. There are a lot of aspects of salvation that Christians have right now. But some we do not possess: sin has not yet been banished from our existence; our health has not yet been made perfect; we are not in heaven with Christ; the world is still in a mess; etc. But believers are absolutely sure that those blessings are coming.

We could illustrate our certainty this way: we are just as sure of Christ's resurrection as you are sure that you are sitting here in your chair listening to this sermon.

B. Faith is certainty about things unseen, Hebrews 11:1b

1. Other words: conviction or being convinced, persuaded. Faith testifies as a witness to the existence and reality of those things that are not seen. Again, faith adds nothing to the reality of or truth of the thing. Rather, it is certainty about something that is real.
2. Faith is to the Christian life what eyes are to physical life. Eyes see visible things and give you certainty about them. Faith sees invisible things and gives you certainty about them too. We sometimes say that "seeing is believing." In actuality, seeing is believing things that can be seen. Faith is the mechanism we have that believes things that cannot be seen or can only be seen indirectly.

Indeed, it is possible for our eyes to trick us. And it is possible for our belief/trust mechanism to fail us as well, to give a “false positive.” This requires us to rub our eyes and look more closely...or to assess our faith and see if what we believe is actually believable.

3. A caveat: The Bible is not talking about “faith in general” here. The chair illustration will help me explain what I mean.
 1. Sometimes we illustrate faith as the trust that you have in a piece of furniture upon which you are sitting. You had faith that the chair you are now sitting on would be sturdy enough to hold you up. Then you sat down, and lo and behold it did hold you up! Such faith leads to knowledge or certainty. But such faith is in something that is *seen*.
 2. We are talking about faith in things *unseen*! The difference with faith as the Bible defines it is that it does not have to do with our view of temporal things. It has to do with our confidence and assurance about things we have not seen. You can inspect the chair, quickly look it over for cracks, and so forth. But here we are talking about another level, and that level moves us to something that cannot directly be inspected with physical senses. That is why I can say that faith is the mechanism by which we “see” the unseen. Despite being unseen, this faith, like sight, is the basis for *knowledge* and *certainty*.
4. This passage is about faith that saves; Christian faith; faith in the true and living God and in His son Jesus Christ; faith that believes in what is written in the Bible. These are not physical objects like chairs. Jesus Himself, the concept of universal sin and need of salvation, Hell, and spiritual benefits all are unseen intangibles. But that does not mean they are unreal. They are very real. Of course, you can “see” the effects of sin. Do you “see” the application of the gospel of Christ to yourself?
5. Jesus pronounced a special blessing in John 20:29 on those who believe without seeing Him. We are talking about things that eye has not seen nor ears have heard, but that God has revealed (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

C. Faith was the way of life of Old Testament believers, Hebrews 11:2

The elders are the Jewish people who lived in years gone by, from around 4000 B.C. to 400 B.C.

1. They were saved by faith, just like we can be. Gen 15:6.
2. They were well spoken of or commended for their faith. They lived out faith in God. The idea is that they had a good reputation, and others (mainly God) spoke well of them because of this quality of faith.
3. Examples of faith in Hebrews 11. All the people listed had the kind of faith about which we are learning. From Abel and Enoch and Noah to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, to Moses, the Israelites (on a few occasions!), Joshau, and to Rahab. Abel's faith demonstrated that he was righteous. Noah's faith obeyed God. Enoch's faith pleased God. And so forth through the chapter.
4. They were approved by God for believing in Him. You can receive the same kind of approval—by faith.

D. Faith is a ground of knowledge concerning how God created the world, Hebrews 11:3

1. Faith not only looks forward in time. It also looks backward, all the way back to the beginning of time.
2. It was then that God created the heavens and the earth. The books of Genesis and Exodus make it clear: in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). He completed the task in six days (Exodus 20:11). The major method of creation was divine speech (Genesis 1:3, 1:6).
 1. Christians should be fully convinced that it is the case.
 2. Evolutionists also believe something. But it is something so far-fetched that it is unbelievable.
3. The things we see were not made from what was visible. In fact, it was made from what was not visible because it did not exist. God spoke and something came out of nothing. To use the Latin phrase for this idea, creation was *ex nihilo*.

4. Creation is actual history. And it is God's word. So, when we believe it, we are believing God and His word.

E. Faith is always necessary to please God, Hebrews 11:6.

1. Faith believes in the existence of the Christian God, the Triune, personal being we know as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

He *is* indicates His existence (Exodus 3:14).

He *rewards* indicates He judges and gives reward or retribution based on that judgment. Thus, He is a personal being with moral capacity, not an impersonal force or energy.

2. Faith is something that diligently seeks God. It is not passive.

3. Faith is not an over-and-done-with thing at the beginning of your Christian life. Without *faith all the time* it is impossible to please God. Faith motivating and supporting our works is necessary for those works to please God. Remember, whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

Conclusion

We come back then to the resurrection of Jesus. Christians believe—with utter certainty and conviction—that Jesus died and then on the third day rose again from the dead. This is not a guess or wishful thinking. It did truly happen. All the propaganda in the world cannot change that fact, yet that is what non-Christian people have been trying to do for centuries. Your mind is its own built-in propagandist, attempting to get around the truth about Jesus. But the implications of His resurrection are enormous.

If you are not a Christian, the event of the resurrection calls for serious examination. If Jesus arose from the dead, it would seem to me from your perspective that there is a *much* higher likelihood that the Bible is true; that what Jesus taught is true; that what Christians have been saying for centuries is true; that Heaven is real; that Hell is dreadfully real; that all of us will face Jesus as judge; and all that is true despite some hang-ups or un-answered questions that you might have.

You might have the feeling, “I wish I could have faith like that person does. It seems easy for him.” Where does that faith come from? It comes from God. Sincerely ask God to help you understand, to help turn your unbelief to belief, to become convinced, to open your eyes and mind, to heal you from the deadly wound of iniquity and guilt. I believe in God that He will answer that prayer.

For those of us who already believe the resurrection of Jesus happened, our trust rests on the One who was dead, and behold, is alive forevermore. He has the keys of Hades and of Death (Rev. 1:18) and will never let His people be captives in those terrible places. He sprung Himself out of death, and He will share that blessing with all His people. His resurrection means our resurrection. His glory means our glory. His life means our life. His freedom from sin means our freedom from sin.

Christian faith is belief that is well-justified based on God’s word revealed in the Bible. It yields conviction or certainty about the things disclosed by God, because it is trust *in Him*. Out of it arises a vibrant relationship between you and God that is purifying, that drives good, that creates love for God and others, that induces respect and reverence for God.

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