

Faith

In the book of Hebrews we have the definition of faith: “Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for...things not yet seen, for by it the elders obtained a witness.” (Heb 11.1,2). Faith is not believeism, it’s not mental; it’s a spiritual *substance* that we may say stands in the place of things before they become manifest things. AND, as well it witnesses in our heart a Yes and an Amen, so that we know that the things we ask for are indeed THERE but not yet HERE, but on the way.

A problem arises sometimes for Christians and a weight is often put on them by a misunderstanding of scripture and of what is required of them. The scripture says: “For without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11.6). He that comes to God must believe... So ‘believers’ work up a sweat “to believe” 1)that God is, and 2) that He is a rewarder. Preachers have said “Just believe!” accompanied by incantations like “God said it, I believe it, that settles it!” – said over and over and over till ‘faith’ presumably rises up and then I can please God and He will hear me and grant my petition. But this is a case of getting the cart before the horse. Believing does not make faith; “the devils believe and tremble” (James 2.19), but faith makes believing. The scripture is saying: the necessary pre-condition to believing that God is, and He’s a rewarder is to HAVE faith. Then, if you have faith you won’t have any problem in believing. Faith enables believing. The fruit of faith is belief – not the other way round. Let us remember that in all acts of faith God is the initiator. Therefore faith must precede belief.

Well, one may say: Is faith generated by me or where does it come from? The scripture answers this precisely: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Roms 10.17). The first thing to notice is that faith comes. Faith for a particular thing or promise comes. And if it comes that means you didn’t have it before it came. So where did it come from? It comes from hearing and that means receiving and understanding. In turn the receiving and

understanding come from the word of God. God's word is not like man's word. Man's word can have many interpretations. God's word is sent as a complete meaning package with God safeguarding His word by causing the receiver of the revealed word to receive the Word + its meaning complete. This disallows any private interpretation. (See 2Peter1. 20,21).

We may sum up by saying, first comes the Word. The Word enables hearing. From hearing comes faith. From faith comes a belief and witness in the spirit (the Yes and the Amen) that we please God. From knowing that God hears us and that we please Him comes the thing desired in God's perfect time. (See 1John 5.15). God is the initiator and finisher of all acts of faith and He guards over His word to perform it. (See Heb 12.2a).

God wants us to come to Him, and like a father wants to reward us out of His great heart for coming to Him. Therefore, He gives us the enablement to do so. That enablement is faith.

John Joseph Curtin- June 2022