

Other Faith Foundations

Differences between natural and Biblical faith

These days, many people confuse natural faith with God-inspired Biblical faith. Natural faith is expressed when we trust that the chair we are sitting on will not collapse. We base this natural faith on our experiences over many years of seeing well-made chairs not collapse. If we have had a bad experience once when a chair we were sitting on collapsed, we might doubt other chairs will hold us up. Other examples of natural faith are when we believe the aeroplane we are flying in will get us from one city to another destination and the roof of the house we are living in will not collapse on top of us. More examples are when the television set will have pictures on it when we switch it on and the food we have bought has not got poison in it.

Our natural faith in these examples is based on a combination of the *experiences* of our *eyes, ears and other physical senses*, the *reasonings* of our *own mind* and what other people have taught us from *their physical sense experiences* and *their reasonings*. Such faith is not evil, but it is purely a natural thing. It is not Biblical faith because it is not based upon a revelation of God's will found in His written Word or through the guidance of His Holy Spirit. There is a difference between considering the probability of a thing and faith in the Person of God. Faith in God is not just a mathematical or reasoned probability.

Natural faith is a gift of God, but is limited in that it is based upon the reasonings of our and other people's minds and physical sense experiences. Natural faith is of little use in the realm of praying for salvation or for anything else. In fact, it often tries to oppose an expression of Biblical faith, when our human reason and common sense, formed on the basis of our experiences in life, tell us that what God reveals He wants us to trust Him for is impossible. Refer to Chapters 10 and 12 of my book, "HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S VOICE" for many details and examples of this.

One, but not the only, reason why many Christians confuse natural faith with Holy Spirit-inspired Biblical faith is the false idea every human is given a certain amount of Biblical faith when they are born. This teaching suggests even unbelievers are given a measure of Biblical faith by God. The main Scripture which is used supposedly to prove this false teaching is Romans 12:3: "***For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.***" When we look at the words, "***God has dealt to each one a MEASURE OF FAITH***" in context with verses 3-5, we see what these words are really saying. In the first part of verse 3, we see a hint of those to whom the Apostle Paul was directing his words. Paul says, "***to everyone who is among you***". These words are not referring to the whole human race, unbelievers included. But as verses 4 and 5 of the same chapter show, Paul was here referring to the body of Christ – born-again sons and daughters of God.

Romans 12:1 proves that verse 3 is only talking about born-again Christians, because the Apostle Paul directs his comments which follow in the rest of this section to a particular group. Romans 12:1 begins with: "***I beseech you therefore, brethren...***" Paul did not make it a habit to call unbelievers by the words "***brethren***" or "***brothers***". (The only exceptions to this are recorded in Acts 13:26, 13:38, 22:1, 23:1, 23:5-6 and 28:17. In these instances, Paul

addressed non-Christian religious male Jews with the word “*brothers*”. But his usage of this word in these instances related to Paul’s common ancestry with other Jews – his brothers in race. As revealed by Paul’s words recorded in Romans 2:17-29, 10:1-3, Acts 28:25-29 and other parts of the New Testament, he did not regard non-Christian Jews as being brothers in Christ though).

Likewise, Paul at the beginning of the Book of Romans explained to whom his comments in the rest of the Book were directed. He said in Romans 1:7: “*To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints...*” Paul did not ever include unbelievers in his definition of a saint of God.

Another verse which proves not all humans have Biblical faith within them – the ability to trust God for salvation, guidance or anything else – is 2 Thessalonians 3:2: “*And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.*” Nowhere in the Scriptures does it say God has given all people a measure of faith. Only born-again Christians have this gift. This divinely imparted ability to believe in God the Father is given to us the moment we are converted.

The faith

The expression “*the faith*” is used in Acts 6:7, Colossians 2:7, 1 Timothy 4:1, 6:10 and Jude 3. The expression “*the faith*” refers to the total of Christian doctrines found in the Bible, especially the New Testament.

Many wrongly use the expression “*the faith*” only in relation to Biblical truths that do not necessarily have any practical relevance to their daily lives. But as we see in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 6:10, the expression “*the faith*” is linked as well to practical living. For example, 1 Timothy 6:10 states: “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*”

The Bible is a book of *practical* doctrine. It is not a book of truths that have no practical relationship to daily living. This is why the claims of many nominal Christians to believe in the faith is a hypocritical sham.

The spiritual gift of faith

1 Corinthians 12:9 speaks of the spiritual gift of faith: “*To another faith by the same Spirit...*” This is a special supernatural impartation of faith for certain God-ordained miraculous workings in our lives. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says such manifestations of miracle-working faith are “*for the common good*” which means for the benefit of others. These manifestations cannot be “worked up” by human effort, but are given to whomever and whenever the Holy Spirit determines as 1 Corinthians 12:11 shows: “*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*” Any Christian can receive this special spiritual gift of faith at *any time*. An example of this occurred in 1 Kings 18:1-46 when God gave Elijah a Word and faith that it would rain after three years of famine.

Bible Study Questions

1. Describe natural faith.
2. Describe God-inspired faith.
3. Does every human have God-inspired Biblical faith within their hearts?
4. What does the expression "*the faith*" mean in Acts 6:7, Colossians 2:7, 1 Timothy 4:1, 6:10 and Jude 3?