

Simple Faith, not Blind Faith

Christianity is a reasonable faith. That doesn't mean it's moderate. It means we are able to reason it out. The usual reaction to such a statement is that what we believe is either born of faith, or it is derived from reason, but it cannot be both. Well, that's not entirely accurate. Faith, to be faith, must have an objective foundation. We must have a reasonable basis for our faith. There must be something in which to believe, something in which to trust, and something in response to which we *act*. Faith, to be faith, *cannot* be blind faith. That's what distinguishes the faith of Christianity from superstition, vain imaginations, and worldly philosophies.¹ It finds its conviction in historic events like the Exodus, Miracles, and the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. God didn't simply say to Abraham or to Israel, "I am God. Trust me." He *demonstrated* his Godhood.

I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. Ex 6:7

Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." John 10:37-38

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 1Cor 15:3-5

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 1Cor 15:13-14

And yet our reason does not supersede or underlie our faith. We are not reasoned or persuaded into the kingdom by our intellect and physical evidences. Faith isn't a scientific or logical conclusion arrived at with irrefutable proofs. Even so, Christianity has its proofs and its eye-witness testimony; but these are believed because of something outside of ourselves: *revelation*. God reveals himself to us through his Spirit, and then he graciously draws us to himself, giving us the very faith by which we are saved.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. Eph 2:8-9 NIV

What happened on the cross is foolishness to our natural mind. It makes no sense that another person can be held accountable for our offenses, or that we should receive his righteousness as if it were our own. It makes no sense that God should become a man, or that such a man should rise from the dead. It simply boggles the mind.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." 1 Cor 1:18-19

Nonetheless, our faith is not blind or irrational. The "Faith Chapters" in Romans 4 and Hebrews 11 speak of believing without yet having the tangible evidences necessary to justify our belief. Abraham did not know exactly how God would make provision to keep his promise that nations would grow from his seed if Isaac were sacrificed. He didn't know if Isaac would be raised from the dead, or if God would redeem

¹ Isa 2:6; Rom 1:21; 2Cor 10:5; Col 2:8

Isaac, as in fact he did. He only knew that God did not lie, and that God had the power and the intent to do what he had promised (Rom 4:20-21). How did he know these things? Did he discover them on his own? Did he perform experiments and rationally conclude them? No. God called him and revealed himself to Abraham. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” (Rom 9:15) “I will call those who were not my people, my people.” (Rom 9:25-26). “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” (Rom 10:20)

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Heb 11:1

Noah built the ark without seeing the rain clouds. Sarah considered God faithful though she was well beyond child-bearing age, and so she was given the power to conceive. All who died before having the object of their faith in their sight, and before knowing of the Christ, still died with saving faith, because they were looking forward to the time when God would make some kind of provision for them, some unknown means of fulfilling his promise to them. And so they were not able to have faith in the actual provision, but only in the one who would make that provision. Our faith is in God, who is the source and the cause of our salvation. Our faith is not found in the *means* which he has provided. When we place our faith in Christ, we place it in God’s promise that through Christ, we are forgiven and cleansed, having everything needed to be pleasing in the Father’s sight on the Day of Judgment.

We have not seen Christ, and yet we believe and rejoice (1Pet 1:8). Thomas demanded to see Christ for himself, and to put his fingers into his wounds, or else he would not believe that Jesus was resurrected from the grave. Yet this was not held against him. Rather it was a testimony to the faith of those who would not see and yet would believe (Jn 20:29). The object of our faith is not the sight of what has been promised, but the promise itself. Nonetheless, as I said, this is not a bare promise any more than it is blind faith. No promise has value except that the one making the promise is trustworthy and able to fulfill his promise completely under his own power, without contingency or dependency. And that brings us back to the fact that we must have faith in **God** if we are to have faith in either his promises or his provisions. And faith in God is *given* to us. Why is that so? Because “None has seen the Father, except the one who is from God.” Jn 6:46

Here is where we find the treasure and wonder of Christ as God incarnate. John 14:9 “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” He is the physical manifestation of God who cannot be seen. We may look upon the face of Christ even when we cannot look upon the face of the Father. Moses was told, “No one may see my face and live.” Ex 33:20. But God also said to Moses that there was a place where he could be seen. And so God placed Moses in the cleft of the rock, that Moses might look upon the back of God after he had passed before him in all his glory. Ex 33:21-23 Jesus Christ is the Cleft of the Rock. In him, and from his vantage point, we may catch a glimpse of the majesty of God. Our faith *has* an object, even though we cannot see Christ any more than we can see God. Our faith is not in the visage of Christ, but in the fulfillment of his promises – the establishment of the new Covenant in his Blood, which is a historical event, a *fait accompli* for which there is ample evidence and eye-witness testimony.

Please, don’t confuse our hope of salvation with the faith that attains it for us. Hope – that is, our firm expectation of something yet unseen – is actually the *product* or *outworking* of our faith. Faith must precede hope just as any promise must precede its fulfillment; hope is what fills the gap between the promise and its fulfillment. Rom 8:24-25, “But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

Our faith is therefore a simple faith in God who makes the Promise, and in Jesus Christ who has fulfilled that Promise. It is not a blind faith. Though *once* we were blind – *now* we see.