

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- BELIEVE – ACTS 16:31
- REPENT – ACTS 17:30; LUKE 13:3
- CONFESS – ROMANS 10:10; I TIMOTHY 6:12
- BE BAPTIZED – ACTS 2:38; MARK 16:16
- BE FAITHFUL – REVELATION 2:10

PRAYER LIST

North Ridgeville church of Christ
36364 Chestnut Ridge Road
North Ridgeville, OH 44039

Website: nrcoc.net

Times for Meeting

Lord's Day

9:30 AM Bible Study (all ages)
10:30 AM Worship

Wednesday

7:00 PM Bible Study (all ages)

Elders

Bruce Dean
Mark Ullman

Evangelist

Steven Wallace

THE NORTH RIDGEVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.” James 1:22

April 17, 2022

“Faith. What Is It?”

Steven J. Wallace

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).¹

The subject of faith frequently finds itself in the discussions that take place in religious and non-religious circles alike. Like many Biblical words, there can be various definitions associated with it. The book of Hebrews gives us a definition of faith.

Let's observe that faith is not “blind.” It is not a *feeling* or a *desire*. It is not a belief that is based on a naked wish. It is not, “I believe this is because *I want it to be so.*”

Rather, faith is the *substance* of things hoped for. The word translated “substance” means a *setting* or *placing under*, like a substructure. It is a source of confidence. It has been described as a *title deed* that establishes assurance in the reality of something. We can believe in the reality of a piece of property based on its deed. Faith is a title deed of the things we hope for because God has deeded these things to us by way of promise.

Faith is the *evidence* of things not seen. This evidence is not based on material things which collide with the senses. The Hebrew writer

speaks of the nature of things *not seen*. The New American Standard interprets this as, "...the conviction of things not seen." What gives us *conviction* of unseen things? Such blessed assurance and conviction come from what God has spoken. "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

In the background of Hebrews, the original recipients were in danger of turning away from Christ and losing their reward. They needed endurance, and they needed to reclaim with confidence the things they had hoped for in faith (Heb. 10:35-39). Hebrews 11 addresses the faith that saves as being the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

By such *faith*, the elders obtained a *good testimony* (Heb. 11:2). The *elders* are those Old Testament heroes who lived by faith. He gives a rich sample of such (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, etc.). These men and women were those who *believed to the saving of the soul* (cf. 10:38). Abel obtained a *witness* that he was righteous (11:4). Enoch had the *testimony* that *he pleased God* (11:5). Yet without faith, it is impossible to please Him (11:6). This is not having faith in *self* or in *others*, but having faith that serves as a title deed of God's promised possession for the faithful. It expresses itself in the simple sentiment: "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it."

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Heb. 11:3). We accept by faith that God created the universe from nothing and spoke it into existence (Psa. 33:9). God said, "Let there be," and "it was so" (Gen. 1:3-31). This doesn't mean blind faith, but rather faith in all that God is and has proven Himself to be. The experience of *faith* is closely and critically connected with *knowledge* for *by faith we understand*. God gives us knowledge of things to believe. For example, I can believe confidently that if I die, I can be resurrected. This is not based on a personal wish or desire, but because Jesus promised and proved it historically by rising from the dead (Jn. 5:28, 29; Matt. 28:5-7). My faith is in something unseen that has a substructure and title deed in what Jesus personally did!

We behold invisible realities by knowledge. Seeing is not believing; believing is seeing! Noah was warned of things "not seen" but he moved with godly fear in preparing an ark (Heb. 11:7). Although he likely had never seen rain, that didn't stop him from building an ark. God's warning was proof, and he moved with assurance of a flood.

Abraham went out toward his inheritance not knowing where he was going (Heb. 11:8). Sarah received the ability to conceive although she never experienced such before (11:11). Physically it looked impossible, yet she judged Him faithful who had promised. Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead. Not because he had seen a resurrection, but because he received Isaac from the deadness of Sarah's womb. That served as Abraham's *title deed* of faith regarding the hard command to offer up Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19).

Joseph made mention of the departure for the children of Israel and gave instructions about his own body. He never lived to "see" this but he believed in it based on God's word (Gen. 15:13-16; 50:24, 25). Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh and chose to suffer with the people of God. He forfeited the treasures of Egypt for Christ's greater riches. How? *By seeing the invisible* (Heb. 11:24-27).

Faith is not based on nor defined by the physical sight of things. It is built on seeing the invisible God. Peter wrote to some who did not see Christ but nevertheless believed in Him (1 Pet. 1:8).

In all, Bible faith is active and moves to obey. The status of faith barren of works is dead (Jas. 2:26). Demons *believe* (mentally accept the reality of God) and yet tremble (Jas. 2:19). They are not saved. Some believed in Jesus but were unwilling to *confess* Him because of the fear of the Pharisees (Jn. 12:42). They allowed the things seen to stomp out any assurance and conviction.

If the Bible mentioned you, how would it read? "By faith [insert name] obeyed when he/she was called to go out" (see Heb. 11:7). Or would it read more like John 12:42, "[insert name] believed in Him, but because of the []? [] he/she did not confess him"?