

Believe in God; Believe Also in Me

John 14:1

The apostles of our Lord had just been informed that the Lord Jesus Christ was about to do something that he alone could do. This was confusing to them at best, and could have brought them great distress. He now tells them what to do in every situation, both good and bad.

First, the Lord told them to have faith. They should avoid troubled hearts by trusting in God. "Believe in God; believe also in me." But what does this mean? What is faith and is faith an end in itself? Or, is there an object of faith?

There are several words that may be used to describe biblical faith. We are told to believe. We are told to have faith in the Lord. We are told to depend on the Lord. We are told to put our confidence in the Lord.

The writer of Hebrews likens faith to rest. He reminds us that the Lord God created the heavens and earth in six days but then rested on the seventh day.

In the same way, we must understand that true faith, biblical faith, is not a work that we do. It is the opposite of working to secure our place before God. This is why the apostle Paul says that salvation is a matter of grace through faith. Grace is not what we do for God, but what the Lord must do for us. Grace is the Father planning salvation, the Son securing it by his death on the cross, and the Holy Spirit applying that saving work of the Son to our hearts. Faith is the posture of dependence on our part. It means that we see what God has done, and we rest in that work of his. We are confident that his work will suffice to save us.

The analogy of rest then means that, as God came to the seventh day, and did nothing at all on that day, so we must do nothing to try and save ourselves. We must trust the Lord to do all for us. And that is what we discover that he has done. If we try to add to his finished work some effort of our own, we destroy the quality of faith. Faith is not what we do; faith is trusting in what God has done for us. It is especially true that faith is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ who alone could have atoned for sinners. It is that truth which comes to the fore in the passage which follows this verse.

Secondly, it should now be clear that the Lord was not calling on them to have a mere cognitive "faith" or "belief" in the existence of God. This faith was to be like the trust that Israel was called to in Old Testament times. They were to have a child like sense of dependence on their Creator, and they were to have the same attitude toward his Son. Faith must have its proper object.

And, we are instructed to continue to trust in the Lord through all the vicissitudes of life. We have put our confidence in the Lord to save us, and now we must continue to trust him to lead, guide, and protect us in every situation.

I once knew a woman who had many problems, and was sinking into despair. She had recently been through eye surgery and had no husband to help her. She had

the responsibility of trying to raise her children, and she was having money problems. The only place she could afford to rent was not very nice, and was vermin infested.

The woman told me that she guessed that she just did not have enough "faith." I was curious to know what she meant by "faith." She told me that she just could not seem to work up a positive attitude about things. I could easily see why.

For her, faith was having the strength of will to believe that things will turn out alright. Faith, for her, was like the teaching of "positive thinkers" such as Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller. Their heirs are plentiful today in the health and wealth "gospel" movement. If you just have a positive attitude you will be able to conquer any foe! This is not what the Bible means by faith!

When the Lord Jesus Christ calls us to believe, he means believing with God as the object of our faith. Faith is not an end in itself but has for its object the Lord himself.

by Joe Nesom