

## Pondering Biblical Faith

By Betty Harstad

*“To present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven whereof I Paul am made a minister.”*

(Colossians 1:22b-23 KJV)

It is a good practice to look up word meanings from Scripture in a couple different dictionaries. Few words are deemed as important in Scripture as the word “Faith.” There are various aspects to the meaning of faith according to different dictionaries. We often hear the phrase “people of faith” in which it appears that a sincere belief in anyone or anything is enough to bind people together to work for a common good.

The first meaning for faith in Webster's New World Dictionary is:

*1. An unquestioning belief.*

The first definition in the 1828 Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language is similar but with more thought:

*1. The assent of the mind to the truth of what is declared by another, resting on his authority and veracity, without other evidence; the judgment that what another states or testifies is the truth. I have strong faith or no faith in the testimony of a witness, or in what a historian narrates.*

This simple explanation of faith often appears to be enough for the world to trust and follow a leader, raise money for charity, vote for the most convincing candidate, or have faith that a new political system will solve social problems in a clever way. Placing this unquestioning faith in man is unwise; how much more so is practicing this sort of faith where our soul and eternal life are concerned! What is the Biblical meaning of faith? First, let's look at the 1828 Webster's Dictionary entry for Biblical faith:

*4. Evangelical, justifying, or saving faith, is the assent of the mind to the truth of divine revelation, on the authority of God's testimony, accompanied with a cordial assent of the will or approbation of the heart; an entire confidence or trust in God's character and declarations, and in the character and doctrines of Christ, with an unreserved surrender of the will to his guidance, and dependence on his merits for salvation. In other words, that firm belief of God's testimony, and of the truth of the gospel, which influences the will, and leads to an entire reliance on Christ for salvation.*

*Being justified by faith. Romans 5.*

*Without faith it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11.*

*For we walk by faith and not by sight. II Corinthians 5.*

*With the heart man believeth to righteousness. Romans 10.*

*The faith of the gospel is that emotion of the mind, which is called trust or confidence, exercised towards the moral character of God, and particularly of the Savior.*

This meaty explanation of Biblical faith indicates that God has ways to reveal Himself to us so that we may have a sure faith in Him – even though we cannot comprehend the things that are too high for us to understand. Enough evidence is around us: "*The heavens declare the glory of God...For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they [mankind] are without excuse*" (Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:20 KJV). As Paul stated in Colossians 1:22b-23, Biblical faith needs to be grounded and settled. On this side of the Cross, we have the infallible proofs of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Also, unlike the Old Testament people who did not have the completed Bible, Christians today have the whole Bible and can discover for themselves the many prophecies that have already been fulfilled. Yet even Adam and Eve lived long enough to pass down what God revealed to them about the beginnings of both earth and mankind and even glimpses of the coming Messiah.

The men and women of faith listed in Hebrews Chapter 11 could not see the end from the beginning, yet each fulfilled a purpose laid out for them by God. They had already chosen to believe God through the evidence that could be gleaned in the heavens, in His Word, and by their own conscience. They were made confident that they could and should bend to His will as a part of God's purpose and plan of eternal salvation, much of which was yet incomprehensible to them. Just as for many of us, the daily lives of most probably seemed rather ordinary with work and family. However, they were sometimes clouded by sorrows that tested their faith. For others the word they received by faith was "wait" ...for a wife, a child, or for war to cease. They learned to wait in faith and in prayer even while busy with daily duties, as only God knew the right and perfect timing for each step of the way.

We who believe and trust God desire to know Him through His inspired Word. The better we know Him the more we desire to respond to His will in complete faith rather than go our own way. "*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV).