

What Is Faith and How Does Faith Act?

Probably no passage shows the active nature of true faith than Hebrews 11. The usage of believing conjoined with obedience is particularly emphasized.

- a. "By faith Abel offered..." vs. 4. Therefore, offering is an action of faith.
- b. "By faith Noah...prepared an ark." vs. 7. Therefore, preparing was an action of faith.
- c. "By faith Abraham, when he was called...obeyed." vs. 8. Therefore, obeying was an action of faith.
- d. "By faith Moses...refused, choose, esteemed," vss. 24-26. Therefore, refusing, choosing, and esteeming were actions of faith.

What the lexicographers say in reference to faith meaning obedience:

- a. "(belief) as to obey. The fact that 'to believe' is 'to obey,' as in the OT..., is particularly emphasized in Hebrews 11. Here the pistuein (to believe) of the OT characters has in some instances the more or less explicit sense of obedience." TDNT, Vol. 6, p. 205 (This is the best of language dictionaries.)
- b. "pivsti\$ (faith) is understood here as acceptance of the Christian kerygma (message). It is thus the saving faith which recognizes and appropriates God's saving work in Christ. Here, too, of course, pisti\$ (faith) contains the element of believing. Obedience, trust, hope and faithfulness are also implied." TDNT, Vol. 6, p. 208
- c. "For him, too, pistiv\$ (faith) is no mere disposition of the human soul. Primarily, it is acceptance of the kerygma, i.e., subjection to the way of salvation ordained by God and opened up in Christ. TDNT, Vol. 6, p. 217
- d. "Faith is uJpakovh (obedience) as well as oJmologiva (confession) TDNT, Vol. 6, p 217.

Another word is "persuade." peiqw means to persuade, and is sometimes translated "believe." It means also "to obey" among other ideas. The negative is to disbelieve,

disobey, as in John 3:36. "He that believeth (pisteuvw) on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not (ajpeivqw) the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

a. Nearly all versions later than the KJV translate this second word "obey not" or "disobeys," or an equivalent.

b. ASV "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

c. NASV "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey

It is impossible to get "faith only" out of the meaning of faith in the New Testament. We need to tell people that they need to believe in believing. But they also need to believe in obeying. (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:9; Rev. 22:10)