

Faith as found in the book of hebrews religion essay



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In view of the term faith as found in the book of Hebrews, one must begin at its source, to lay some initial groundwork or foundation to be able to rightly build upon it a structure through Hebrews. It is found in the Old Testament book of Habakkuk, specifically chapter 2 and verse 4b, “ The just shall live by his faith”. This specific text in the Old Testament plays a larger role in the doctrinal discussions of the New Testament in a variety of passages. Though its modern interpretation reflects the method by which its teachings may be entirely fulfilled in everyday living, it is not lost in what historical value the verse holds. Roughly four hundred and fifty years ago, that verse ignited a fire in one Martin Luther that started the Protestant Reformation. In his interpretation of it, he did not read it, “ The just by faith shall live,” the man who is made just by his faith, but the one who is just, having been so made by God himself, shall live, endure, through his belief and faith in God. Belief and faith in the church, in popes and decrees, is ineffectual, does not make for endurance, for salvation, for eternal life. Luther’s tremendous emphasis upon the main teaching of this text made it a kind of battle-cry of freedom among the German reformers.[1]According to Luther himself,

“ Before those words broke upon my mind I hated God and was angry with him because, not content with frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further increased our torture by the gospel. But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood those words - ‘ The just shall live by faith!’ ‘ The just shall live by faith!’ - then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God.”[2]

Entire New Testament books are a testament to the scope of this foundational passage. From Romans that defines the just, to Ephesians that

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defines the aspect of life; it is Hebrews that ends the passage with telling how to take hold of it in definition and display. Specifically, Hebrews details what faith is and as well as its object, the expectations of faith, and the examples Christians should follow.

What Is Faith?

There are groups of theologians and scholars where faith is not being talked about enough, and there are groups where too much is being said, for the most part because what is being said is not biblical. It is not sound. When faith is discussed, the catalyst cannot be on man's faith. The greater emphasis should be placed upon the faithfulness of God. It is not man's ability to rise to a spiritual level, but the character of God that is being dealt with when discussing faith. His character is the primary focus, and the activity or response of man is going to depend upon what is known about the character of God and that man's own inability. However, " in recent years some scholars have proposed that faith in Hebrews does

not have Jesus as its object." [3] In order to answer some of these scholars, the question that must be answered first is what is faith? What it is not is a leap in the dark, a random belief in some great unknown entity, or the ever present leap of faith, which in contemporary theological thought, few concepts have had more influence. » [4] There is not any credulity of thought being towards some great unknown beyond comprehension and understanding at all. Faith in the biblical sense does not depart much from the secular definition. Man can have faith in any number of things or objects. However, regarding it biblically, many regard it as simple-mindedness and as an expression of an uncritical spirit inappropriate to men and women coming <https://assignbuster.com/faith-as-found-in-the-book-of-hebrews-religion-essay/>

of age. By contrast, the Scriptures seem to regard faith as a stepping forward, not into darkness but into the light which God has given.[5]The word itself, faith, or even better, faithfulness, is the Greek word *pistis*[6], which has a meaning of “ a firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing.”[7]

The two ways in which it is used in the New Testament is impartially and personally. Being the focus of this text is within the book of Hebrews, the former of the two will not be discussed. The simple definition of this question, what is faith, is found in Hebrews 11: 1, which states, “...faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” To better help in understanding the bare facts of this, in order to expound upon this important verse, one must be able to grasp initially some kind of understanding to better comprehend its message. To illustrate in helping one with this matter, a person at one point in time places an order from a store. Later, that same store calls the person back to say that the order is ready for pickup. The person accepts by faith the word of the store clerk that the order is ready. Picking up the order by driving to the store’s location is the act of faith. It is not a passing emotional state. There is a substance to it that comes by hearing. It is an essential grace provided and preserved by God. As such, in returning to an earlier statement, due to the author and sustainer of faith, it is He in which that faith is based upon. The proof comes “ from the relationship of faith to the word of God. In 6: 11-20 the idea of Jesus being the object of faith is depicted in terms of the word of God.”[8]In this trusting of God, the substance is how God was realized or grounded in the person of Jesus Christ. It differentiated the belief in some abstract existence from an

actual existence. Again, it is in this difference where the division came be distinguished between “ blind faith” and true saving faith. Looking to the Author of faith as an example, it is in His faithfulness to save fully and completely that exemplifies man’s confidence, as his own severely lacks in all aspects. Looking at Hebrews 3: 2-6 as an example of this, Moses compared to Christ delineates little over much more, which lends itself to the call of “ holding fast in verses 6 and 14 in the same chapter. Back to Hebrews 11: 1, pistis is the tangible realization of the Person being believed. Its background is found in Hebrews 2: 8, with the triumph of Christ as the “ hoped for and not yet seen” reality of faith.[9]