

THE NATURE OF TRUE FAITH

These 5 concepts (faith, fear, worship, service, and obedience) are closely related and often interrelated. And these 5 concepts are consistently reflective of what makes something/someone a person's god/God. If the God of the Bible as revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is truly our God, then it is expected that the concepts of faith, fear, worship, service, obedience, and following Him will be manifest in our lives to some degree.

Obviously if something is someone's God/god they will believe in it whether it is true or not. With this as the foundation, we note that a saving faith in the God of the Bible is defined by or closely associated to the following characteristics.

FEAR = To reverence.

"Now I know that you fear God..." (Gen. 22:12; cf. Heb. 11:17). "That all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You" (1 Kg. 8:43). "I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites...But you have not obeyed" (Judg. 6:10). "They had feared other gods..." (2 Kgs. 17:7; cf. 35, 37, 38; and Rom. 1:25). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7. cf. v. 29; 9:10; Ps.111:10). "I fear the LORD, the God of heaven" (Jon. 1:9, 16).

"And I will come near you for judgment...because they do not fear Me" (Mal. 3:5). "Those who feared the LORD...a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name" (Mal. 3:16). "But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2). "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:35). "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18).

To fear God is to reverence Him for Who He is. This is involved in saving faith. In the Bible, the word fear is often used as a synonym for faith (see Gen. 42:18; Job 1:1; Prov. 31:30; Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 10:28; Lk. 23 40; Acts 10:22; cf. Gen. 22:12 with Heb. 11:6, 17).

WORSHIP: Reverential respect/regard that is paid to worth.

"They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it...and said, 'This is your god...'" (Ex. 32:8). "You shall worship no other god..." (Ex. 34:14). "Because they have forsaken Me, burned incense to other gods,

and worshiped the works of their own hands” (Jer. 1:16). “Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven” (Acts 7:42). “Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). “So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast” (Rev. 13:4).

“You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him” (Deut. 6:13). “Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’” (Matt. 14:33). “True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:23-24). (Note: This passage in John 4 is a salvific/evangelistic context. cf. Mt. 15:9). “Then he said, ‘Lord, I believe! And he worshiped Him.’” (John 9:38). “And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.” (1 Cor. 14:25). “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3; cf. Rom. 2:29). “Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy.” (Rev. 15:4).

Worship is worth and allegiance attributed to a perceived higher power. Saving faith is the first acceptable act of worship before God that anyone ever does (John 4:23-24; Heb. 11:6).

SERVICE: The fruit of devotion.

NOTE: Biblically, service is closely related to worship.

“For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods” (Deut. 7:4). “...saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’ which you have not known – ‘and let us serve them” (Deut. 13:2, cf. vv. 6, 13). “Your fathers... served other gods” (Josh. 24:2). “And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.” (Judg. 3:6). “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mt. 6:24). “Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Rom. 1:25).

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15, 18). “Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.” (Mal. 3:18). “For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” (Lk. 4:8). “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” (Jn. 12:26).

“Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.” (John 15:20).

“For if I still pleased men, If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). “Turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). “The revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave Him to show His slaves what must quickly take place” (Rev. 1:1). “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His slaves will serve Him” (Rev. 22:3).

“These words are faithful and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His slaves what must quickly take place.” (Rev. 22:6).

NOTE: Worship and service are often linked together giving the idea that where you find one you will find the other. The concept is one of expressed DEVOTION to God (cf. Matt. 4:9-10; Acts 7:42-43; Rom. 1:25; Ex. 20:5; Dan. 3:28). We aren't saved by worship (other than the response of saving faith) or service, however they are the fruit of saving faith that properly recognizes God for Who He is.

OBEDIENCE OR FOLLOWING: These concepts are closely related.

“And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice...’” (Ex. 5:2). “And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them.” (Judg. 2:19). “And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kg. 18:21).

“And the Lord said, ‘Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts and after the Baals’” (Jer. 9:13-14). “They have walked after other gods...” (Jer. 16:11). “Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie” (Rom. 1:25). The false prophet “causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast” (Rev. 13:12, cf. 16 and 2 Thess. 2:4).

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:23). “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’

and not do the things which I say?" (Lk. 6:46). "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk. 8:21).

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life" (Jn. 3:36). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (Jn. 10:27). "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:32). "And a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

"Obedience to the faith" (Rom. 1:5, cf. 15:18, 16:19, 26). "But they have not all obeyed the gospel" (Rom. 10:16; cf. Isa. 53:1). "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people" (Rom. 10:21). "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (Rom. 11:4). "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work" (Titus 1:16). He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9).

"By faith Abraham obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). (Note: In the entire "Hall of Faith" chapter of Hebrew 11, faith as illustrated, always has corresponding obedience or fruit.) "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 Jn. 2:3). "Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him" (1 Jn. 2:29; cf. 1 Jn. 3:10). God's people "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (Rev. 14:12). "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14). "For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book" (Rev. 22:9).

All of these aspects (fear, worship, service, and obedience) related to God are either involved in saving faith or are the fruit of saving faith. The BIG QUESTION is this: Who or what is your God? We receive Christ as our personal Lord/God and Savior by faith ALONE but that involves a fundamental change of heart that then works itself out in the life.

The true God has spoken, and His people obey! The concept is not one of perfection but rather one of direction (cf. Rom. 7:14-15).

Salvation is not based on the obedience of human works but rather on the obedience of faith only.

However, the expectation is that the obedience of faith will invariably produce the fruit of obedience to some degree in the life of every born-again believer. Every believer will follow the Lord with some degree of obedience. Obedience begins with saving faith. In the process of maturity, one may experience periods of carnality or spiritual setbacks, but through it all, He Who began a good work in the believer will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:6; cf. Heb. 12:7-11).

“Only he who believes is obedient; only he who is obedient believes.” –
Dietrich Bonhoeffer