

# Knowing by Faith

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# What is faith?

- Is faith a feeling, an emotion, a guess, an opinion, a blind leap, a wager, a fantasy, a visualization, a wish, a decision, a commitment, a value, a tradition?
- Is faith the opposite of knowledge?
- Real faith is knowledge of reality!



# Faith: substantial proof of unseen realities

- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1 KJV)
- Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. (Hebrews 11:1 HCSB)
- Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see. (Hebrews 11:1 CEV)

# What is true faith?

True faith is not only a **sure knowledge** by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture; it is also a **wholehearted trust**, which the Holy Spirit creates in me by the gospel, that God has freely granted, not only to others but to me also, forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace, granted solely by Christ's merit. (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 21)



# God-given knowledge

You will **understand** the fear of the LORD and find the **knowledge** of God. For the LORD gives **wisdom**, and from his mouth come **knowledge** and **understanding**. (Proverbs 2:5-6)

To you it has been given to **know** the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. (Matthew 13:11)

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him **known**. (John 1:18)

# Jesus: making God known

This is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent... O righteous Father, even though the world does not **know** you, I **know** you, and these **know** that you have sent me. I made **known** to them your name, and I will continue to make it **known**, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:3,25-26)



# Peter: knowledge of God

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the **knowledge** of him who called us to his own glory and excellence... But grow in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2-3, 3:18)

# Paul: faith and knowledge

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the **faith** of God's elect and the **knowledge** of the **truth** that leads to godliness--a **faith** and **knowledge** resting on the hope of eternal life, which **God, who does not lie**, promised before the beginning of time (Titus 1:1)

I **know** whom I have **believed**. (2 Tim 1:12)



## John: We know!

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life... We **know** that anyone born of God does not continue to sin... We **know** that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We **know** also that the Son of God has come and has given us **understanding**, so that we may **know** him who is **true**. And we are in him who is **true**—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the **true** God and eternal life. (1 John 5:13, 18-21)

# Knowing by faith

*Faith overlaps with other ways of knowing.*

- **Givens:** starting point and standard
- **Credulity:** accepting testimony
- **Faculties:** abilities working properly
- **Relating:** personal interaction



# Starting point and standard

- All knowing starts with accepting some things as givens. These presuppositions or first principles require no proof, are basic for knowing other things, and are a standard for evaluating other ideas.
- Givens or first principles include: the world is real, my senses are experiencing real things, my mind can know truths, other persons are real and not just illusions, memories really happened, some things are right and others wrong.

## **Prior commitment**

“We take the side of [atheistic] science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs ... because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation... but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes ... no matter how counterintuitive. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.” (Richard Lewinton of Harvard)





Does your mind  
have ability to know  
things outside it?



Is the world real and  
does it have features  
that are knowable.

# Thought is an act of faith

It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a skeptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, “Why should *anything* go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic?” They are both movements in the brain of a bewildered ape. (G. K. Chesterton)



# By faith we understand

- **By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God**, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (Hebrews 11:2)
- In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. (John 1:1-14)
- Jesus is the eternal *Logos*, the logic of the world and the light of human intellect.

# Reckon on Reality

Imagination projects unreal images out of the mind and seeks to attach reality to them. Faith creates nothing; it simply reckons upon that which is already there. God and the spiritual world are real. We can reckon upon them with as much assurance as we reckon upon the familiar world around us. Spiritual things are there (or rather we should say here) inviting our attention and challenging our trust. (A. W. Tozer)



# Starting point and standard

- It is rational to presuppose some things as givens, without proof. We can't avoid first principles; we just need sound ones.
- Starting with right presuppositions gives us a firm foundation for other knowledge and a measuring stick to evaluate various claims.
- God's revelation in his written Word, the Bible, and in his living Word, Jesus, can be accepted by faith as first principles to ground our worldview and to provide a standard for deciding what else is true.

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# Accepting what we're told

- Most of what we know comes through believing what we were told.
- Our knowledge of math, science, and history comes mostly from accepting what we're told by books and teachers.
- Our knowledge of parenting, gardening, cooking, business, and much else comes mostly from accepting what we're told.
- Our knowledge in court cases often come from testimony.

# Accepting testimony

- We know much about God by accepting testimony of Christians we know.
- The Bible gives human authors' eyewitness testimony to God and his actions in Christ.
- We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater. (1 John 5:9)
- When the outer testimony of Scripture produces belief in the Son of God, we have the inner testimony of God's Spirit. Faith accepts God's outer and inner testimony.



## **Faith accepts testimony**

We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. (1 John 5:9-10)

# **By faith in God's testimony, you know you have eternal life**

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13)



# Knowing by faith

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- **Givens:** starting point and standard
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- **Faculties:** abilities working properly

# Faculties working properly

- We have knowledge when our faculties are working properly in a suitable setting for which those faculties were designed to produce true beliefs.
- What if faith is what happens when our God-sense (our faculty designed to produce knowledge of God) is made healthy and is in a setting where God is showing something of himself for us to know?
- In that case, faith is knowledge!



# **Senses: organs receiving signals**

- You see only if you have eyes that work and light from an object reaches you.
- You hear only if you have ears that work and something sends sound waves.
- You taste only if your taste buds are working and something is in your mouth.
- You smell only if your nose is working and molecules from something are in the air.
- You feel touch only if your skin and nerves are working and something touches you.

# Heart organs receiving signals

- **Taste** and **see** that the Lord is good. (Ps 34:8)
- My sheep **hear** my voice. (John 10:27)
- How sweet are your words to my **taste**, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Ps 119:103)
- For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the **fragrance** of life. (2 Cor 2:15-16)
- “Were not our hearts **burning** within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32)



# Inner experience

*Heart organs sense and know things by experience, not just hearing descriptions.*

- You know red by seeing it.
- You know music by hearing it.
- You know a scent by smelling it.
- You know honey by tasting it.
- You know God's burning reality by feeling his flame within.

# **Know despite world's unbelief**

- By faith we see reality, even if others lack a renewed eye or God's light. Our sight is knowledge, even if unbelievers don't see it.
- We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. (1 John 5:19)
- The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:4)



# Faith sees and knows

- For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

# Eyes of Your Heart

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may **know** him better. I pray also that the **eyes of your heart** may be enlightened in order that you may **know** the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17-19)



# Seeing the unseen

**By faith our heart-eyes see what eyeballs can't see: God and his promised rewards.**

Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Moses considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward... he endured as seeing him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:26-27)

## **Faculties working properly**

Faith is the action of the reborn God-sense that takes in God's self-revelation. The Spirit creates faith by reviving the God-sense and speaking gospel truth in such a manner that you accept the facts, know those facts are meant for you personally, and delight in God and in the great things of the gospel.



## **Faith versus numbness**

Faith enables our spiritual sense to function. Where faith is defective the result will be inward insensibility and numbness toward spiritual things... Our trouble is that we have established bad thought habits. We habitually think of the visible world as real and doubt the reality of any other. Sin has so clouded the lenses of our hearts that we cannot see that other reality, the City of God, shining around us. (A. W. Tozer)

# God-consciousness

The soul has eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear. Feeble they may be from long disuse, but by the life-giving touch of Christ they are now alive and capable of sharpest sight and most sensitive hearing. As we begin to focus upon God, the things of the spirit will take shape before our inner eyes. A new God-consciousness will seize upon us and we shall begin to taste and see and inwardly feel God, who is our life and our all. (A. W. Tozer)



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# Personal interaction

- We know other persons by interaction.
- We know the personal God by interaction, by awareness of another Self making Himself known to us and drawing us to know Him.
- We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. (1 John 5:20)



## **The Spirit within**

This is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us... We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (1 John 3:24; 4:13-16)

# Knowing by faith

Faith includes, combines, and surpasses:

- **Givens:** starting point and standard
- **Credulity:** accepting testimony
- **Faculties:** abilities working properly
- **Relating:** personal interaction

By faith we take God's written and living Word as our starting point and standard for truth, accept his testimony, perceive his glory with our inner heart, and embrace God's interaction with us.



# Faith is knowledge

Faith is not to be *contrasted* with knowledge: faith *is* knowledge, knowledge of a certain special kind. It is special in at least two ways. First, [what is known] is of stunning significance, certainly the most important thing a person could possibly know. [Second] it is known by way of an extraordinary cognitive process or belief-producing mechanism. Christian belief is “revealed to our minds” by way of the Holy Spirit’s inducing, in us, belief in the central message of Scripture. (Alvin Plantinga)

# Firm and certain knowledge

- Faith is a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit. (John Calvin)
- Faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God. (A. W. Tozer)