

Faith as the Doorway to God's Promises: A Biblical and Theological Study

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Abstract- This paper advances the thesis that faith functions as the divinely instituted gateway through which the promises of God are accessed, interpreted, and embodied within Christian life. Building on Hebrews 11:8–10 as its primary exegetical locus, the study contributes new analytical perspectives by integrating covenant theology, promise-fulfillment dynamics, and contemporary faith praxis. Beyond descriptive theology, the paper argues constructively that faith operates simultaneously as epistemic trust, covenant loyalty, and eschatological orientation. Methodologically, the study employs biblical exegesis, historical-theological dialogue, and constructive synthesis, making an original contribution by framing faith as a participatory doorway rather than merely a juridical or cognitive category.

Keywords: Faith, Promise, Hebrews 11, Covenant, Justification, Eschatology, Abraham

I. INTRODUCTION

Faith has remained one of the most enduring and contested categories within Christian theology. While universally affirmed as central to salvation and discipleship, its precise nature and function continue to invite theological clarification. This paper argues that faith is best understood as the divinely appointed *doorway* through which God's promises are both received and lived out. Using Hebrews 11:8–10 as a hermeneutical anchor, the study situates faith within the broader biblical narrative of promise, pilgrimage, and fulfillment.

Historically, early Jewish Christians often interpreted faith in continuity with Torah observance, viewing Christianity as an extension rather than a fulfillment of Judaism. Apostolic teaching—particularly Pauline theology challenged this synthesis by asserting justification by faith apart from works of the law (Rom 3:28). This tension provides an essential backdrop for

the Epistle to the Hebrews, which presents faith as the sole and sufficient means of access to God.

This conference paper makes a constructive contribution by moving beyond faith as mere belief or legal status, proposing instead that faith functions dynamically as covenant participation oriented toward God's promised future. In doing so, the study bridges biblical theology, systematic reflection, and contemporary faith practice.

II. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS OF FAITH

Faith has been approached from philosophical, theological, and experiential perspectives. Classical theology, represented by Thomas Aquinas, defined faith as intellectual assent to divine truth grounded in God's authority. Modern philosophy, exemplified by Immanuel Kant, emphasized rational faith oriented toward moral purpose, while William James interpreted faith pragmatically as action taken amid uncertainty. Karl Barth decisively reframed faith as radical trust grounded exclusively in God's self-revelation rather than human reason.

This paper contributes to these discussions by proposing a *tri-dimensional* understanding of faith: (1) epistemic trust grounded in revelation, (2) covenantal allegiance expressed in obedience, and (3) eschatological anticipation oriented toward divine fulfillment. Hebrews 11:1 supports this synthesis by defining faith as both assurance (*hypostasis*) and conviction, grounding future hope in present commitment. Faith, therefore, is neither blind nor passive; it is an active participation in God's redemptive agenda.

III. FAITH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, faith is primarily relational and covenantal rather than abstract or speculative. Abraham exemplifies this reality: “Abraham believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6). His faith was marked by trust in God’s promises despite delay, uncertainty, and human impossibility (Rom 4:18–21).

Although the noun “faith” appears infrequently in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut 32:20; Hab 2:4), its conceptual field is extensive. Hebrew terms such as *’emunah* (faithfulness), *’emet* (firmness or truth), and *’aman* (to trust or believe) emphasize loyalty, reliability, and covenant commitment. Faith in the Old Testament thus involves: (1) assent to God’s revealed truth, (2) personal trust in God, and (3) obedient commitment to God’s covenant.

IV. FAITH IN ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

Roman Catholic theology defines faith as the assent of the intellect to divinely revealed truth on the authority of God. This includes belief in the historical truthfulness of Scripture and the supernatural origin of Christian doctrine. Catholic theology distinguishes between explicit and implicit faith, maintaining that while believers may not consciously know every revealed truth, they implicitly assent to all that God has revealed.

Contemporary Catholic thought, as articulated by Pope Francis, emphasizes faith as an encounter with the living God that engages the whole person—mind, will, and emotions. Faith is thus not a leap into irrationality but a reasoned trust grounded in divine revelation. Hebrews 11:6 is often cited as expressing the minimum content of saving faith: belief in God’s existence and trust in God as a rewarder of those who seek him.

V. FAITH IN PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

Classical Protestant theology understands faith as the human response to God’s gracious self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. The object of faith is not primarily

doctrinal propositions but the personal reality of God in Christ. Martin Luther described faith as a “living, daring confidence in God’s grace,” emphasizing its active and transformative character.

The Reformation doctrine of *sola fide* (faith alone) affirms that justification is a legal declaration of righteousness received through faith apart from works of the law (Rom 3:28; Eph 2:8–9). While Protestant theology affirms that good works necessarily flow from genuine faith, it rejects works as the basis of justification. Faith, therefore, is not opposed to reason or ethics but grounds both in a relationship with God.

VI. FAITH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The Epistle to the Hebrews offers one of the most sustained theological reflections on faith in the New Testament. Written to a persecuted Christian community tempted to revert to Judaism, the letter presents faith as the only legitimate pathway to God. Drawing heavily on Old Testament imagery, particularly Levitical priesthood and sacrificial theology, Hebrews argues for the superiority of Christ and the sufficiency of faith.

Hebrews 11 functions as both theological exposition and exhortation. Often described as the “hall of faith,” the chapter presents figures such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others as exemplars of persevering trust. These individuals received divine commendation not because of social approval or immediate success but because they acted in faith toward promises whose fulfillment lay beyond their lifetime.

VII. FAITH AS THE DOORWAY TO GOD’S PROMISES

A central contribution of this paper lies in its articulation of faith as a *participatory doorway* rather than merely a condition or instrument. Scripture presents God’s promises as relational commitments rooted in divine faithfulness and fulfilled in Christ (2 Cor 1:20). Faith does not coerce fulfillment; rather, it aligns the believer with God’s salvific movement.

Justification by faith underscores this reality. Faith excludes human boasting and re-centers salvation on divine initiative. Yet faith also initiates a lived journey marked by obedience, endurance, and transformation. Hebrews 11 consistently portrays faith as movement—leaving, waiting, offering, enduring—thereby redefining faith as an enacted response to promise.

This perspective advances theological discourse by integrating juridical, relational, and eschatological dimensions of faith into a single coherent framework, suitable for contemporary theological reflection and praxis.

VIII. FAITH AND ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE

Faith is inherently future-oriented. Hebrews portrays believers as pilgrims who seek “a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:10). Eschatological hope—the expectation of Christ’s return, final judgment, and new creation—shapes present faithfulness. Romans 8:24–25 affirms that hope sustains believers amid suffering as they await unseen realities with patience.

IX. BIBLICAL CASE STUDIES OF FAITH

9.1 Abraham

Abraham’s obedience in leaving Ur, waiting for Isaac, and offering his son exemplifies faith that trusts God beyond visible circumstances. His willingness to sacrifice Isaac demonstrates confidence in God’s power, even over death (Heb 11:17–19).

9.2 Mary

Mary’s response to the angelic announcement—“Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38)—embodies humble submission and trust. Her faith positioned her within God’s redemptive plan and continues to inspire Christian discipleship.

9.3 The Woman with the Issue of Blood

The healing narrative in Mark 5:25–34 illustrates faith as courageous trust that overcomes social exclusion

and suffering. Jesus’ declaration, “Your faith has healed you,” affirms faith as the means by which divine power is received.

X. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY FAITH PRACTICE

In contemporary contexts marked by instability, violence, and existential uncertainty, faith as the doorway to God’s promises offers both theological depth and pastoral relevance. Faith is not escapist optimism but disciplined trust shaped by Scripture, community, and hope in God’s future. It empowers ethical resilience, sustains worship under pressure, and nurtures perseverance amid suffering.

This paper contributes to practical theology by emphasizing that faith must be formed intentionally through teaching, sacramental life, communal worship, and spiritual discipline. As a lived posture, faith enables believers to embody God’s promises socially and ethically, becoming witnesses to divine faithfulness in the present age.

XI. CONCLUSION

This study has argued that faith functions as the divinely appointed doorway through which God’s promises are accessed, interpreted, and embodied. Grounded in Hebrews 11:8–10, faith emerges not as passive belief but as covenant participation oriented toward God’s promised future. By integrating biblical exegesis, historical theology, and constructive synthesis, the paper contributes a participatory model of faith that holds together justification, obedience, and eschatological hope.

From Abraham’s pilgrimage to the witness of the early church, faith consistently mediates the journey from promise to fulfillment. For contemporary Christianity, faith remains indispensable—not only for receiving God’s promises but for living faithfully within them. As such, faith continues to stand at the center of Christian theology, worship, and mission.

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