



HELPS Word-studies

4102 *pístis* (from 3982/*peithô*, "*persuade*, be persuaded") – properly, *persuasion* (be persuaded, come to trust); *faith*.

Faith (4102/*pístis*) is always a *gift from God*, and *never* something that can be produced by people. In short, 4102/*pístis* ("faith") for the believer is "God's *divine persuasion*" – and therefore distinct from human belief (confidence), yet involving it. The Lord continuously *births faith* in the yielded believer so they can know what He prefers, i.e. the *persuasion of His will* (1 Jn 5:4).

[4102 (*pístis*) in secular antiquity referred to a *guarantee* (warranty). In Scripture, faith is God's warranty, certifying that the revelation He inbirthed will come to pass (*His way*).

Faith (4102/*pístis*) is also used *collectively* – of all the times God has revealed (given the *persuasion* of) His will, which includes the full *revelation of Scripture* (Jude 3). Indeed, God the Lord *guarantees* that all of this revelation will come to pass! Compare Mt 5:18 with 2 Tim 3:16.]

1. The root of 4102/*pístis* ("faith") is 3982/*peithô* ("to persuade, be persuaded") which supplies the *core-meaning* of faith ("*divine persuasion*"). It is God's warranty that guarantees the fulfillment of the revelation He births within the receptive believer (cf. 1 Jn 5:4 with Heb 11:1).

Faith (4102/*pístis*) is always *received from God*, and *never* generated by us.

Ro 12:3: "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, *as God has allotted to each a measure of faith* (4102/*pístis*)" (NASU).

Eph 2:8,9: " For by grace you have been saved through *faith* (4102/*pístis*); and that not of yourselves, it is *the gift of God*; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (NASU).

Gal 5:22,23: "²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, *faith* (4102/*pístis*), ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

2 Thes 1:11: "To this end (glorification) – indeed each time we pray about (*peri*) you for the purpose (*hin*) of our God counting you worthy of the call – even that He may fulfill (His) every good-pleasure that comes from (His) goodness *and work of faith*, in (His) ability."

Reflection: Faith is *only* (exclusively) given to *the redeemed*. It is *not* a virtue that can be worked up by human effort.

Faith (4102/*pistis*) enables the believer to know God's preferred-will (cf. J. Calvin; see 2307/*thelçma*). Accordingly, *faith* (4102/*pistis*) and "God's preferred-will (2307/*thelçma*)" are directly connected in Scripture.

Ro 12:2,3: " And do not be conformed to this world, but betransformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what *the will* (2307/*thelçma*) of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of *faith* (4102/*pistis*)" (NASU).

2 Cor 8:5,7: " And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the *will* (2307/*thelçma*) of God" (NASU). 7" But just as you abound in everything, in *faith* (4102/*pistis*) and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also" (NASU).

Heb 10:36,38: "³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the *will* (2307/*thelçma*) of God, you may receive what was promised" (NASU).

" BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY *FAITH*(4102/*pistis*); AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM" (NASU).

1 Jn 5:4: "For *whatever is born of God* conquers the world; and this is the conquest that has conquered the world – our *faith* (4102/*pistis*)."

In sum, *faith* (4102/*pistis*) is a *persuasion from God* that we *receive* as He grants impulse ("divine spark"; cf. the Heb *hiphil* form of believe, **mn*, in a later discussion). Faith is always the *work of God* and involves hearing His voice – whereby the believer lays hold of His preferred-will (cf. J. Calvin).

Hab 2:1: " I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see *what He will speak in* (Heb *b*) *me*" (NASU).

Hab 2:4: "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live in his *faith*" (= 4102/*pistis*, "faith from the Lord").

More on what faith is . . . and isn't

- 1. In Scripture, *faith* and *belief* are not exactly the same. Faith always comes from God and involves His revelation therefore *faith* is *beyond belief*!**
- 2. Faith is God's work; faith is *never* the work of people. We cannot produce faith ourselves, nor can we "drum it up at will." Rather, faith comes as Christ speaks His *rhçma*-word within (see Ro 10:17, Gk text).**
- 3. In all of Scripture, only the term *faith* is ever used in the following way: Ro 14:23: Whatever is not of *faith* (4102/*pistis*) is *sin*." Heb 11:6: "And *without faith* (4102/*pistis*) it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (NASU).**

Reflection: Nothing quite like this two-fold witness appears elsewhere in the Bible. These *sweeping* statements sober the heart and inspire the soul!

The Lord offers to inbirth faith in each scene of life – so that each matters equally in eternity . . . no matter how insignificant they *seem* (Lk 16:10 with Lk 17:6 and 2 Pet 1:2).

Key quotes

"Faith always pre-supposes revelation" (W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis*, 55). "Faith is always a response to a divine revelation" (W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Hebrews*, 143). "Faith . . . both in its initiation and every step of the way, is Spirit given . . . faith is *God given*" (W. Hendriksen, *Galatians*, 197). "Faith *precedes* works, and is not something merely *deduced* by reason of existing" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Thessalonians*, 2 Thes 1:11). "Faith is always a gift of God" (L. Morris, *John*, p 520). "The basis of faith is God's revelation of Himself . . . Christianity came to be seen as a faith *event*" (O. Michel, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*).

"Faith is the *divine* response, wrought in man, by God" (from Berkof's *Systematic Theology*, representing the views of Barth and Brunner).

"Faith always has the element of assurance, certainty and confidence . . . and evidential value substantiating the thing we hope for . . . with faith, there is no strain or tension; rather, it has the element of assurance and confidence in it . . . if there is strain or tension . . . trying to persuade yourself to keep from doubting, you can be quite sure that it is not faith . . . faith is not the law of mathematical probability, . . . faith is not natural . . . faith is spiritual, the gift of God . . . you cannot command faith at will, faith is always something that is *given-inwrought* by God; . . . therefore, if you want to be a man of faith, it will always be the result of becoming a certain type of person" (M. Lloyd Jones, *Romans*, Ro 4:18-25).

"Faith is the divinely given conviction of things unseen" (Homer Kent Jr., *Hebrews*, 217, quoting Theological Dictionary of the NT vol 2, 476).

"Faith is the organ which enables people to see the invisible order" (F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 279).

"Faith is knowing what is *His will toward us*; therefore, we hold faith to be the knowledge of God's will toward us" (John Calvin, as quoted by R. McAfee Brown in *Is Faith Obsolete?*).

"Right faith is a thing wrought in us by the Holy Spirit" (Wm. Tyndale).

"We have made faith a condition of mind, when it is a divinely imparted grace of the heart . . . we can receive faith only as he gives it . . . you cannot manufacture faith, you can not work it up . . . you can believe a promise, and at the same time not have the faith to appropriate it . . . genuine, Scriptural faith is not our ability to 'count it done,' but is the deep consciousness divinely imparted to the heart of man that it is done, . . . it is the faith that only God can give . . . do not struggle in the power of the will . . . what a mistake to take our belief in God and call of faith . . . Christ, the living word, is our sufficiency . . . (Charles Price, *The Real Faith*, Logos/publications).

Note: On the distinction between *believing* (belief), and *faith* in the Scriptures see Js 2:19; Jn 10:38; Ac 8:13, 26:27,28; Ro 14:2; 2 Thes 2:11; 1 Jn 4:1; also Jn 2:23, 7:31, 12:42 and 4102/*pisteuô* ("believe").

As in the Gospels, a person's believing (belief) is vital (cf. Heb 11:6). But a personal encounter with Christ (a true connection with Him and His Word) is always necessary for believing ("man's responsibility") to be transformed into faith (which is *always* and *only* God's word). See also Mt 8:10,13, 9:22,28,29, 15:28; Ac 20:21; Ro 9:32; Gal 3:9,22.

Summary

Belief and *faith* are not exactly equivalent terms. When Jesus told people, "Your faith has made you well," faith was still *His gift* (Eph 2:8,9). *Any gift* however, once received, becomes the "possession" of the recipient. Faith however is always from God and is *purely His work* (2 Thes 1:11).

Note: The Greek definite article is uniformly used in the expressions "your faith," "their faith" (which occur over 30 times in the Greek NT). This genitive construction with the article refers to "*the principle of faith (operating in) you*" – not "your faith" in the sense that faith is *ever generated by the recipient*.

[The meaning of the definite article in this construction is "the principle of faith at work in you," "the operating-principle of faith in them," etc. For examples see: Mt 9:2,22,29; Lk 17:19; Phil 2:17; 2 Pet 1:5, etc.]

Faith (4102/*pistis*) involves *belief* but it goes *beyond* human believing because it involves the personal revelation (inworking) of God. Faith is always *God's work*. Our believing has eternal meaning when it becomes "*faith-believing*" by the transforming grace of God.

Reflection: Demons believe (and shudder) . . . but they do not have (experience) faith!

Js 2:19: "You believe that God is one. You do well; *the demons also believe, and shudder*" (NASU).

STRONGS

NT

4102:

πίστις

1. conviction of the truth of anything, belief (Plato, Polybius, Josephus, Plutarch; θαυμάσια καὶ μείζω πίστεως, Diodorus 1, 86); in the N. T. of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it: [Hebrews 11:1](#) (where πίστις is called ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων); opposed to εἶδος, [2 Corinthians 5:7](#); joined with ἀγάπη and ἐλπίς, [1 Corinthians 13:13](#).

a. when it relates to God, πίστις is "the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ": [Hebrews 11:6](#); [Hebrews 12:2](#); [Hebrews 13:7](#); πίστις ἐπὶ Θεόν, [Hebrews 6:1](#); ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἡ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, by which ye turned to God, [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#); τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν καὶ ἐλπίδα εἰς Θεόν, directed unto God, [1 Peter 1:21](#); with a genitive of the object (faith in) (τῶν θεῶν, Euripides, Med. 414; τοῦ Θεοῦ, Josephus, contra Apion 2, 16, 5; cf. Grimm, Exgt. Hdbch. on Sap. vi., 17f, p. 132; (cf. Meyer on [Romans 3:22](#); also Meyer, Ellicott, Lightfoot on Col. as below; Winer's Grammar, 186 (175))): ἡ πίστις τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτόν (Christ) ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, [Colossians 2:12](#); διὰ πίστεως, by the help of faith, [Hebrews 11:33, 39](#); κατὰ πίστιν, equivalent to πιστεύοντες, [Hebrews 11:13](#); πίστει, dative of means or of mode by faith or by believing, prompted, actuated, by faith, [Hebrews 11:3f, 7-9, 17, 20-24, 27-29, 31](#); dative of cause, because of faith, [Hebrews 11:5, 11, 30](#).

b. in reference to Christ, it denotes "a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God" (on this see more at length in πιστεύω