

### **Another use of the word *Faith* in the Bible**

We sometimes speak of saving faith, it is called saving not because it is a work we do to save ourselves or cooperate in our salvation but because of its content, namely, Christ and the Gospel. It saves and is necessary for salvation in this sense that by the power of the Gospel, faith lays hold of the promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation solely on the basis of God's grace and Christ's merit, to the exclusion of any and all merit in us. Thus saving faith *receives* the salvation won for us by Christ; it is not the prompting or meritorious cause of salvation. Indeed, it is the message of salvation that causes faith. Faith is *the receiving organ* of our salvation.

Sometimes, however, the Bible uses the term *faith* to describe something other than saving faith, strictly speaking. Consider, for example, our Gospel Lesson for today, Mark 4:35-41. Jesus has had a very long day, and in His state of humiliation has become tired. He falls asleep in the boat. So soundly does He sleep that even a storm does not awaken Him. The disciples struggle with all their might against the storm, and when their efforts all seem in vain, they wake Jesus from His sleep with an anguished plea, "*Teacher, do You not care that we are drowning?*" (Mark 4:38). Their cry shows that they knew Jesus could save them; their anguish and fear in the situation of that moment brought them to fear that He may not want to rescue them in this particular situation. After Jesus stills the storm, He turns to the disciples and asks them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (4:40).

How does Jesus use the word *faith* in this context? Is He talking about that faith which knows that He is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world and therefore their Saviour? No, He is not. For the very prayer of the disciples indicates that they knew He was the Son of God with power to save them even in this particular situation. Their whole relationship with Him was a confession of faith in Him as the promised Messiah. This is why they were with Him in the first place. The Apostle John writes, "*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who had heard what John had said and began to follow Jesus. Andrew first found his brother Simon and told him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated as 'the Christ').*" What, then, does the word *faith* mean in this context?

Faith in this context is still knowledge, assent, and confidence. However, it is knowledge of specific promises that Jesus has made to them, assent to those specific promises, and confidence that what Jesus had promised would come to pass. Jesus had promised that He would make them fishers of men (Mark 1:17). That promise could not be fulfilled if they were to perish in this storm. But at that particular moment in time they did not remember the promise, neither did they apply it to this circumstance. Therefore they had no faith in this sense that they did not apply a specific promise to a particular circumstance in their lives. That does not mean that they did not have saving faith. It does not mean that they had rejected Jesus as the Son of God and the promised Messiah.