

Words Mean Things: “Faith”

Pistis, a sort of funny sounding Greek word, is highly important in the New Testament and in the lives of believers. Simply, and correctly translated, it means **faith**. It is derived from *pietho*, which means to be persuaded. Thus the Greek concept of faith as used in the New Testament is to be persuaded to the level of absolute confidence. This is frequently expressed, as in our Creeds, with the affirmation, ‘I believe.’

One needs to be careful, however, in how and when, and to what degree we express our faith in the word believe.

For example, we believe that when we flip the little switch on the wall, the light will come on, but we have perhaps been through too many thunderstorms in the past to expect that that belief, trust, and confidence to be absolute. As a Christian, on the other hand, we are convinced beyond any doubt whatsoever that Jesus is the Messiah, that He did die and rise for us, ascended into heaven, and has and will come again to take me, and all believers, with Himself, that where He is we may be also.

How, then, is it that so many are led into unquestionable belief, what we call faith, in false religion, false gods, and are so completely convinced in their belief?

That would be the work of the devil of whom Jesus says in John 8, “*He is a liar and the father of lies,*” (v. 44). And a convincing liar at that. It began in the Garden of Eden when he said to Eve, “*you will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Gen. 3:4-5). That was a truth, “*your eyes will be opened*” was true, “*knowing good and evil*” was true. That was a half-truth. “*You will be like God*” was a shrouded lie/half-truth. Adam and Eve ‘knew,’ EVERYTHING good, blessed, and wonderful, and decided they wanted to also know ‘evil’, suffering, pain, sorrow, loss, and a whole lot more, even death. “*You will not surely die*” is the beginning of ‘the big lie.’

Satan was and still is willing, even eager, to contradict God, but is so very clever in doing so. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our weakest weakness and knows just how to appeal to it. He knows when we are at our lowest low point and knows how to take advantage of it. He knows full well that the weaknesses of our flesh make us really vulnerable to his lies.

Sin ‘looks like’ fun to the flesh, and he plays on that. Within his toolbox everything is framed in the context of lies and/or half-truths.

That would indicate that our defence has to consist of an absolute conviction of the truth of God’s Word. We call that faith, and it is faith that needs to be exercised at all times. So what? How do I do that? To be very Lutheran, what does this mean? It means that we must see to it as Paul said to the believers in Colossae “*...let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly!*” (Col. 3:16). That would indicate that to have and nourish a strong, healthy faith which is able to fend off the lying, deceitful tricks and temptations of the devil, we should, we need to have daily devotions, a life permeated with prayer, and stubborn determination to be in/at Sunday morning worship, every week.

I have checked. Where attendance at Sunday worship is concerned the Bible gives frequent and strong command, encouragement and incentive. The devil’s excuse book is about four to five times thicker than the Bible. No matter what, he has at least three nice sounding excuses to miss, even avoid daily devotions and Sunday worship.

Remember the promise and encouragement, “*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (James 4:6). Again, “*Resist him, firm in your faith*” (1 Peter 5:9). How, then, does one resist? By reading the Word of God daily and by regular, faithful attendance at Sunday worship in which we have the added powerful benefit of the sacrament. Faith. “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ*” Romans 10:17. See you in church.