



THE SINNERGISTS PODCAST

Episode 3: What is Faith?, Part 2

"**Faith**" is one of the most important, but often misunderstood, words in Christianity. In episode 2 we saw that in the ancient Greco-Roman world "faith" (Greek πιστις, Latin *fides*) was a relational term meaning **trust, loyalty, faithfulness, and allegiance**. In this episode, we see how that understanding sheds light on some well-known "faith" passages in the New Testament. For example,

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who *believes in [is loyal to/is faithful to/gives allegiance to]* him may not perish but may have eternal life."

So how well does that fit with Jesus' overall message? We think it fits very well.

* Jesus regularly indicates that the opposite of "faith" is not **disbelief** but **disobedience**.

John 3:36

"Whoever *believes in [is loyal to/is faithful to/gives allegiance to]* the Son has eternal life; whoever **disobeys** the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath." (See also: Luke 6:46, Matthew 7:24, Matthew 28:19-20).

* "Faith" was something that Jesus could **see**.

Matthew 9:2

And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. **When Jesus saw their faith**, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

This understanding of "**faith**" as "**embodied allegiance**" also brings new meaning to the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11. **It was their action that pleased God!** Go read it for yourself and see!

But isn't "faith" the opposite of "works"?

* No, as James clearly points out, faith and works are two sides of the same coin. (See James 2)

* Additionally, in the New Testament, "works" is often shorthand for "works of torah/the law," referring specifically those Jewish identity markers of circumcision, kosher eating, etc., not simply "good deeds."

* Every time a biblical writer talks about being saved by faith apart from works they almost immediately follow it up with the necessity/importance of good works in those who have faith.

Bottom Line: Understanding "faith" as "embodied loyalty and allegiance" makes the most sense of the New Testament as a whole.

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