

BIBLICAL FAITH and MODERN COUNTERFEITS

False and Fake

There is much talk about faith, but little understanding of what faith is. Too many people think of faith as: *"A blind leap into the dark."* – the very opposite of reason and logic. All too many think of faith as wishful thinking, along of the line of *"wishing upon a star."* Others think of it more as demanding their own way. *"Name it! Claim it! Frame it!" "Gab it and grab it!"* Many people's understanding of faith has been confused by the bizarre antics of hyper-faith gurus with their health and wealth visions and dreams.

Manipulation and Magic

As we do one-on-one personal Evangelism on the streets and in the shopping malls we have come across many people who claim that they *"tried Christianity", "but it did not work!"*; *"God did not come through for me!"*; *"I did not get my healing!"*; *"I did not keep my healing!"*; *"I did not get that job"*; *"I did not get that raise"*; *"I did not win that competition!"*; *"I did not win the lottery!"* Proverbs 1:31: *"Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way and be filled to the full with their own fancies."*

Presumption

It would seem that many people are confusing presumption with Faith. In Genesis 16 we read of the presumption of Sarah and Abraham. In presuming that Sarah could give her maid, Hagar, to Abraham to conceive a child that could fulfil God's promise, they set in train a disastrous series of events. *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* Proverbs 14:12

The Legacy of Ishmael

The presumption of Abraham and Sarah led to the birth of Ishmael *"a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him."* Genesis 16:12. To a large extent the violence and hostility of the Muslim Arab nations today is an ongoing legacy from that presumption, 4000 years ago.

Pessimism and Defeatism

In Numbers 14 we read of the negative report of ten of the twelve scouts who had explored the Promised Land. As a result *"all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation said to them, if only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in the wilderness!"* Numbers 14:2. The ten unbelieving scouts reported back that while the land was flowing with milk and honey, *"the land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants... and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."* Numbers 13:32-33

The Faithful Report Rejected

Only Joshua and Caleb gave a good report and said: ***"If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them."*** And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tabernacle of the Meeting before all the children of Israel. Then the Lord said to Moses: ***'How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I performed among them?'"*** Numbers 14:7-10

Unbelief and Rebellion Condemned

Because of their unbelief God condemned the children of Israel to wander in the wilderness *"According to the number of days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you will bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. I the Lord have spoken this. I will surely*

do so to all this evil congregation who have gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die." Numbers 14:34-35

Presumption as Rebellion

However, despite this judgement from God, the people of Israel declared that they would take the land: *"And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, 'Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!' And Moses said, 'Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you'. But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah."* Numbers 14:40-45

Transgression Leads to Disaster

They presumed to go when God had forbidden them to. Yet, they claimed that they were acting in accordance with the promises of God! The dictionary definition of presumption is: *"When you believe something to be true without adequate proof."* Presumptuous: *"shows little respect for others by doing things we have no right to do."* Presumption: *"overstepping proper bounds, taking something for granted."* Israel's rash attack following her rebellion and unbelief was presumptuous and disastrous.

The Sons of Sceva

In Acts 19 we read of the seven sons of Sceva, who were presumptuous in attempting to perform deliverance. *"Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?' Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."* Acts 19:14-16. Here we see an empty and powerless religion. The sons of Sceva were guilty of presumption. Presumption often flows from pride, arrogance and insolence.

Principles for Faith

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss..." James 4:3. *"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* James 4:6-7. If the devil is not fleeing from us then either we have failed to submit to God, or we are not resisting the devil, or both. James 4:8: *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."*

Fake Faith

Many people proclaim faith today, but all too often it is fake faith. Many times, what is being promoted is faith in faith. However, Biblical Faith is all about the Object of that Faith. You can have all the faith in the world, misdirected, and it will do you no good. It is not the amount of faith that matters, but in Whom you place your faith. Biblical Faith is not *cheap grace, easy believism, just believe, follow your heart, wish upon a star, speak it into existence*, presumption, wishful thinking, demanding your own way, taking Scriptures out of context, manipulation. Biblical Faith is not trite and trivial, materialistic and self-serving. Faith is not you demanding your way. Faith is you submitting to the Will of God, in obedience.

Justice and Mercy

You cannot claim healing as your right. The only right we have is to be condemned to hell for all eternity. If you demand justice from God, God's Law demands holiness and perfection. What we need is mercy, grace, undeserved favour. GRACE stands for: God's Riches At Christ's Expense. FAITH can stand for: Forsaking All, I Trust Him.

The Just Shall Live by Faith

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” Romans 1:16-17. God calls us to Himself, and we enter into a relationship with Him through faith and not by works. We are Justified by faith, and because we have been made right with God, we can live faithfully toward God. Our walk with God begins and continues in faith. The Christian life consists of belief, trust, and total surrender. ***“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*** Romans 6:11. Justification belongs to those who place their faith in Christ alone. Knowledge of doctrine means nothing unless it includes complete trust in the Saviour. There are many people who may be able to wax eloquent about Redemption, Propitiation, Justification, and other Divine truths surrounding Salvation. Yet, unless full surrender has been made unto Christ, head knowledge will not necessarily result in salvation. God, who is Just, cleanses a sinner based on faith in Jesus Christ the Righteous. This overwhelming truth should propel the believer into mission-minded service for God.

Promises Come with Conditions

We have no right to claim promises that have conditions that we do not meet. Our Lord Jesus Christ made it clear in Mark 11:25: ***“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in Heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”*** Luke 11:4: ***“And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.”*** Matthew 6:14: ***“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*** Matthew 6:15: ***“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”***

Consider the Context

It is presumptuous to claim promises for which we do not fulfil the conditions. Every promise comes in a context and with conditions. In Romans 6 the Apostle Paul condemns the presumption of those who say that we should continue to sin that grace may abound. ***“Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”*** Romans 6:2

God is Greater

Isaiah 55:8-9: ***“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”***

Pop Faith

To popular culture, *“faith”* is hoping to win the lottery, making a wish as you blow out birthday candles, or throwing a coin into a wishing well or fountain. Pop culture thinks crossing your fingers, or stroking a rabbit's foot, will bring you luck. If a rabbit's foot was lucky it would still be on the rabbit!

Trivial Selfishness

A prominent tele-evangelist gave an example of faith as he and his wife were driving to the shopping mall and praying for a parking place close to the entrance and seeing one open up just in time for them. This kind of trite, trivial, materialistic and self-serving presumption does not even come close to Biblical Faith. In a world where Christians are losing their lives, and even their heads, literally, for the Gospel, it is tragic that there are those who can abuse the Scriptures, ignore the great commands and calls for brave and bold Biblical action, and turn it into some Hollywood magic genie wishing upon a star and following your heart delusion.

Foolishness is not Faith

Foolishness is all too often masquerading as faith. Presumption is superseding Scriptural principles in making vital choices. No amount of talent or eloquence can make something acceptable to God that He has condemned in Scripture.

How Can We Know

How can we know the Will of God? By listening carefully to His Word, by studying the Bible.
How can we please God? By obeying His Word.

Biblical Faith

Biblical Faith is trust in the Sovereignty of God;
surrender to the Lordship of Christ;
obedience to the Word of God;
willingness to sacrifice for the Kingdom of God;
determination to seek first the Kingdom of God;
following in the steps of Christ;
putting Biblical duty first;
courage to overcome our fears;
boldness to obey God in spite of all opposition;
perseverance in spite of setbacks;
and discernment as to what is that good, acceptable and perfect Will of God (Romans 12:2).

Test All Things

We are warned in the Scriptures to test all things, to examine yourself, to see if you are in the Faith. Faith is an intelligent step into the light (not a blind leap into the dark!). Faith is based on facts. Faith and reason are friends. We have a reasonable Faith.

Faith and Facts Go Together

In Exodus 4 to 14 we read of the ten great supernatural attacks on the false religions of Egypt. Exodus 14:31: *"Thus Israel **saw** the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; **so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.**"* Faith is based on facts.

Faith is Not Blind

Biblical Faith is not blind. Faith in the Bible is based on facts. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, the Apostle Paul teaches: *"And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"* Faith does not reject evidence. The Truth of Christianity is based on historic events and truth that can be tested by reason and evidence.

Examining the Evidence

Active Biblical Faith depends on historic events that can be investigated. In John 20:27 our Lord Jesus Christ declared to Thomas: *"Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."*

Careful Investigation

Dr. Luke begins his Gospel, Luke 1:1-4: *"Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those **who from the beginning were eyewitnesses** and ministers of the Word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you **an orderly account...** that you may **know the certainty** of those things in which you were instructed." Christianity is a reasonable Faith founded on historic events that can be investigated and confirmed.*

The Hall of Faith

Hebrews 11 is often called the "Hall of Faith".

Hebrews 11:1: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Hebrews 11:6: *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that **He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**"*

Biblical Examples of Faith

The Biblical examples of Faith presented to us are of **Noah** building the Ark and stocking provisions in the Ark for a great multitude of animals. It was an enormous undertaking, requiring diligent hard work, over many decades.

Abraham, eager to obey God, leaving home and safety to go a great distance to where God led him. Willing even to sacrifice that which was most precious to him in obedience to the Word of God.

Joseph, remaining faithful to God, despite being betrayed by his own brothers into slavery, fleeing from temptation, wrongly accused, thrown into prison, yet remaining steadfast and faithful. And God raised him up to be governor of Egypt.

The mother of Moses defied Pharaoh's order to kill her newborn infant and saved his life.

Joshua and **Caleb** did not follow the majority, but were bold and brave enough to remain faithful to the Lord even when the mob of Israelites wanted to stone them to death for their positive report. God rewarded them and they, alone of their generation, entered the Promised Land.

Young **David**, the shepherd boy, showed his faith by walking into the valley of the shadow of death to confront the giant Philistine Goliath with only his sling and shepherd staff.

Daniel exercised true Biblical Faith by refusing to compromise his principles as an exile in a heathen land. He refused the food offered to idols and he still prayed by his window despite the edict that no one was to pray to anyone but the king and he was thrown into the lions' den, where God preserved him.

The three friends of Daniel, **Shadrack**, **Meshack** and **Abednego** displayed true Biblical Faith when they refused to bow before the heathen idol. *"Our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."* Daniel 3:17-18

The **Apostle Peter** displayed Biblical Faith when he stood before the same Sanhedrin that had condemned the Lord Jesus Christ to death and defied their command to not speak in the Name of Jesus. *"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men!'"* Acts 5:29

Faith Through the Fire

Hebrews 11:32-39: *"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: **who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith...***"

Bold and Biblical Faith

Here, in this most important chapter on faith, Hebrews 11, which defines faith as being certain of the substance of the things that we hope for, the evidence of things not seen, diligently seeking God,

Hebrews 11 gives these great examples of faith: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David – men of obedience and action. **"Faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead."** James 2:17

Spiritual Warfare

The Bible speaks of us taking up **"the shield of Faith"** Ephesians 6:16 and putting on **"the breastplate of faith and love..."** 1 Thessalonians 5:8. Faith is something strong and substantial, like a metal shield that can put out all the fiery darts of the wicked one. We are commanded to **"fight the good fight of Faith."** 1 Timothy 6:12.

Counterfeits Being Peddled as Faith

When you study the Scriptures it is quite clear that Biblical Faith is so far removed from the fake faith, presumptuous, manipulative, materialistic, magical, wishful thinking, demanding our own way, *wishing upon a star, follow your heart*, trite, trivial and self-serving counterfeits that are being peddled in all too many churches and TV channels today.

The Fool Follows His Heart

Hollywood keeps telling you to follow your heart. The Bible tells us that only a fool follows their heart. **"He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered."** Proverbs 28:26

Fakes Shipwreck Faith

"Having faith and a good conscience which some having rejected concerning the Faith have suffered shipwreck." 1 Timothy 1:19. Faith and a good conscience will bring us safely into God's harbour. However, those who reject Biblical Faith and their conscience, will suffer shipwreck.

Live By Faith

That is why we are told in the Scriptures **"the just shall live by his Faith"** Habakkuk 2:4.

Draw Near in Faith

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..." Hebrews 10:22

Seek God

Faith requires that we seek God. Deuteronomy 4:29: **"...you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul."**

2 Chronicles 14:4: **"He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the Law and the commandment."**

Psalms 105:4: **"Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face evermore!"**

Isaiah 55:6: **"Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near."**

Jeremiah 29:13: **"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."**

Zephaniah 2:3: **"Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger."**

Matthew 6:33: **"But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."**

Luke 11:10: **"For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened."**

Acts 17:27: **"So that they should seek the Lord in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."**

Keep Your Eyes Fixed on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-2: *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God."*

Be Inspired by Examples of Excellence

We are surrounded by a great cloud of faithful witnesses. Examples of excellence. Victorious Christians who have changed the world. Their examples should inspire us to lay aside those burdens, repent and break from those sinful habits and addictions that have ensnared us so that we can run this race of Faith with endurance.

Faith in Action

Biblical Faith requires action. It is more like a race than the self-serving passivity so often palmed off as "*faith*". And we are to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith. It is the object of our Faith, Christ, that is of supreme importance. The issue is not so much our faith, but **Who** we are exercising our faith in.

Stand for Christ

Do not settle for less than God's very best. In my own life I have seen how faith requires **action**. A missionary advised me before I went into the army to make my stand for Christ early and boldly. On the first Sunday I asked the chaplain if I could speak and standing up in front of the hundreds of men in that hall, I declared *"I love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart and I want to honour Him during my next two years here. If anyone else feels the same, please see me afterwards. Let us start a Bible Study and Prayer Fellowship."* That was a hard stand to take, but it was essential. That is where Frontline Fellowship was born, in that Bible Study and Prayer Fellowship in the South African Infantry.

Faith Missions

Faith led me to launch missions across the border into closed communist countries, to proclaim the Gospel in mosques, terrorist bases and to debate Muslim leaders like Ahmed Deedat at the Islamic Propagation Centre International and in the largest mosque in Durban. Faith in my life has meant singing in prison cells and in chains. Flying far behind enemy lines into the no-fly zones of the Nuba Mountains of Central Sudan, during the height of the war there.

Faith Demands Obedience to God

Faith is not us attempting to manipulate God to get what we want. God's ways are so much higher than our ways. Praise God that His answers to prayer are more intelligent than our prayers. Imagine if God had given us everything we had asked for! Many of our prayers were not really intelligent. We could not see behind the scenes and what the consequences would be. We need to trust God and this means studying His Word and obeying His commands. Even when the consequences seem quite dire.

Pop Culture Presumption

Pop culture faith might express itself in entering a competition to win an iPhone and then going out and buying a case for that iPhone, presuming that you will win it. That is not Biblical Faith.

Biblical Faith

Biblical Faith would be to work to save up to be able to buy the iPhone and then after ordering it and receiving confirmation of receipt of payment and the tracking details of the item mailed to you, then receiving confirmation from the post office that your parcel has arrived, on the way to the post office, you could stop by and buy a cover for the iPhone in faith. You have not yet seen the item, but you have enough evidence that it has arrived and that you will soon have it in your hand.

Reject the Fake

Reject the counterfeits. Faith is not magic, nor is it manipulation and presumption. All too many people are mistaking God for *the magic genie*, you rub him up with enough faith and he pops out and declares: "*Your wish is my command!*"

God is Lord

Actually, it is exactly the other way around. God is not our servant. We are to be His servant. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Neither is God *Father Christmas*. He is not just there to give us the gifts we want. He is the Creator, the Redeemer, our eternal Judge. We are to worship, serve, honour and obey Him.

Captive to the Word

In Church history we have seen great examples of Biblical Faith. **Dr. Martin Luther** boldly standing before the emperor and defying all the might of the pope of Rome, declaring "*My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. Amen.*"

Expect Great Things from God! Attempt Great Things for God!

William Carey launching the modern missionary era, sailing for India, campaigning against infanticide and widow burning, establishing schools, translating the Scriptures, setting captives free and winning souls to Christ.

It is No Sacrifice – Say Rather Privilege

Dr. David Livingstone training in medicine and theology, sailing for Africa, walking across the continent, from coast to coast, dedicating his life to setting captives free, healing bodies, saving souls, proclaiming the Gospel and challenging Christians to dedicate their lives to fulfilling the Great Commission.

Put Feet to Your Faith

Biblical Faith is bold and brave and has its boots on. **Do not settle for less than God's very best.**

As the hymn declares: "*Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*"

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10:17.

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