

IS YOUR FAITH A COUNTERFEIT?

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There are some Bible topics that are so important that we need to review them regularly.

We've recently started a review of Faith.

Romans 1:15-17

15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.**

17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;** as it is written, "**The just shall live by faith.**"

Romans 1:17 (NIV)

17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed —**a righteousness that is by faith from first to last**, just as it is written: "**The righteous will live by faith.**"

Romans 1:17 (NLT)

17 **This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith.** As the Scriptures say, "**It is through faith that a righteous person has life.**"

The phrase appears 4 times in scripture. It would seem to be a fairly important statement.

We are to live by faith. We conduct our lives. We make our plans by faith. We deal with people and situations by faith. We face difficulties by faith.

But — honestly — how often do you think of faith? Every day? Rarely? **DO YOU LIVE BY FAITH?** It is probably closely linked in somewhat to our dedication to reading the bible?

Romans 10:12-17

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

13 For “**whoever** calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

14 **How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?**

And **how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?**

And **how shall they hear without a preacher?**

15 And **how shall they preach unless they are sent?** As it is written:

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?”

17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** *(And reading and reflecting on the Word of God)*

The Word must be preached and heard. **Faith comes by hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing ... and hearing what?** **The Word of God. That’s where the faith comes from.**

We’ve perhaps all set out to live by faith at various times. Maybe had some disappointments because some of our expectations didn’t work out.?

It’s not always easy ... certainly not “natural”! **It’s supernatural.** It’s hard to live in a supernatural way.

1 Timothy 6:10-12

10 For **the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

11 But you, O man of God, **flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**

12 **Fight the good fight of faith,** lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

We must be prepared to fight. Not just a simple “stroll in the park”.

If there's a fight — there must be enemies? (Though it's a good fight — we should expect to win!)

If we're going to understand faith ... it may help us to watch out for some of these enemies — **counterfeits of faith.**

We need to stay awake. **Recognise real faith from a similar — but counterfeit — faith.**

1. Don't confuse faith with feelings.

This is very common.

- I don't feel that God heard my prayers
- I don't feel that God is with me
- I don't feel worthy
- I don't feel God has forgiven me

But — **feelings have nothing to do with faith.** Our feelings go up and down — if we're tired ... gloomy weather ... hormones.

Faith is a decision to believe what God says in His Word.

2 Corinthians 5:7

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. (*Not by feelings — not by physical circumstances*)

There were major problems all around Paul! If he looked at them ... he'd be in danger of going under. But he made a decision — to walk by faith — to trust God to see him through.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. (*Our mind and spirit*)

17 **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,**
18 **while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary** (*subject to change*) **, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

Choose where to look ... where to focus. Our feelings aren't the key.

Faith is a decision! Many times our feelings will follow.

2. Don't confuse genuine faith with mental assent/agreement.

This is a dangerous one! **It looks superficially like faith!**

In our minds — intellectually — we can see the logic ... the Biblical proofs — but **it's just in our heads ... in our minds — but it doesn't influence our heart.**

Mark 11:20-20

20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

22 **So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.**

23 **For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes** (*in his heart*) **that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.**

24 **Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you (HAVE) received them, and you will have them.**

Does not doubt in his heart — but — believes in his heart!

Romans 10:5-10

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”

6 But **the righteousness of faith speaks in this way**, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down from above)

7 or, “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? “**The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart**” (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

9 that **if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

10 **For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

Heart ... heart ... heart.

FAITH IN 2 PLACES — IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART.

FAITH IS VOICE ACTIVATED!

Hebrews 10:19-23

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 **and having a High Priest over the house of God,**

22 **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.**

A true heart in full assurance of faith ... without wavering (firm ... established ... unmoved). COMPLETELY PERSUADED!

3. Don't confuse real faith with dead faith.

True faith leads to taking action — to make things happen — not just mental assent.

James explains this fairly well.

James 1:19-27

19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and **receive with meekness the implanted word**, which is able to save your souls. (*Be humble ... receive God's Word*)

22 But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 **But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

A DOER OF THE WORD. Not hearers only! If we are — we deceive ourselves!

James 2:14-22

14 What does it profit, my brethren, **if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?**

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

17 Thus also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” **Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.**

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, **that faith without works is dead?**

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

22 Do you see that **faith was working together with his works,** and **by works faith was made perfect?**

James 2:26

26 **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**

James 2:17 (NIV)

17 **faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**

It's very possible to have dead faith. Dead faith is very common.

Luke 6:46-49

46 “But **why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?**

47 Whoever **comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them,** I will show you whom he is like:

48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

Three parts:

- Comes to Jesus
- Hears His sayings
- Does them!!

Jesus expects us to be doers — not just hearers. **“Faith comes by hearing”** — but if there are no corresponding actions ... it may be simply dead faith.

So ... if we say we have faith ... and are walking by faith ... can we point to corresponding actions?

4. Don't confuse faith with presumptuousness.

Presumptuousness is to believe something for which you have no warrant — no promise — no Word from God ... not based on Biblical scripture. (Almost like you're forcing God to “back you up”).

Jeremiah 7:1-15

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

2 “Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!’ ” *(this is the Temple in Jerusalem)*

3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: **“Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.**

4 **Do not trust in these lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.’**

5 “For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor,

6 if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, *(if you sort your lives out and live properly)*

7 then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

8 **“Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit,** *(You are believing something that you have no right to believe)*

9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know,
10 **and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’?**

11 Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” says the Lord.

12 **“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.**

13 **And now, because you have done all these works,”** says the Lord, **“and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer,**

14 **therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.**

15 And **I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren**—the whole posterity of Ephraim.

Jeremiah 7:8 (NET)

8 **“But just look at you! You are putting your confidence in a false belief that will not deliver you.**

Many of these people may have been sincere.

Maybe many of their preachers pointed to the awesome temple saying God would never allow His Holy Temple to be destroyed.

False belief. Presumptuous. God said He would destroy it — like Shiloh.

So they ended up dead — or captives. And the city was destroyed. All because the people were presumptuous.

1 Samuel 4:1-5

1 **And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.**

Now **Israel went out to battle against the Philistines**, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek.

2 Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field.

3 And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, **"Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies."** (*Says who? It was their idea*)

4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5 And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, **all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook.**

Israel shouted for joy! They were super-excited! They must be victorious now?? **They've got the Ark! God is with them!**

No! They have no word from God. There is no instruction — no promise.

1 Samuel 4:6-11

6 Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, **"What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?"** Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp.

7 **So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!"** And they said, **"Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before."**

8 **Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods?** These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

9 **Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!"**

10 So the Philistines fought, **and Israel was defeated**, and every man fled to his tent. **There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers.**

11 **Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.**

Massive defeat. What could have happened? Well. **They had no word from God.**

1 Samuel 4:12-22

12 Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head.

13 Now **when he came, there was Eli, sitting on a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God.** And when the man came into the city and told it, all the city cried out.

14 When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What does the sound of this tumult mean?" And the man came quickly and told Eli.

15 Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see.

16 Then the man said to Eli, "I am he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line."

And he said, "What happened, my son?"

17 So the messenger answered and said, **"Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured."**

18 Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that **Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died,** for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

19 Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, **she bowed herself and gave birth,** for her labor pains came upon her.

20 And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it.

21 Then **she named the child Ichabod,** saying, **"The glory has departed from Israel!"** because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

22 And she said, **"The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."**

Ichabod. The glory has departed. (Shiloh destroyed soon after).

Thousands “believed” — but that was presumption. There was **NO WORD FROM GOD.**

Deuteronomy 1:35-36

35 **Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers,**

36 **except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD.**

Deuteronomy 1:42-45

42 **“And the LORD said to me, ‘Tell them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.” ’**

43 **So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the LORD, and presumptuously went up into the mountain.**

44 And the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you as bees do, and drove you back from Seir to Hormah.

45 **Then you returned and wept before the LORD, but the LORD would not listen to your voice nor give ear to you.**

You can’t just say “I’m doing this in faith” ... and simply go your own carnal way.

5. FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD. Not just making up our own opinion — based on wishful thinking — and expecting God to back us up.

Living by faith means being very clear about what God has said — exactly. **FAITH COMES BY HEARING WHAT GOD HAS SAID** — not what we think He said or meant ... or what someone else tells us.

No escaping the fact that **a good knowledge of God’s Word is key.** Good and accurate!

So if we want to live by faith effectively ... that's where we need to focus — spending a decent amount of time in God's Word.

Five minutes a day — or 30 minutes a week — won't cut it!

“If you don't have time to pray and read the scriptures — you are busier than God ever intended you to be”.