

Bible Thoughts

with P.H.A.Hopkins

Faith

The thoughts and note material given on these pages are only a possible suggestion of the meaning, they must not be taken as inspired, however they are prayerfully prepared and compared with other similar material. There are many ways in which God's Word can be analyzed and none must be taken in place of the Word of God itself.

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What is faith?

The life of any person is full of faith, we each use it regularly each day, for example each time you sit down on a chair you are showing faith in the construction and designer of the chair. You would not normally inspect a chair before sitting, you trust that they made the design strong enough to carry the weight of yourself and not to tip over when you sit upon it. We trust the supply company to supply electricity when we switch on the light, clean water to come out of a tap. The daily life of every person is full of acts of faith.

We can use the word "faith" in two ways, one has the sense of "it being trustable." We are able to accept that what we have heard or seen can be trusted. The second meaning involves a physical action by the person, "a full and complete trust". The example of sitting on a chair demonstrates both, we have previously learnt that chairs are safe to sit on, trustable, but until you actually sit upon it you have not demonstrated your real faith and trust in the chair.

In [Roman 3:3](#), Paul is talking about the advantages the Jews had, they had been taught about the promise of faith of God', but still did not believe it, the trust was still available but they ignored it.

The Old Testament and faith.

In the Old Testament the word "faith" is only found twice,:

[Deuteronomy 32:20](#), *"for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. "*

[Habakkuk 2:4](#), *"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."*

God did not expect an act of "faith" instead the idea is expressed as an act of "believe" or "trust. " Further examples :

[Exodus 4:5](#), *"that they may **believe** that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee."*

[Numbers 14:11](#), *"And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they **believe** me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? "*

[Psalm 27:1ff](#), *"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I*

fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

The people still had faith, were trusting and believing in God. Abraham is especially recorded in his relationship with God as a man of faith, *"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."* [Genesis 15:6](#).

The New Testament and faith.

In the New Testament the idea of faith is very obvious, this emphasis on the action faith involves the saving work of God through Christ, central to this record is that God sent His Son as Saviour of the world by His death on the cross as replacement, an atonement for sin. The act of Faith is that man abandons his own efforts for his future and puts his complete trust and faith in the death of Christ, a complete trust for their future life and forgiveness in this act by Jesus.

[Acts 16:30](#), *"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."* and [John 3:16](#).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The word "faith" is concerned always with facts, e.g. "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." [John 8:24 b](#). The act of "faith" or "no faith" always involves a result, "good or bad." [John 5:24](#), *"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* This act of faith does not just accept certain things are true, but now includes and involves the complete trust in a Person, the Person of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes faith can come as the result of an action, Peter heals Tabitha(Dorcas) who had died, [Acts 9:42](#), *"And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive."* As a result, *"it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord."*

Jesus is approached by a sick woman, who believed that just to touch him would heal her, [Matt 9:22](#), *"But Jesus turned him about, and when*

he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."

What sort of faith does God expect?

[Romans 10:8-11](#), "8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." "How do I become a Christian?" A question often asked, it is not a complicated action or process. Simply, if we believe in our heart and say with our mouth that Christ is the risen Lord, we will be saved. Believing includes an action. When we decide to believe in God, we must also be willing to follow his instructions and Laws. This action shows others what we believe. As you live your daily life after taking Christ as your Saviour, can other people tell by how you live that you are a member of God's family?

What else happens?

The action of "believing" has a very important effect, it makes our relationship with God has changed, the Bible tells us that we become the "children of God."

"14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" [Rom 8:16](#).

"6 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." [Gal 3:26](#).
"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." [1 John 5:2](#).

This change in relationship is because of our act of faith. We now believe that God is exactly who he says he is and will do what he says He will do.

Our good life or good deeds cannot not by themselves make us right with God, an act of faith is needed, *"For what saith the scripture?*

Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."
[Rom 4:3.](#)

Is there a faith that God will reject?

[James 2:14-24.](#)

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." [James 2:19.](#)

Paul is saying that just believing that there is a God results in rejection, because the Devil and his followers know and believe that there is a God, but do not seek to follow and obey Him. True faith involves a commitment of your whole self to God.

Faith that has no power.

It is possible to have a faith without power, let us examine some events from the scriptures showing who had a powerless faith.

Read [Genesis 16:1-16.](#)

God had promised Abram(Abraham) and Sarai(Sarah) that they would become a mighty nation, yet, at that time they had no children and Sarai was getting past the age when she could have children.

After they had been living in Canaan for ten years, their faith became powerless. Like Abram, Sarai had trouble believing God's promise of a great nation, God never fails in His promises but Sarai decided to help Him and takes the situation over by offering Abram her Egyptian servant Hagar as a wife, v3. A son results and out of this lack of faith in God was to come a series of problems. This will invariably happen when a person does not trust the promises of God and personally tries to make His promise come true through our own efforts, especially if our action is not in line with his promises and directions.

Time was the greatest test of the faith of Abram and Sarai because God had his plans and knew the right time for the next stage in His plans. We must simply wait for God, he has the perfect time for everything.

Unfortunately, when we ask God for something and He appears to be asking us to wait or does not appear to be responding, it is a very great temptation to take matters into our own hands and try to take over the plans of God.

Read [Exodus 14:1-31.](#)

The people of Israel have been allowed to leave Egypt and God has guided them to the side of the Red sea, but in the meantime Pharaoh has changed his mind and is leading his army to get the people of Israel back. As Israel waits by the Red Sea it appears that God has lead them into a trap. The people of Israel can see the Egyptian army approaching in the distance, and they are terribly frightened and cry out to the Lord to help them. In addition they also turn against Moses, *"11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"* [Exodus 14:11.](#)

It appears that God seems to have led Israel into a trap between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army, but God knows what he is doing. In there fright Israel had called to God for help but seems to have no faith and trust in Him, all the Israelites can see is the Egyptian army sweeping in for the kill. Yet, they had seen God's powerful hand deliver them from Egypt, and still did not trust Him, their only response was fear and despair. God, through a miracle leads them across the Red sea to safety and also punishes the Egyptian Pharaoh and his soldiers for their action. God has preserved these stories in the Bible so that we can learn to trust him fully every time. God never fails, we must trust Him fully so that we can accept problems and situations with faith rather than with fear and complaining.

Our Fruit depends upon our faith.

[Matthew 3:1-12.](#)

In the reading John the Baptist has just starting his preaching, preparing the way for the Messiah. He is warning the Jewish nation that they must be prepared for the Lord, *"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* He is telling people to prepare themselves for the coming Messiah, He is saying that an unchanged life indicates an unchanged faith. The message from God has not changed with time, people will be judged for their behaviour and unproductive lives. God calls us to obey and worship Him. In the reading John the Baptist is comparing the Jews who are claiming that they believe in God but do not live and obey him, as a result John says that they are the same as an unproductive tree

which has to be cut down. A fruit tree is expected to produce fruit, so also the people of God should produce a life of obedience and honouring to God. God has no use for people who call themselves Christians but really do not live a life which demonstrates this title, they are God's people in name only and therefore of no value to Him. How productive are you for God?

How can we know if our faith is weak?

In [Matthew 14:22-33](#) we find an example where the faith of Peter failed him when tested. after the miracle feeding of thousands of people with just five loaves and two fishes the disciples are sent by Jesus in their boat across the sea of Galilee. As the boat sailed across the sea a bad storm appears and the boat gets into difficulties.

During the night Jesus appears walking on the water towards the boat. At first the disciples were scared stiff thinking it was a ghost or something, then Jesus spoke to them and they lost their fear, especially Peter, who spoke to Jesus and said, *"28 Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. "*

Peter was apparently full of faith as he stepped off of the boat to walk on the water towards Jesus " *30 But when Peter saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"*

Peter, who was the only one who had sufficient faith to stepped out of the boat onto the water and started to walk towards Jesus, a miracle, but then he took his eyes off of Jesus and saw what was going on around him, his faith began to fail when he realized what he was doing and what was happening around him.

We may not walk on water, but we do often walk through unexpected or bad situations. If we look on the "waves of the problem" without looking to Jesus for help, we too may loose what faith we had and start to "sink." When problems appear and our faith is tested, keep your eyes and faith on Jesus and his power rather than on your own abilities.

In [Luke 24:1-12](#) we find another time of the faith being weak.

Jesus had been crucified and buried and on the third day some women had visited the tomb and found it open and Jesus gone. *"12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass."*

Jesus had told the disciple of his coming death and resurrection but it appears that Peter and the disciples had not understood what Jesus had told them, Peter was so puzzled by the events, he did not understand that this event was exactly according to the plans God had for Mankind.

When people hear about the death and resurrection of Jesus for the first time they often think it must be a just a story, a fairy tale, but like Peter, as they learn more of the facts and have a personal contact with Jesus, they come to realize the truth and commit themselves to serve and worship Him. Faith starts very weak but grows as we have a greater relationship with the Lord, Peter denied the Lord before the crucifixion, but was later to spread the message of salvation into the world.

Weak Faith needs help.

[Mark 9:14-29.](#)

"23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. "

The father had some sort of belief that Jesus could help his son's illness, but he needed Jesus to make that faith grow. Weak faith can become strong faith with God's help. Faith is a gift from God, [Eph. 2:8-9](#). Faith is not something we can obtain without help. Our Faith cannot be stored away like money in the bank because faith always needs an action by God. We grow in faith through the daily renewing of our faith and trust in and through Jesus. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* [Heb 11:1](#)

Those with weak faith have limits.

[Romans 14:1.](#)

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Paul is talking about people who have a strong faith and how they relate their lives and behaviour to the world's activities and behaviours, he emphasizes the effect it can have on those who have a faith which is weak. To a person who has a strong faith, the meat which

has been offered to idols has realized that the idols are man made and therefore cannot have been contaminated or defiled by being offered to a man made object, even if it represents a god, but those who have a weak faith and understanding may consider it wrong to eat anything which has been offered by others to an idol in this way because the idol represents a god to the person offering the meat. Paul said that those with strong faith must avoid activities which could hurt the faith of those who are weak.

How do we know that our faith produces a result?

[Luke 17:5-10](#)

"5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. "

Jesus had been talking about forgiveness earlier and the disciples are asking for the faith to help them forgive. But Jesus does not directly respond to their request, he is pointing out that the persons amount of faith is not as important as the fact that the faith is really genuine. A faith which brings results must also depend upon the action of God. True Christian faith is total dependence on God and a willingness to do his will. It is the complete and humble obedience to God, to do whatever he calls us to do, — we have to have faith in our all-powerful God.

The mustard seed is very small, but it contains life and can grow to be a very large plant. Like a tiny seed, only a small quantity of genuine faith in God will allow, what may initially be a very small faith, to grow to great power. The seed was almost invisible at first, but once it is planted correctly, it sends out roots under the ground and they spread out enabling the plant to grow and take over. Our faith, through God may be small at first, but it can spread and produce wide reaching results. Faith that produces results has to be real and genuine, not necessarily large.

[Romans 5:1-11](#)

Our relationship with God has to start with an act of faith, we hear the words of God and realize that we do not reach the standards set by God,

then through the promises made by God Himself we find that we can be made right with God because and through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ His Son in our place. *"I Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"* [Rom 5:1](#). Our faith produces a result, forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ and what He has done for each of us.

[Hebrews 10:19-39](#).

Once we are of the family of God then faith will allow us to draw closer to God. However, God may allow us to experience pain and suffering to increase our conscience of His presence in our lives, and so ultimately increase our faith.

"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." [Heb 10:22](#).

"38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." [Heb 10:38](#).

The writer of Hebrews is also encouraging the True Believer not to lose or give up their faith in God in times of persecution and stress, but to use each situation to show, to demonstrate that their faith is real.

In [Hebrews 11:1-40](#) we find a list of people who, by their faith, have served God. It starts by asking "What is faith?" *"1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report. 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."* It is a full trust that what we want to happen will happen, even though we cannot see any evidence of this now or in the future. Two words describe faith: sure and certain. They contain a beginning and an end point. We believe in God and His promises, we start with believing in God and his character and the ending comes with God fulfilling his promises, even though we cannot see any sign of those promises as yet, we are demonstrating our true faith. See [John 20:24-31](#).