



Faith

By Arthur Eedle

A Goal to Achieve

Here is a dyed-in-the-wool Soccer fan who desperately wants to see the Cup Final in May, and he knows that without a ticket it is impossible to get into Wembley Stadium. He knows that he will have to apply many months in advance to be one of the 88,600 watching the game. And he knows that he will have to pay a considerable price to obtain that ticket. Is he willing to pay the price?

Here is a 6th form student anxious to pursue a career in Physics. He knows that to obtain a place at University he will need to have high grade A levels in Physics and Maths. Will he forego some of the normal pleasures of life to study and win through?

Here is an accomplished athlete with quite an astonishing track record. But she knows that to be selected for the next Olympics she needs to train and maintain fitness to an extent beyond the average. Is she prepared to make sacrifices in the hope of being selected?

These three examples have one thing in common, a **goal to achieve**, and a desire to reach that goal. And each knows that it will be impossible to achieve without stringent preparations, or paying the price.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews had this to say.

‘But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’

Hebrews ch.11 v.6

Once again we are presented with a goal, the reward and an impossibility, lack of faith.

Do we want to please God? Then we will want to find out about faith. We will search diligently until we know and practise all that is required of us, thereby to obtain the reward.

Faith versus Hope

‘But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’

Hebrews ch.11 v.6

I assume that because you are reading this, you are therefore amongst those who desire to **please God**. It is important to dwell on this verse in Hebrews. We are told that without ‘faith’ we cannot please God. Therefore, if anyone has the desire to please God, he or she must cast everything else aside and focus on this word ‘faith’. Whatever faith is, it must become the centre of our attention, and be treated with the same drive as that of soccer fan, physics student or the athlete.

We are going to do just this and as a result some surprises may meet us along the way.

Here then is the **first law of faith** in the Bible.

‘So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.’

Romans ch.10 v.17

First of all we must cast aside the world’s use of the word faith in ways not conforming to Biblical teaching. Our study of faith must be limited to the ‘rule book’ as rigorously as the physics student is limited to the laws of nature.

If a man says, ‘I have faith that this chair will not let me down’, he has misappropriated the word faith. Instead he has exercised hope that man’s workmanship will not fail him.

If a woman says, ‘We must have faith that it will not rain at the Church Garden Party’, she should rather have said, ‘We must pray that in the Lord’s kindness it will not rain’.

If a mother says, ‘I have faith that my daughter will pass her examinations’, we would have to find out more about the mother, if she had true faith, according to Romans ch.10 v.17, or whether she was merely employing a commonly used expression.

Let us look more closely at this verse and its insistence on us using our **ears**.

Faith and Hearing

‘So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.’

Romans ch.10 v.17

In Matthew’s Gospel three times the Lord says,

‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’

Matthew ch.11 v.15, ch.13 v.9 & ch.13 v.43

In the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation the Lord speaks to Seven Churches, and His final word to each Church is this.

‘He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.’

Revelation ch.2 v.7,11 & 29, ch.3 vv 6,13 & 22

The writer to the Hebrews complains that his readers’ ears have ‘become dull of hearing’ (see ch.5 v.11).

And so we have an indisputable link between **faith** and **hearing**. Our **ears** have become the first focus in our enquiry about **faith**.

But what must we hear? We are told ‘and hearing by the word of God’. But this immediately presents a major problem to many Christians. They say, ‘I’m not a prophet. I cannot hear God speak. Are you telling me that if I cannot hear God speak to me, there is no way in which I can please Him?’

Well, on the surface it certainly looks that way, doesn’t it? Let us investigate further. There are two Greek words for ‘word’. ‘Logos’ and ‘rhema’. ‘Logos’ is the written word and ‘rhema’ is the spoken word. Paul said that faith is derived by hearing the word (‘rhema’, the spoken word) of God. This surely emphasises the necessity of actually hearing God speak. There is no way of getting round it. Unless we can hear God speak to us, we cannot begin a walk of faith.

This may come as a devastating truth, one that appears to disqualify the majority of God’s children. Some, reading this may not wish to read further, feeling they have been scandalised. Others may be drooping into a state of melancholy. But hold fast ! There is more to learn.

‘Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.’

Hebrews ch.12 vv 12-13

If you have just been knocked for six, but are now ready to believe what the ‘rule book’ says, know this - **you have just taken a step of faith**. Your ears have been opened to receive God’s truth. More to come.

Four steps of Faith

My studies on faith have shown me at least four distinct ways in which faith operates.

The first of these ways is what may be called the learning and declaring faith.

The Bible is every Christian's 'rule book', and from reading and studying we may come to know a great deal about God. Let's have a few simple examples.

'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.'

Hebrews ch.11 v.3

Do you believe this? Or do you believe in the 'big bang'? These days it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain a belief in the Creator and His creation. Evolution is taught in schools, and our children are growing up to accept what some scientists say. Asked whether they believe in creation they either hedge, not wanting to be out of sync with their peers, or else declare vocally that Science has proved otherwise.

But the Bible tells us that God created the Universe. If you truly believe that, and are ready and willing to declare it publicly regardless of what others say, then **you have taken a vital step of faith.**

Jesus spoke these words.

'But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.'

Mark ch.10 v.6

Do you believe in Adam and Eve as literal people? Can you stand up against the growing tide of mockery and derision coming from those who treat the early chapters of Genesis as fable rather than literal truth? Can you draw alongside your Lord and Master, who believed in Adam and Eve, and declare your faith in the Genesis account? If so, then **you have taken a second step of faith.**

'For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; ... '

Matthew ch.24 vv 38-39

Do you believe in a Global Flood, and a literal Noah? Once again, these were the words of Jesus Himself. As a Christian, do you maintain the authority of Jesus' words, and declare your belief in them, regardless of what others may say? If so, then **you have taken a third step of faith.**

‘Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?’

Luke ch.1 v.34

Do you believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus? You’d be surprised how many Christians fight shy of believing it. There was once a Bishop of Durham who openly declared that the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Jesus were not literal, but had to be ‘spiritually understood’. But if you hold fast to these two precious truths, which are the basis of man’s salvation, know that **you have taken yet another step of faith.**

These four examples are sufficient for our needs. But one thing has to be understood – the need for **declaration** of our beliefs.

‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’

Matthew ch.5 v.16

‘... and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:’

1 Peter ch.3 v.15

Quite apart from any public declaration, it is a good thing to make an occasional declaration of belief in our prayer times. It is necessary, not only for the Lord to hear it, but also the Devil.

Father, I declare my absolute belief in You as the Creator of the Universe. I believe in Adam and Eve as the first created pair. I believe in a literal Flood, in which only Noah and his family were saved. I believe that Jesus was born to Mary, a Virgin, and that He was a real figure in history, dying on a cross, and resurrected by the power of God, bringing man salvation from his sins.

All this has to do with faith, of the **learning and declaring** kind.

Faith and Patience

The Second type of faith may be called **practical faith.**

Is your prayer life a monologue, when it should be a dialogue? When you say Amen, do you just get on with the day’s work? Have you ever stopped and ‘waited on the Lord’?

‘But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.’

Isaiah ch.40 v.31

What does it mean to 'wait'? Remember the last time you sat in a waiting room. Why were you there? Was it not with the expectation of seeing someone? Waiting on God means you are expecting Him to speak to you.

Jesus said,

'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

Matthew ch. 7 v.7

It takes time and patience to hear God speak. But it is vitally necessary. Our Lord's daily walk was never meant to be unique, but as an example to us all.

We now come to another operation of faith, namely **corporate faith**. We have seen how God often speaks to ones and twos to accomplish His purposes, but sometimes the Divine pressure spreads wider like a tidal wave. Often this happens as a result of 'the enemy coming in like a flood, and the Spirit of the Lord lifting up a standard against him' (see Isaiah ch.59 v.19). Mankind are to be reminded of God's promise.

'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.'

2 Chronicles ch.7 v.14

One is reminded of the two occasions when Britain was called to a united day of prayer by King George VI during the Second World War. The first was in 1940, resulting in the success of 'Operation Dynamo' to save our troops from being massacred at Dunkirk. I have a photograph of long queues of people outside St Paul's Cathedral in 1940, waiting to spend time there in prayer for the nation. The second in 1942 during the North Africa campaign under General Montgomery, which brought the victory at El-Alamein. Prime Minister Churchill said that this was the turning point in the war. And so, on each occasion, the Holy Spirit's pressure began in a small way, and rapidly built up throughout the nation, by which the Lord was able to 'lift up a standard against the enemy'.

After the war years, and during the winters of 1948 – 1953, evangelist Tom Rees held Saturday night campaigns in London's Albert Hall. The massive auditorium, holding over 9,000 people, was filled on over 50 occasions, and there were over 30,000 conversions. Billy Graham's Mission to Britain followed, and over the 35 years in which he came to Britain some 320,000 conversions were recorded.

But the reason for recording these great victories is to speak of the **corporate faith and prayer** of untold thousands of people throughout the land who held prayer vigils for the campaigns. My own memory is of attending meetings organised by Tom Rees each week at St Peter's, Vere Street in London, where the church was filled and prayer lifted up to God throughout a couple of hours. To be present at such times, and to feel the vibrancy of prayer, was an awesome experience. Wartime victories were followed by peacetime victories.

As it is with the national so it is with the individual. Let us take heart therefore and say from our hearts,

'But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord'.

1 Corinthians ch.15 vv 57-58
