

ENEMIES OF FAITH

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We've spent a couple of weeks looking at the topic of faith. It should be something we are very familiar with — there are 4 scriptures that say that “the just shall live by faith”. Not just “play at faith”.

We've all tried it — but too often seem to fail and get disappointed. We thought we were walking by faith ... but our expectations fell through. Why?

One reason:

1 Timothy 6:10-12 (NKJV)

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 — so there must be enemies.

We've started to look at some of the specific enemies to our faith. They can defeat us!

FIRST ENEMY: DON'T CONFUSE FAITH WITH FEELINGS

Great if they align ... but faith is a decision to believe God's Word. Our feelings are not relevant. Just because you don't feel that it's going to work out doesn't mean you're not in faith.

SECOND ENEMY: DON'T CONFUSE FAITH WITH MENTAL ASSENT

We may see the “logic” of certain scriptures in our mind... a teacher or article has “proven” something to us ... but it’s just intellectual agreement ... it’s head knowledge.

Faith is found in 2 places — in the mouth and in the heart. With the heart one believes.

Just because we “see” the truth in our minds ... doesn’t mean we are in faith.

THIRD ENEMY: RELYING ON HUMAN REASON

We’d like to believe God’s Word ... but it makes no sense to our human reasoning ... our intellectual abilities. We can evaluate ... analyse ... consider ... and decide it can’t happen. We reason ourselves out of what God can and will do.

Be we have to recognise that our minds aren’t that good. They are puny compared to God’s mind and intellect.

We saw last week how Naaman almost lost his healing by relying on his human reasoning. We saw how the Pharisees and the religious leaders failed to get healed by Jesus one day ... they saw a miracle ... but reasoned to themselves that Jesus was in the wrong. They reasoned themselves out of God’s blessings.

In Isaiah we saw that God’s thoughts and ways are far above our mental capability. If God says something ... we shouldn’t let our human reasoning and intellect get in the way!

Let’s continue with some more enemies to faith.

One of the consequences of mere mental assent ... or deciding to lean on our own human reasoning ... is that we end up taking no action.

FOURTH ENEMY: FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS A DEAD FAITH

So we may have faith ... but it’s a dead faith (it sort of won’t work ☺).

James 1:19-25 (NKJV)

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.

22 But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.** (*Deluding 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.** (*It's the doing that makes the difference*)

Not hearers only ... DOERS! We need to hear (faith comes by hearing!) ... but can't stop there.

James 2:14-26 (NKJV)

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? (*Just talk ... meaningless! Meaningless without action!*)

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?**

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

24 You see then that **a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.**

25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

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

James 2:17 (NIV 1984)

17 In the same way, **faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**

James 2:26 (MSG)

26 **The very moment you separate body and spirit, you end up with a corpse. Separate faith and works and you get the same thing: a corpse.**

The Weymouth New Testament talks of faith without "corresponding actions".

If we have faith ... we'll be doing something. We'll be taking action that corresponds with our faith.

If we're not doing anything at all ... just hearing and "nodding our head" ... then it's not genuine faith. It's a dead faith.

We looked last week at the men who let their friend down through the roof for Jesus to heal. JESUS SAW THEIR FAITH. It was obvious in their actions.

The lady with the issue of blood. Took action!

Blind men ... cried out and followed Jesus ... even though they were blind.

If we say that we have faith ... but do nothing that corresponds ... it is probably just dead faith.

Luke 6:46-49 (NKJV)

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.**"

COMES TO JESUS ... HEARS HIS SAYINGS ... AND DOES THEM. Three parts!

The same storm came in both cases. The storms of life come to all of us. The difference is down to whether we are JUST HEARERS or DOERS OF THE WORD.

A man or woman of faith will be taking action!

FIFTH ENEMY: BEING PRESUMPTUOUS

People who are presumptuous may well fully rely on God ... they may be confident in their heart ... they may be sincere ... they may take action.

All looks good. But ... they don't have God's Word.

Genuine faith is believing that God will act according to what He has said in His Word.

If you're "believing" without God's Word ... you're likely in presumption. You have no promise from God.

Let's look at the following example:

Numbers 14:1-4 (NKJV)

1 **So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.**

2 And **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 this wilderness!**

3 Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

4 **So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."**

They don't believe ... they rebel!

Numbers 14:20-35 (NKJV)

20 Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned, according to your word;

21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord—

22 because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,

23 they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

25 Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea."

26 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

27 "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.

28 Say to them, *As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you:*

29 The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.

30 *Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun,* you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.

31 But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.

32 But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.

34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.

35 I the Lord have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.' "

God's punishment was made clear.

Numbers 14:39-45 (NKJV)

39 Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly.

40 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!"

41 And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed.

42 Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you.

43 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."

44 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.

45 Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

The people presumed. They thought that they had repented? It was the Promised Land after all. They were God's people. BUT: They had no word from God ... in fact ... the contrary!!

Another example of sloppy thinking.

1 Samuel 4:1-3 (NKJV)

1 ... 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."

The ark will save us!! They were confident! They would have victory!

1 Samuel 4:4-5 (NKJV)

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.**

They were really confident ... sincere ... they took action. "We cannot be defeated. God won't allow it"!

1 Samuel 4:6-10 (NKJV)

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.**

Thirty thousand men died.

There was no question that Israel believed. They were sure positive that God would give them victory ... they had the Holy Ark with the Holy Covenant ... among God's Holy People. Surely God was with them?

So ... they believed ... but it was not God's Word. Presumptuous!

Jeremiah 7:1-15 (NKJV)

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!’** ” *(all worshippers in God’s Church today)*

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.’*** *(I’m in the Church ... I’m part of the Church ... I’m baptised ... nothing can happen to me)*

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,

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.***

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.

These people believed ... trusted ... but in their own opinions. “We have God’s Holy Temple ... He dwells here ... nothing can conquer us ... God will protect us”.

Presumptuous. Believing and acting on something that was not true. THEY HAD NO WORD FROM GOD.

There's no guarantee God will back up presumption ... even if sincere.

George Müller's Definition:

Faith is the assurance that the things which God says in His Word are true and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word. This assurance, this reliance on God's Word, this confidence is faith.

Faith comes by hearing ... the Word of God. That's the foundation.

Once ... during the Days of Unleavened Bread ... we were out with a couple who ate some batter-covered fish (containing leaven). They said, "We're eating it by faith". Presumptuous and disobedient.

Another guy we knew considered walking off the cliff top — God would let him down gently ... he had faith. NO! He was presumptuous!!

Faith is believing God's Word. Presumptuous is believing for something for which you have no promise ... no warrant ... no Word ... where you're almost forcing God to back up your position. God is not going to be forced!

SIXTH ENEMY: FAITH WON'T WORK IF KNOWN DISOBEDIENCE

In 1 Samuel chapter 4 and Jeremiah chapter 7 the people were living in sin anyway (as well as being presumptuous).

We can't expect our faith to work if we know we're living contrary to God's ways ... known and deliberate (not talking of occasional slips and lapses when we're distracted).

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened,

That it cannot save;

Nor His ear heavy,

That it cannot hear. (God is there)

2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God;

And your sins have hidden His face from you,

So that He will not hear.

God won't hear!

Not minor slips and stumbles (though we shouldn't be overly casual). Talking about a serious choice of a carnal lifestyle ... and expecting God to show up in our emergencies.

Psalms 66:16-20 (NKJV)

16 **Come and hear, all you who fear God,**
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.

17 I cried to Him with my mouth,
And He was extolled with my tongue.

18 **If I regard iniquity in my heart,**
The Lord will not hear.

19 But certainly God has heard me;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God,
Who has not turned away my prayer,
Nor His mercy from me!

If I regard iniquity ... GOD WILL NOT HEAR.

If we see sin in our lives ... and know it's there ... and choose to ignore it ... get quite comfortable with it ... don't expect God to answer. OUR FAITH CAN'T WORK.

1 John 3:20-22 (NKJV)

20 For **if our heart condemns us,** God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

21 Beloved, **if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.**

22 And **whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.**

If we know in our hearts that we're not living in a way that's pleasing to God ... our conscience will be affected and we can't expect our faith to work.

SEVENTH ENEMY: FEAR OPPOSES FAITH

Fear will nullify our faith.

Fear and faith are very similar. The inverse.

- Faith is believing: Fear is believing
- Faith is believing God: Fear is believing satan
- Faith comes by hearing — the Word of God
- Fear comes by hearing — the lies of the devil
- Faith comes by meditating on God's Word
- Fears comes by meditating on satan's lies ... and this world's ways (they call it WORRY!)

Mark 4:35-40 (NKJV)

35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side."

36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And **they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"**

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

40 But **He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"** (*Full of fear ... no faith*)

On another occasion Peter walked on the water ... till he saw the wind and the waves ... and became afraid ... and faith disappeared. (Hard to believe good and bad at the same time).

Luke 8:41-42 (NKJV)

41 And behold, **there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue.** And **he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house,**

42 for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him.

Luke 8:49-56 (NKJV)

49 **While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher."**

50 **But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, “Do not be afraid; only believe,** and she will be made well.” *(A critical moment here)*

51 When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl.

52 Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.”

53 And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead.

54 But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Little girl, arise.”

55 Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat.

56 And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Verse 50 in the King James Version: **“Fear not; Believe only”**.

If Jairus had allowed fear to grab him ... faith would disappear ... and there may have been a different ending.

Faith is the antidote to fear. FEAR IS THE ENEMY OF FAITH.

2 Timothy 1:4-5 (NKJV)

4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy,

5 **when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you,** which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

Genuine ... authentic ... faith!

2 Timothy 1:6-7 (NKJV)

6 **Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.**

7 **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**

If we find ourselves becoming fearful ... we should recognise that it's an enemy. It is best to go to The Word (our favourite passages) ... and “encourage ourselves in the Lord”.

This is a fight. We need to be prepared for battle. But a good fight ... we win!

So ... be aware of the enemies: Feeling — Mental Assent — Human Reasoning
— Dead Faith — Presumption — Disobedience — Fear.

There are other enemies ... but that's enough for now!