

## THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

### Part 4

#### *Counterfeit Faith*

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January 8, 2011

Right brethren, we are continuing for at least one more day with our series of how “The Just Shall Live by Faith.”

We will do the usual recap just to position where we are and then move on a little. Today’s title will be “Counterfeit Faith”. We have labeled this series “The Just Shall Live by Faith” and that phrase appears four times altogether in scripture. The fact that it appears four times in four books suggests that it is quite a fundamental and important topic.

**Hebrews 10:35-36** Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise...

This sounds good — *great reward* —and *a promise* — once a certain time has elapsed!

**Hebrews 10:37-39** "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now *the just shall live by faith*; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those *who believe* to the saving of the soul.

So the writer, probably Paul, is bringing out here that the just actually are people who *live by* faith. It is not incidental, it is not some sort of luxury, it is not the icing on the cake, and it is just the way that you and I *live*. Faith is something that we are demonstrating, exercising day in and

day out, because that is how we live. The righteous, the just, the believers are people who live by faith. “*But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*” As we have seen in earlier weeks, without faith it is impossible to please God. So if we do not hold our faith, if we turn and run, so to speak, then it is very hard to please God. In fact, Hebrews 11:6 says that it is *impossible* to please God. Hopefully we have seen a number of times now that faith is something that you and I need to understand, practice and live by.

**II Corinthians 5:7** For we walk by faith, not by sight.

So the just shall live by faith, or as Paul says here, walk by faith. It is the same thing — to walk, to conduct our lives, *to live day by day by faith* and not by sight. This is the way that you and I are supposed to do it. I am quite sure that we do not, and shame on us that we do not do it better. Most of the time we do rely on our five physical senses and that is good. That is what is supposed to happen *most of the time*, but clearly *not always*; especially if we want to move into or deal with the spirit realm. We cannot directly hear what is being said or taking place in the spirit realm, so our five physical senses, great as they are, have their limitations. You and I are supposed to be somewhat above that, able to interact in the supernatural and not just the natural.

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

This is why our physical senses stop and they cannot help us. If you or I are totally dependant on having to see it to believe it — “I have to reach out and touch it to believe it” — like doubting Thomas; then we have a problem — because that is not faith; and without faith we cannot please God. Faith has to do with seeing the things which *are not seen*. Our faith is our assurance, our conviction, and it is *the evidence* that those things are real and that we believe that they are real even though at this stage we do not see them. The Revised Standard Version translates this verse as: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, *the conviction* of things not seen.” So they are things that are invisible, not imaginary, they are real things though *not visible*.

You and I have to learn *to see the invisible*. You will recollect that a couple of the illustrations that we used were Elisha’s servant, when Elisha asked God to open his servant’s eyes to see what

was already there. Of course the countryside was crowded with chariots of fire, the angels of God. They had been there already, but it was just that the servant had not been able to see in the spirit realm. And, of course, faith is what is required to see things which actually are invisible. We also saw the example of Balaam and his donkey. If you recollect, the angel of the Lord was there with a sword, and at the early stage the donkey could see the angel and therefore took evasive action several times. But Balaam got his knees and ankles grazed as the donkey barged into the wall, and eventually the donkey just gave up, lay down and finally Balaam's eyes were opened and he saw what was, up to that stage, invisible. You do not know what is near you at the moment, whether it is an angel or a demon. But, we need to believe that *there is* a spirit realm, things exist in the spirit realm, and faith is about our conviction, our evidence and our assurance of things not seen.

In our second week we looked at the topic of "Receiving What God has Already Given". We had to challenge the idea that God is some sort of a spiritual miser, He is hard of hearing perhaps, or He really does not care. So the idea of some people is that you have to work up great faith, and then try and persuade God to be merciful and helpful and respond. We cannot move God, and we cannot think that He is a hard taskmaster. I mentioned the girl in our early years in the church, with her Catholic upbringing and that fact that her father left the family when she was a baby. So her idea of God was hard, vindictive, ruthless, and to her if you stepped out of line even the slightest, then God just rubbed His hands with glee and jumped all over you. That was her idea of God. Some people still have the idea that God is difficult, He is not easy to entreat, you really have to impress God somehow if you want Him to occasionally throw you a little bone. So, you try to work up this incredibly difficult thing called faith, and if you get enough of it you can move or persuade God. We said that is just wrong; that is a wrong concept.

Faith is about *moving mountains*, not moving God! Faith is how *we receive* from God. Faith is about *our receiving*, not about moving God to give. God has already taken care of our needs, you and I have to switch on and receive. I think we used the analogy of a television broadcast. The television signals are everywhere, but they are not visible to our physical senses until we switch on a television set and get a picture and sound. But we have to switch it on first. If the picture is poor or the sound quality is poor, the odds are that the problem is with the receiver, not

with the broadcasting station. If the receiver is working then we will tune in and we will get the words and the pictures that we want. Likewise, faith is about you and me getting tuned in better, making sure our receiver is in receiving mode. Faith is not about trying to ramp up the power at God's end, the broadcasting end. God does not have the problem; the problem is at *our end*. We said for illustration that Jesus Himself commented that the Father is much, much more willing to give us good things than we are to feed our own young children. Any concept that God is hard, difficult, or has His back turned, and we have to twist His arm to do us a favor is a totally wrong concept and one that Satan has worked hard over the generations to instill. Jesus said if we being evil know how to give good things to our children *how much more* will our Father give good things to us when we ask Him? That is God's attitude.

**Psalms 145:8-9** The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.

We have to renew our mind; we start off with a natural mind that depends wholly on the physical ("seeing is believing"), and then over time our minds get renewed and we start to understand more about our God and our Father.

To be gracious means to be *disposed to show favor*. This is God's disposition, and His nature, to show favor. It is not God's nature to get out there and jump on people. It is not God's nature to ignore His sons and daughters. It is not God's nature to relish punishment. God takes no pleasure in the death even of the worst of the wicked, and God's default attitude is to be gracious. The question of faith is about *our receiving* from God's goodness, not our trying hard to batter God into submission. God is not the problem, the problem is not at the broadcasting end, but the problem is whether you and I have learned to receive.

Last week, in our third message we looked at how we need to *choose to believe God*, because fairly often there will be a contradiction, or some conflict between what the Word of God says and what our senses or our mind and intellect say. There may be options for us to choose between. Do I choose to believe *my experience*, do I believe what my senses tell me, do I choose to believe my traditional understanding, or my church friends and their experiences, or do I

choose to believe *what the Word of God* clearly says? You might think that is an obvious one, in some ways it is, but it can cause a lot of actual practical problems, because to choose God and His Word properly we do have to know what the Word of God says, and to know the Word of God thoroughly. Just vaguely thinking, 'I think that there is a scripture somewhere that sort of covers this type of situation, but I am not quite sure where it is'. That is not a thorough grounding in the Word of God! But once *we know* the scriptures, and what they clearly say, we cannot afford to hover and waver between the various choices. We cannot flip and flop; one day we are for God's word, we'll stand fast forever, then a day later you are wondering if God is going to come through this time. Wavering between two or more options *is doubt*, and we are not too sure any longer whether it is going to be this way or that way, and we are dubious. And of course, if there is doubt, then we have chosen at that stage not to believe God, and we are in two minds.

And doubt, being dubious, will actually stop our faith in its tracks.

**James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

You ask God for wisdom and it says that He will give it liberally, generously and abundantly. He will not be using a little teaspoon; He will get a huge big truck and just pour out wisdom. God is not there keeping count and saying, 'The last time I gave you wisdom you abused it'. There is no reproach and God does not tell us that we blew it last time and the time before that, and so there are no more chances for you.

**James 1:6-8** But let him ask in faith, with *no doubting*, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

And we said last week that doubt in the Greek has this meaning of judging between two or more options. If you are double-minded, then you have doubt. It could be this way, or it could be that way, and you have to make a call; you have to choose which way. The doubter is blown one

way and then the other way. Physical circumstances change and suddenly we are believing God on the Tuesday, but by the Wednesday bad news has arrived and suddenly, 'I do not think that God is coming through. Maybe I have this wrong, maybe it was not God's idea, maybe God's word does not say that'. Then on Thursday something happens externally and then they see God coming through. That is not choosing to believe God, that is choosing to react and respond to the good news, the bad news, the neutral news or no news. You are driven and tossed by the forces out there, rather than being single-minded. This person doubts, and they stand between two or more opinions; they have not judged which way. The Greek word was 'diakrano' meaning to judge between. We have to make the call, and of course the right call is in all situations to choose *to believe God*.

**Romans 4:19** And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Abraham could have just said, 'Look at the evidence, look at what my physical senses are telling me. Sarah and I are old, and what is more she was barren when she was young'. It says that he did not consider, focus on, dwell on, and meditate on the physical.

**Romans 4:20-22** He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

God liked that, it pleased God to see Abraham's faith. God needed Abraham to come to see this and thankfully he did. Abraham did not hover between seeing the physical and God's promise. Thankfully for all of us, Abraham chose to believe God, and he was not swayed by the physical evidence.

**Matthew 14:25-26** Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

They did not recognize Jesus immediately, but to be fair it was the middle of the night and pretty dark.

**Mark 14:27-28** But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

Peter was renowned we think for having a large mouth and being quick to use it, and not always pondering!

**Mark 14:29** So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

This is illogical; you and I know that people cannot walk on water. But here is Peter walking on the water with Jesus. Pretty good so far, but unfortunately the story changes.

**Mark 14:30** But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

Because Peter saw with his physical eyes that the wind was boisterous and no doubt some waves were splashing, he was afraid. Then immediately Jesus caught him and said to him, 'Well done Peter, I am really impressed at your confidence and courage and that you were the only person willing to step out of the boat and come to me'.

No he did not say that! He said, 'Peter what little faith you have, *what a disappointment*, why did you doubt? Why did you hover between two opinions?'

Remember Abraham *considered not* his physical circumstances and he was *fully persuaded* of what God had promised. Here is Peter and he *did consider* his environment and the waves and the wind and the spray, and the fact that this was impossible, and clearly was *not fully persuaded* that Jesus' word was reliable. So he doubted. I am sure he did not entirely reject Jesus, but he

was uncertain as to if it could happen, is it possible? He thought, "You cannot walk on water. I have been on these lakes all of my life and I know that this is not possible. But, then again Jesus said..." and he wavered. The Greek word here for doubt is a different word 'distazo' but it means again to be of two minds, pulled two ways. Peter had not chosen to believe and be single-minded. Although he had been walking on the water, and he had some slight experience, he lost it. Sometimes people who are looking for God to heal them actually start to get better and they are very excited because God is answering, but then they have a bad day and they think it was not God's idea for them to be healed. People can start off like Peter, doing well and then they lose it because they are not fully persuaded and because they consider their physical environment and are more swayed by what their eyes and ears tell them.

**Mark 14:32-33** And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Peter was probably hiding in some other part of the boat, and feeling rather foolish. Great start, but not too good a finish; and it is how you finish that matters, not how you start.

I think that it might help to clarify further what faith is, by reviewing what faith is not. We do not want to have something that we think is faith on our part and yet it is *a counterfeit*. It is not real faith and it is some kind of con. Today we will move on and look at some of these look-alikes, this counterfeit faith. If you and I want to walk by faith and live by faith we must not misunderstand and employ something that *we think* is faith but actually is a look-alike.

Sometimes it can be subtle and sometimes it is a bit more obvious.

1. **Faith is not feeling.** That should be fairly obvious. God does not answer our prayers by whether we feel that He will, or feel that He will not. It is not a question of whether we feel that God will or feel that God will not. Feelings are in the *physical realm*, and they are what we feel in our bodies and they can vary quite a lot from morning to evening, from day to day. Sometimes you have a nice warm breakfast and you feel really good, and you say 'It is going to be a great day today; I just believe it'. You have a good night's sleep and you get up feeling refreshed and it is going to be a fantastic day. Or, conversely, your car breaks down in the

middle of nowhere and it is cold and raining and you feel pretty miserable, and you feel like it is all going to go wrong now. Our feelings are quite important to us. I like to feel good personally rather than feel bad and awful. But feelings *do not alter the facts*. God's Word is true, whether you feel that it is true or whether you feel that it is not true. The outward feelings, in a sense, can be a diversion. It is good if they line up with God's Word but even if not, you and I need to choose to believe God by choice. We must not be swayed by our feelings. Remember II Corinthians 7? We walk by faith, not by sight and *not by feelings*. One time a guy came and told me that God was not answering his prayers. He said that God was not responding to him and he thought that God had rejected him. I asked him why he thought that and he said, 'Because I just do not feel that God is listening any longer'. I said to him, "What do your feelings have to do with it? You do not judge your relationship with God by whether you feel that He is listening or not." At the end of the day we have to say, 'Let God be true and every man a liar'. Forget your feelings. If they line up with God's word — superb. If they do not, then forget them. God's Word is true. The facts are the facts. Faith is our belief and our confidence in the Word of God, and in God's willingness to deliver. Faith is not feeling. Never confuse the two.

2. **Faith is not mere "mental assent."** We have covered this from time to time, but this is a really dangerous one. *Mentally assenting* to God's Word and thinking that that is the same as faith. Well it is not. It may look like faith in some ways, but mental assent actually is completely powerless. Mental assent means that *we agree* that the scripture is *true*. We read the scriptures and they make sense. We may go and check out the Hebrew and the Greek to make sure that we have it right. We say, 'Yes it is right, the scriptures say what they say'. So *we assent* to the Word of God, we agree with the Bible, but it is only *head knowledge*, and it does not affect our hearts, or our lives. We sort of "see the truth" physically, but it stays in our head. If you ask a person, "Do you believe that God answers prayer?" They will answer yes. Do you believe God answers prayers? Why yes, it is in scripture. Do you believe that God provides for all of our needs? Oh yes, I have seen that in the Bible. Ask the person if they are healed and they will say, 'I hope to be'. Well that is not faith. Such people *agree* with the truth, they *assent* to the Word that must be true, but in their lives there is *no corresponding action*. Their lives are unchanged,

and the danger is that such a person confuses their agreement with the scripture with living faith. Mental assent at it best is really a dead faith.

**James 2:14** What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

This person claims to have faith, actually believes that they have faith — but has no works. One translation says, “no corresponding actions”.

**James 2:15** If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 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? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 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.

The faith is visible *by the works*, by the fact that there *is action* and something changes in the life of the person. It is not just head knowledge and verbally agreeing with the truth of scripture. That is faith without works, and this person does not change. The Weymouth translation beginning in verse 17 says: “So also faith, if it is unaccompanied by obedience has no life in it so long as it stands alone. Someone will say that you faith and I have actions. Prove to me your faith *apart from corresponding actions* and I will prove mine to you *by my actions*.”

If you have faith there will be corresponding actions, there will be works of some sort. If we say that we believe that God is our healer, and we say that God is our provider, and that He is our deliverer, and that He is our source of wisdom, but *never actually do anything* apart from worry and submit to surgery and pop pills, then it is almost certainly just mental assent. We "believe" the Words of the Bible in our head, but "Take action on that? You must be joking!" That is a dangerous place to be.

**James 1:21** Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

So it is very important to receive the implanted word, remember faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

**James 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

To be doers of the Word means that when we hear and believe, there are some *corresponding actions*; not just hearing it and believing it. One translation says “deluding yourselves”, and another says “beguiling yourselves”. This person probably does not know that they are deceived because Mr. Armstrong always said that a deceived person does not know that they are deceived. So here is a person who hears the word and mentally agrees with it being true. If we are talking healing they *agree* that God can heal, but doing something about it, ‘not me personally no, apart from the doctor’s appointment tomorrow’. So you are a hearer and a believer but with no corresponding action. Well, such a person is his own worst enemy.

**James 1:23-25** 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; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 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 is too easy for us to be content and self-satisfied and think that we are a man or woman of God because we know the scriptures, and we are "one of the elect." But if it does not lead *to doing*, to corresponding action, then the scripture says that faith *without works is dead*. It is so subtle this one, that I have to conclude that many are deceived. They *assent to* and they *think* that is the same as faith but it is not, that is just mentally agreeing with the word of God. Quoting from what Mr. Armstrong said in the 1980 Good News magazine, "at least 99 out of every 100 earnest surrendered Christians have not fully recognized just what faith is or how to exercise it." He is not talking about pew warmers; he says 99 out of a 100 *earnest surrendered* Christians have no clue about faith! Why? He did not explain that, but speculating you would have to assume that God’s people do not spend enough time in the Word; because *faith comes* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. If you do not spend much time in the Word you will not have

much faith. Jesus also warned of the danger of hearing only. How do you know if you are a hearer only? Check out the *corresponding actions*. Do they correspond to a believer or do they correspond to what non-believers all around us are doing. Do we say one thing but our behavior and our works are different?

**Matthew 7:24-25** "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

But this was the wise man who hears *and does*. This is the man or woman who has *corresponding actions*, not just hearers only and deceiving themselves. If we hear and believe that God is our provider, healer and deliverer then we are doing things that correspond with that.

**Matthew 7:26-27** "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Here is devastation and destruction and danger to the person who hears, listens — perhaps mentally agrees — may *think* that they are a person of faith, but they are in serious danger since when the storms come they may be wiped out. They *thought* that they had faith, when all that they had was mental assent, mental agreement and there were no corresponding actions that demonstrated their faith.

**Luke 5:17** Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal *them*.

Only one person apparently got healed, so even though the power was there to heal *them*, they managed to reason themselves out of God's blessings, rather than just accepting the word.

**Luke 5:18** Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him.

They had this man on the stretcher and realized that they could not get anywhere near Jesus. They could have said, 'It cannot be God's will then. If it was God's will people would just part and we would flow through'. No, they did not take no for an answer.

**Luke 5:19** And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

This took courage; they had to go and get some hammers and make a big hole, and then let this guy down on some ropes right in front of Jesus who was busy preaching at the time.

How could Jesus *see their faith*? Because faith has corresponding actions; faith has works. This guy could have sat at home and said, "Well, we all know that Jesus of Nazareth could heal". But faith has corresponding actions; it is not the hearing, it is *the doing*, and these guys got out and did some doing. Jesus said, "Wow, I see your faith". Their actions told Jesus what they believed; and they believed if they could get this guy in front of Jesus he will walk away.

**Luke 5:20-25** When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'? "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" —He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

For example, if you believed that God had healed you, you would not be out getting measured for a coffin! In terms of corresponding actions you would think that there is something not right there; 'God is my healer and I believe that I am healed'.

### 3. Faith is not hope.

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

Hope is in the future; something out there that you and I want, like deliverance, prospering, health. Biblically, we have seen that it is something that we can hope for, but it is future, and it is out there ahead of us somewhere. For example, we have a hope for the resurrection. It is not here today, but we confidently expect it, but we have to wait for it because it is out there in the future. But faith *is now*, it is in *the present*. It says that "*faith IS the substance of things hoped for*". Faith is the proof, the evidence and the conviction that we *have now* of things that we confidently expect. Just saying things like "I hope that God hears me and delivers me" is not good enough. You cannot say, "I am hoping and praying". Faith is *the substance* of the things hoped for. Faith is here and now and it is your evidence or proof *right now, today*, that you will have what you are hoping for. "Do you think that God will heal you? Well I sure hope so." Well forget it, because God has never promised to heal us based upon *our hoping* for it. We have to believe *now*, present tense and not wait until we receive it and then believe it. If that seems strange, well we are supposed to be renewing our minds, and not being naturally minded.

**Matthew 21:20-22** And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither away so soon?" So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

It is not *hoping* that God will answer that brings about answers; it is not *needs* that bring about answers, it is whatever things that you ask in prayer *believing*, and that is here and now. The

delivery may be some days, weeks or months away, but you are expecting that and you are hoping for that. But the believing is NOW.

**Mark 11:24** "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

When do you believe? *When* you pray! You do not wait to have them and then believe; there is no faith there. Faith is in the here and now. The Weymouth translation says, "*This is why I tell you that whatever you pray and make request for if you believe that you have received it it shall be yours*". The Greek here means that you believe that you have received it even though in the physical you do not have it, but you have to believe that God has heard and that you have received it. So the believing is now. "I believe NOW that I have received it; and I am confidently expecting it." Faith is in the here and now; it is proof that we shall have what we hope for.

**I Corinthians 13:13** And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

They are all important, but faith is not hope, hope is not faith. So, hope is important, but it is in the future, and it is yet to turn up. Faith is *right now*.

4. **Faith is not being presumptuous.** I know that we have talked about this before as well, but presumptuous people *believe*, they do actually believe in their hearts. They have great confidence and are sincere. So in that sense being presumptuous is very much like faith, because the believing part is there, but it is not belief based on the solid Word of God. It believes based upon wishful thinking, based on our reasoning, based on our pride, based on our mis-application of scripture. Believing is there, but faith is based on the word of God, whereas presumptuousness is based upon believing something else. We are stepping out and trusting God but actually there is nothing underneath that trust, and we have no Word of God.

Moses had sent out the twelve spies to look around the Promised Land and bring back a report. Two brought back a good report, and said it was a fantastic land with milk, honey, grapes, pomegranates, and such. But, unfortunately the other ten spies brought back a bad report, saying that there were giants in the land, and 'if we go in we will get slaughtered'. The people chose to believe the bad report and they said that God had brought them there to kill them. They wanted to go back to Egypt. God was not at all pleased with this. We will pick up the story in verse 20 of Numbers 14:

**Numbers 14:17-23** "And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD—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, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

So God told them to turn round and, basically, depart.

**Numbers 14:28-32, 34-35** "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: '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. '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. 'But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. 'But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. '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. '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.'"

So it is pretty clear, they blew it and now God has spoken His word that they are going to die.

**Numbers 14:39-45** Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. 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.

Why was there slaughter and death? Didn't these people have God's promises, and the word of God?

Well not any longer. They may have convinced themselves that God would back them up. They said that they would step out "in faith" and enter the land, after all God had brought them all this way. 'We made a bit of a mistake yesterday, but we have repented; God will back us up'. And so they stepped out *in presumption*, no faith. Faith is based upon *the Word of God*. These people may have *believed* that God would back them, but He did not, and He would not, because what they were doing was not based upon the Word of God.

**I Samuel 4:1-2** 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. 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.

That is a lot; it is more than Canada, Britain and the United States lost in Afghanistan over the last ten years.

**I Samuel 4:3-5** 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." 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. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook.

"We will bring the ark and it will save us; God will back us up and He will not allow us to be defeated when the ark is among us." Did they believe this? It said that their shouts were so loud that the earth shook. They really *did believe* and they were confident that the victory was theirs. 'God cannot allow us to be defeated; we cannot be defeated, the victory is ours'. I do not doubt for a moment that the belief was there in large quantities. But what was this based on? These people had a history of rebellion against God. God had not promised to back them up and this was their idea, their logic; they had the belief and the confidence that God would not allow them to be defeated.

**I Samuel 4:6-10** 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. 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. "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. "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!" 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.

Because belief is not enough; belief without the Word of God to direct us *is presumptuousness*. They thought that they could step out and put their trust in God, but faith comes by hearing the Word of God. In that particular case they did not have any Word of God. We can find other illustrations in the Word of God.

**Jeremiah 7:1-2** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying "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!'"

You could say that this is addressed to believers, religious people at least.

**Jeremiah 7:3** 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.

Change, repent, get right with God.

**Jeremiah 7:4-8** "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.' "For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, 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, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit.

It carries on, but the story is that basically these people thought *because the Temple was there* and because they were in association with it, that all would be well with them. They believed that and had trust in that statement that they were fine; 'we will be protected, we will be delivered or we will be healed'. But it was not based upon the truth, it was belief based upon lying words. And, to believe on lying words is not going to take us anywhere.

*Presumptuousness is believing and acting on something that is not true*, and it is not based upon the Word of God. God does not have to back up presumptuous acts even if they are sincere.

There was a family (husband, wife and four children, also Grandma and Grandpa) in the church who came to this country from Tasmania. They were enticed to come to Philadelphia Church of God headquarters in England and I think that they took the view that if they lived close to PCG Headquarters (as they were invited to) even though there were no jobs there, and no future, that somehow just being in association with the temple of God that they would be blessed and prospered. In fact their lives were a disaster. They were near bankrupt when we came across them. You cannot just step out and *believe* that God will deliver you; that God will do this for you, because you want Him to. "I have no scripture, I have no solid word, but I just believe that because I am a church member, because I am a Sabbath keeper." No, faith is different to presumptuousness. Presumptuousness is believing things that you would like to believe, that you would like to happen, that you want to even pressure God to step in on. But where is the Word of God in all this?

To summarize, as we conclude, faith always, always, always is based *on what God has said*. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. As I said before, it is not so much a faith problem that we have as a Word problem. Faith is not feeling, faith is not mental assent, faith is not hope and faith is not being presumptuous.

Mr. George Mueller has a great definition of faith, and Mr. Armstrong endorsed this definition:

“Faith is the assurance that the things which God said 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 and this confidence *IS FAITH*.”

If you listen to this definition you will hear God’s *word*, God’s *word*, again and again. You and I should always start with God’s word, finish with God’s word and keep it the middle too!

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*Transcript by Patricia Plunkett (many thanks Trish!)*

