

What Faith Is and How to Obtain It

Early Christians used to greet one another with the words, "***How is your faith?***" However, we have slightly altered the custom today, by asking, "*How are you feeling?*" *Faith* has given place to *feeling* and where once faith was so mighty and so prevalent that it had to be enquired about, now **feelings** predominate and must be kept account of! What result? We are **living in realm of the *seen* rather than the *unseen***! 2 Corinthians 4:18 states, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." It is because of an increased conviction that, in these closing days of the dispensation of grace, we need abundantly more faith, that this study is presented!

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

A. Faith is that characteristic of the soul which brings man in contact with God.

We have five physical senses to give us contact with, and make us conscious of, the physical world about us, **just so** faith is that sense of the soul which brings us in contact with God!

1. Faith is the only avenue of approach to God!

Hebrews 11:6 states, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

If there ever was a time when we needed to be in close contact with God it most certainly is today. Never did the world have so much to offer. Never did material things have a greater claim upon the mind and heart of man than today! If there is a way by which we can get in vital touch with God and spiritual things - by all means we should explore it to its depths!

2. God is desirous of blessing man but man hinders Him from doing it by his lack of faith!

Matthew 13:58 states, "And He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith."

If we could look into the heart of our Heavenly Father and see there His plan and will for us, it is certain we would see nothing but the greatest blessings imaginable, which God would like to bestow upon us, however we hinder Him doing so because of our unbelief - because we do not use the faith He has given us.

B. Faith is the thing, above all else, which pleases God

Hebrews 11:6 states, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." and James 2:5 states, "Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith?"

1. We are witnessing, throughout the world, many peculiar and vain attempts to

please God.

Clothing themselves in strange garbs, and disfiguring their bodies. Others will deny themselves necessities of life all in an attempt to please and gain favor of God. Some, who are more spiritual, feel that they can please God by much praying and by their self-sacrifice, when the greatest thing one can do to please God is to **believe**.

Certainly, we can understand that. We, too, are happy when someone has confidence in us, or, someone tells us, "***I believe in you***, you are a person I can trust." Well, God is pleased when we trust...(put our confidence in)...Him!

Numbers 14:11, "The LORD said to Moses, `How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in Me?"

Note the urgency in the cries of Jesus in John 14:1, when He stated, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in (trust) God; trust also in Me." And, verse 11 states, "Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

Jesus would like their faith to be based on His Word alone, however, if works were necessary to help faith, He was willing to bear with them, if they would only believe Him.

2. Note, how important it is to please Him.

Can there be anything more needed, or more important, than to walk in God's divine will and be well-pleasing unto Him? Believing in God and His Word is more important than *servicing* because, if these things are not done in His will, they will be unfruitful. If one walks in God's will he can be sure of victory every step of the way and eternal glory when the race has been run. If you can please God, do it...by all means, do it...whether you please another soul or not! **FAITH PLEASES GOD!**

3. Jesus chided the disciples for their lack of faith more than any other things.

Mark 16:14 states, "Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were eating; He rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe."

Matthew 17:17 states, "O unbelieving and perverse generation,' Jesus replied, `how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?"

Matthew 14:31 states, "Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. `You of little faith,' He said, `why did you doubt?"

It follows, then, that, not only does **faith please Him**, but **unbelief displeases Him**. What if someone said to you, "***My you have a marvelous personality. You are so attractive, so capable, and efficient. I think you are one of the most gracious persons I have ever met, but, you know, I never know when I can trust your word. I never know when I can believe you!***" You, certainly, would not be very flattered and, neither is God very pleased when we say all kinds of nice things about His love and power and, yet, by our actions...if not by words ...we let it be known that we never

quite know whether we can trust Him or not.

God can bear with our mistakes and have patience with our slowness of learning, however, He does ask that, whether we understand or not, we do believe Him, and, with that, He will be well pleased in us.

Matthew 6:30 states, "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Matthew 8:26 states, "He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

Matthew 16:8 states, "Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"

Luke 24:25 states, "He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

C. The ministry of the disciples was hindered because of lack of faith

Matthew 17:19-20 states, "Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, 'Why couldn't we drive it (**the demon**) out?' He replied, 'Because you have so little faith.'

If this was true of these disciples then, it is true today. Much of the ministry of God's Word is being hindered, thwarted, and bound, all because of a lack of faith. This is, indeed, a solemn thing. How many unsaved homes, and lives, are ruined, simply because of lack of faith on our part? Why can't we realize the importance of faith? Faith gets people to God. Faith tears down every intervening barrier and opens the door that man may enter into the full blessing and victory of God's provisions for us in Christ!

D. Unbelief...(that is lack of using one's faith)...is sin

Unbelief is not just a little weakness...not just an unhandy infirmity... according to God, **IT IS SIN!**

Romans 14:23 states, "Whatsoever is not of faith - is sin!"

In John 16:9, Jesus says, in referring to unbelief, "**It** is sin, because men do not believe in Me."

To believe in God, is a command of the Lord and, when one doubts, it is disobedience to this command and, thus, it is sin.

1 John 3:23 states, "And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ."

How vitally important it is that all sin be removed from our hearts, including the

sin of **UNBELIEF**. The child of God must realize the paramount importance of faith.

1 John 5:10 states, "Anyone who does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar"

E. Satan knows the importance of faith!

Jesus states the purpose of Satan" in Luke 8:12, when He stated, "Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe."

Satan's purpose is to keep people from believing. He does not mind so much if the seed of the Word falls upon their hearts, as long as the seed does not take root and bring forth faith because Satan knows he is defeated, and his designs are utterly frustrated, **IF**, the believer really gasps the promise and power of God in a live and active faith. Faith lets the power of God into one's life and

Satan is no match for that, therefore, his great concern is to "*take away the Word from our hearts, lest we should believe.*"

The weakest demon can thwart any Christian who does not have real faith, however, all the demons around will run back to their infernal headquarters for reinforcements the moment they sees the spark of real, holy, faith making its appearance in the heart of a child of God.

Since Satan realizes the power of...and places so much importance on... **FAITH**, how much more should we?

F. The Word of God is only made profitable by faith

Hebrews 4:2, "The message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith."

The inspired writer is speaking particularly about the children of Israel, who had heard about the wonders of the Promised Land, but the word they heard did not profit them for it was not mixed with faith. How many, today, are hearing the message of the Gospel, however, it is not profitable unto salvation to them because there is no "*faith*" mixed with it. How tremendously important this fact makes faith!

G. Whenever commending the saints for their Christian virtues, Paul always mentions and praises faith.

Faith is always spoken of as among the finest of Christian possessions.

Colossians 2:5 states, "I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is."

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 state, "We ought always to thank God for you, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more...we boast about your perseverance and faith."

1 Timothy 1:5 states, "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a

pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Philemon 1:5 states, "I thank God because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints."

H. When urging Christians to new victory and steadfastness, Paul always exhorts to faith

1 Timothy 1:18-19 state, "I give you this instruction, that you may fight the good fight...holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have ship-wrecked their faith."

1 Timothy 4:12, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in...**FAITH**."

2 Timothy 2:22 states, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace."

Titus 2:1-2 state, "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance."

Hebrews 6:12 states, "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

I. The whole Christian life is dependent on our faith

Without faith there could be no experience of the Christian life

2 Chronicles 20:20 states, "Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith and you will be successful."

Isaiah 7:9, "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."

1. We stand by faith

Romans 11:20-21 state, "They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either."

2 Corinthians 1:24 states, "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm."

2. We only overcome by faith

In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail."

3. Failure to obtain God's blessings and the accompanying, judgment, came upon God's people because of lack of faith!

Hebrews 3:18-19 state, "And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief."

The children of Israel died in the wilderness, instead of enjoying the land of milk and honey, as a result of God's judgment on them because of their **unbelief!**"

Deuteronomy 1:31-38 state, "And in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place. In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. When the LORD heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: `Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it... but, Joshua, son of Nun, will enter it.'"

Deuteronomy 32:19-20 state, "The LORD saw this...(Israel's idolatry)... and rejected them because He was angered by his sons and daughters. `I will hide My face from them," He said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who have no faith."

There are other verses that show God's judgment because of lack of faith.

Psalms 78:21-22 state, "When the LORD heard them, he was very angry; his fire broke out against Jacob, and his wrath rose against Israel, for they did not believe in God, or trusted in His salvation." Then verses 32-33 state, "In spite of all this, they kept on sinning in spite of God's wonders, they did not believe. So He ended their days in futility and their years in terror."

II. What is Faith?

Hebrews 11:1 states, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." The Weymouth's translation of this same verse reads, "*Now faith is a confident assurance of that for which we hope, a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see.*"

A. Faith seems strange and paradoxical

1. One does not have the thing he desires, yet, by faith, he has the substance, or assurance, of it.

This is the strange result of faith; and yet it is proven to be a sound position, because it does not leave one there; it really produces the results.

Psalms 27:13 states, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see."

2. Faith looks into the unseen and reckons what it sees as in the realm of the seen.

Faith brings the improbable into the realm of the probable, and it brings the impossible, from all human viewpoints, into the realm of the possible.

Hebrews 11:3 states, "By faith we understand that...what is seen was not made out of what was visible."

3. Faith does not lie. We need to understand clearly that faith does not say you have a thing when you do not have it, nor does it say you do not have something when it is very evident that you do. That would be plain, unadulterated falsehood, and God does not lie. [It is never necessary for anyone to **lie** to please God.]

The thing that faith does is to cause one to be just as sure he is going to receive that for which he is believing, as through it were already his!

The one who exercises faith could not be certain of the things he believes for than if the needed things were already in his possession.

To illustrate: Two girls were counting their pennies: One said, "*I have five pennies.*" The other said, "*I have ten.*" "No," said the first girl, "*you have just five cents, the same as I have.*" The second girl replied, "*My papa said that when he came home tonight he would give me five cents, and so I have ten cents.*" **THE CHILD'S FAITH GAVE HER PROOF OF THAT WHICH SHE DID NOT AS YET SEE, AND SHE COUNTED IT AS BEING ALREADY HERS, BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN PROMISED BY HER FATHER!**

Martin Luther's translation of Hebrews 11:27 is helpful, "*For he held on to him whom he saw not, just as though he saw Him.*"

Faith is not hoping, or wishing, or merely desiring. Faith is utter confidence.

4. Faith is not something strange, or unreal, or intangible.

Faith is substance...spiritual substance...just as real in the spiritual world as any substance we know in the material. It is not some peculiar, mysterious quality which one must strive desperately to generate.

B. Faith is based on three very definite things

1. Knowledge

- (a) Faith is not a leap into the dark. It is not a blind act of the soul. Faith is not walking in the dark it is, rather, stepping in the light. True, the light may not shine very far ahead, however, it always shows the **next step**, and, after all, that is all one can take at one time. Then, when he does take that step, there will be enough light to show the next one. God does not ask us to do the impossible;

nor does He allow us to see the full length of the journey before we start out.

If a train engineer insisted on seeing the full length of the track, and around every turn, before he took the train out at night he would never leave the station. But, rather, there is a headlight up in front and that shows him enough of the track to enable him to begin the journey. As he goes ahead in the beam of light the light shines on before and eventually the whole journey is completed. Likewise, if we walk by faith in the light God sheds on our pathway, the light will move on before us.

John Newton has expressed the true walk of faith in the words:

*"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me."*

No, faith is not walking in the dark. Faith is stepping in the little ray of light that shines ahead and, believing that, when that step is taken, there will be enough light ahead to show the next step...**and there always is!**

- (b) Faith is not believing a thing without evidence. It is based on the best of evidence - the Word of God. God has spoken, and faith simply expects God to fulfill His Word. There is nothing mysterious about it. It is just plainly and simply taking God at His Word
- (c) Believing with the heart, without the head, is out of the question. There must first be the knowledge that God has promised. One does not need to understand **how**, or even **when**, God will fulfill His promise. All one needs to know is that God has said it, and thus he can be assured it shall be done. Faith does not necessarily understand...**it simply knows!** One can see the tremendous necessity of knowing what God has said, and of having an intimate knowledge of the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 9:10 states, "*And they that know Thy Name shall put their trust in Thee.*"

Romans 10:14 states, "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?" and verse 17 states, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Faith is based on **knowledge** - but not on knowledge alone

There are two other important things: **assent and appropriation**

2. Assent.

Must be an assent of the mind to the truth of the promise. If one does not agree to the truth of what God has said, there can never be any faith!

Mark 12:32 states, "And the scribes said unto Him, `Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth." These scribes "*knew*" that what Jesus taught was truth, however, they would not give **assent** to it.

3. Appropriation

After, first, **knowing** what God has promised, and after, secondly, **assenting to the truth** of that promise, then, faith reaches out and takes (or appropriates) what is promised.

Knowledge itself is not enough! A man may have the knowledge that Christ is Divine and, yet, reject Him as Savior. Knowledge affirms the reality of these things, however, it neither accepts nor rejects. Nor is **assent** enough because there is an assent of the mind which does not convey a surrender of the heart and, it is "*with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*"

Real faith is in the realm of the will and action! It appropriates. It takes Faith always has the idea of action in it. **Faith has legs!** It is the soul leaping up to embrace God's promise.

Romans 4:21, speak of Abraham's faith, states, "being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

To believe means, "*to live by,*" implying a real surrender and dependence. Philip Brooks' definition of faith was:

Forsaking
All
I
Trust
Him!

C. There is a difference between belief and faith!

1. Belief is mental; faith is actual.
2. Belief is in the realm of the thought; faith is in the sphere of action.
3. Faith is action upon what you believe.
4. Faith includes trust - utter reliance and dependence.

The story is told of a guide, conducting a party through a large factory. In the course of the tour - they came to a place where he showed them a pot of molten metal, and, picking up a bottle of some sort of liquid, he said to the company of people, "*If I should put some of this liquid on your hand, I would then be able to pour some of this molten metal on your hand and it would not hurt it in any way.*" The people were amazed and marveled at such a remarkable thing. The guide then addressed a lady, who was near the front, "*Let me show you how it works.*" The lady

drew back and exclaimed, "*Oh, no! I believe what you say and I think it is perfectly marvelous. I never heard of anything so wonderful. But, I don't want to try it on me!*" The guide tried to get others to undergo the experiment, however; they all withdrew with much the same words. They **believed** him perfectly. They all thought it was wonderful, but they preferred not to have it tried on them. Finally a man came forward and said, "*I believe what you say, and I am going to trust you that it will be just as you say and that it will not hurt me.*" The liquid was applied, and the metal was poured on the hand, and there was, as the man had said, no harm whatever. What a great difference there was between, this man and all the others. They believed **mentally**, however, he was willing to trust and act.

Likewise, God is looking for those who will really trust their all to Him.

5. There are two kinds of energy known to science: **Potential and Kinetic**

Potential energy is possible energy, however, inactive, while kinetic energy is energy on the move. For instance, a huge mountain lake...high above sea level...containing thousands of acre-feet of water. is a great body of **potential** energy in the eyes of an electrical engineer. After the engineers have constructed the necessary tunnels, turbines, and generators, in the power house at the foot of the mountain, and that water begins to flow down and turn the turbines and generators, sending electricity out into thousands of homes and factories to perform its multiplicity of duties, it is transformed from **potential** to **kinetic** energy. It is active! It is accomplishing something! It is on the move! So, too, it can be said of the two kinds of faith: **Active** and **Passive**. Real faith is active. It is on the move. It really accomplishes something in the kingdom of God.

D. The Characteristics of faith

1. The New Testament give us two examples of great faith.

In the following Scriptures we have the account of the two individuals whom Jesus said had "**great faith**." It is interesting to notice the **characteristics** of these two, and thus to see what great faith is like and what the description are of those who have it.

First Example: The Centurion - Matthew 8:5-10 and Luke 7:1-10

Matthew 8:5-10 state, "When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 'Lord,' he said, 'my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.' Jesus said to him, 'I will go and heal him.' The centurion replied, 'Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.' When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, 'I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.'"

Luke 7:1-10 state, "When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing

of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.' So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: 'Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.' When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, 'I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.' Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well."

When thinking of one who has "*great faith*," we are tempted to expect something out of ordinary, something marvelous, and outstanding, in his characteristics. We are prone to think, "*Surely, here is a great flourishing individual!*" However, I am sure that we will be greatly surprised when we find out what this centurion's characteristics really were. First he was:

(a) UNSELFISHNESS

Notice his concern for the sick man, who was only a servant, yet his master was concerned about him. Faith is concerned about *others*. Many would have more faith if they were more unselfish.

Note, also, his attitude toward the Jews was unselfish. They were of a different faith, nevertheless, he built them a synagogue.

This centurion sent a message to Jesus not to trouble Himself by coming, but to just say a word only. Many are so occupied with their own importance that they feel God should leave everything else and come to their assistance...even for a little thing...and they do not like it if He does not.

Unselfishness thinks of the efforts of, and trouble to, others, however, great faith is unselfish.

(b) HUMILITY

How surprising this is, because you would naturally expect to find one of "*great faith*" being quite exalted, however, this is not so. This centurion, whom Jesus said had *great faith*, was very humble.

The *people* praised him for his greatness and deeds of kindness to them. and declared that he was worthy; but he said, "*I am not worthy.*" Scripture teaches that, "*It is better to have others praise you than to do it yourself.*" He felt he was not worthy even to have Jesus come into his home. True faith...**great faith**...is always humble! Real faith minimizes self and

magnifies God. Hence it always is accompanied by sincere humility!

(c) SIMPLICITY

This centurion was very simple in his approach to the whole matter. The need of his servant presented no ponderous matter. All that was necessary was for Jesus to speak. That would be enough. Faith is not complex or complicated thing - it is absolute simplicity. God has said it and faith simply says, "***He is able to do what He has promised. I believe it, that is all!***"

(d) CONFIDENCE

This centurion had utter confidence in the authority and power of the Word of the Lord. There is not the suggestion of a doubt, in his heart, that the Lord's word would not be obeyed. Faith is based on a confidence in the Word of God.

(e) SPIRITUAL THINGS ARE REAL

Spiritual things were just as real to this centurion as *natural* things. He was used to giving orders to his servants and having them obeyed, and he felt that the affliction...the spirit of infirmity...would obey Jesus just as his servants obeyed him. The spiritual world was just as real to him as the natural world. The same is true today, also, if we will grasp and believe it.

2. Second Example of Great Faith - The Syrophenecian Woman

Matthew 15:21-28 state, "Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.' Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.' The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said. He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.' 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered, 'Woman, ***you have great faith!*** Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."

The outstanding characteristic of this woman's faith was her determination to overcome every obstacle and get what she desired. She had quite a number of things to overcome:

(a) She was a Canaanite and, as such, had no claim on Jesus.

She called Him, "***Son of David,***" however, she had no claim on Him as such for she was not an Israelite. In fact, in the Old Testament, the Israelites had been commanded to destroy the Canaanites. The fact that Jesus "*answered her not a word*" was not unkind...it was a merciful act...because, if he had spoken to her, as "*the son of David,*" it could only have been to condemn her, therefore, He was silent.

(b) The disciples wanted Jesus to send her away.

However, Jesus answered, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,*" and, in that statement He showed her the way to blessing. He was sent to those who were **lost!** He was not sent, necessary to a privileged class, but, rather, to those who were *lost* and, she could find a foothold here!

(c) She was called a dog.

This was not meant as an insult, but, rather, it was a suggestion as to how she could get what she wanted. As a Gentile, she could not claim the bread of the children. Jesus suggested to her that, if she would be willing to take the place of a little dog (the humble place) she could receive what she asked for. She did take the humble place and she did receive. Great faith is utterly humble. Faith wants what it needs badly enough to be willing to do anything to receive it.

So many want a "**special dispensation from heaven**" in their behalf. However, this woman believed that a crumb would be enough, for her need. A crumb from God's table will meet our every need. What then is in store for those who draw nigh to the banqueting house!

3. Further characteristics of faith

(a) **IMPORTUNITY**

Importunity may be defined as "*a bothersome persistence*. Faith is determined to receive the answer. Faith will not take "No" for an answer.

The following Scriptures give two examples of importunate faith:

Luke 11:5-9 states, "Then he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 'So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.'"

Luke 18:1-8 states, "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says.

And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

(b) PATIENCE

The classic example of the patience of faith is Abraham, who had waited 25 years for his son Isaac to be born.

Hebrews 6:15 states, "*And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.*"

True faith is willing to wait. It is not in a hurry!

Isaiah 28:16 states, "*He that believeth shall not make haste.*"

Isaiah 30:18 states, "*Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you...blessed are all they that wait for Him*"

Hebrews 6:12 states, "*Be...followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*"

(c) RESTFULNESS

While faith is waiting, it is not nervous, but, rather it is perfectly restful. Hebrews 4:3 states, "*Now we who have believed enter that rest.*"

(d) JOY

There is a deep joy in believing God. The trusting man is the happy man!

Psalms 5:11, "Let all who take refuge in you...(put their trust in You)... be glad...(rejoice)...let them ever sing...(shout) ...for joy. Spread your protection over them...(because You defend them)...that those who love your name may rejoice...(be joyful)...in you."

Proverbs 16:20, "Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he."

III. THE POSSIBILITIES AND POWER OF FAITH

There is absolutely no limit to what one may have, and what may be accomplished, if he will believe. Faith lifts one out of the merely natural into the supernatural. It brings you in contact with the infinite, and brings the infinite into your life and surroundings. "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). It might be well to **stipulate** some of the definite things which are promised to the one who will believe.

A. OBTAINING THE SUPPLY OF OUR PERSONAL NEEDS

1. Salvation by faith

"For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the world" (Hebrews 10:39).

2. The fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith

"That we might receive the promised of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14). "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive" (John 7:39). The fullness of the Holy Spirit can only be received through faith!

3. Victory over our adversaries by faith.

The Christian's chief adversaries may be summed up as: The **World**, the **Flesh** and the **Devil**

(a.) The "**world**" is overcome by faith

"This is the victory that overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4).

(b.) The "**flesh**" [or old man] is overcome by faith

"Reckon...[an act of faith]...ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

(c.) Victory over the "**devil**" is by faith

"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:6,16). "So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:23). "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32).

4. The entire Christian life is lived by faith

"The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11). "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

5. Perfect peace in the heart is through faith

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3).

6. Sanctification is by faith

"And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).

7. Every blessing we receive is ours by faith

*"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently see Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith has been said to be "**The currency of heaven,**" and without it nothing can be obtained at the throne of grace.*

For instance, if a sick man wishes to ask God to heal his physical body, he would make his request known to God in **faith**. *"The prayer of **faith** shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James 5:15). We must not lose sight of the fact that faith is mentioned in connection with many of the healings recorded in the New Testament. "Daughter be of good comfort; thy **faith** hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour" (Matthew 9:22). "Go thy way; thy **faith** hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight" (Mark 10:52). "Arise, go thy way: thy **faith** hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:19). "The same heard Paul speak; who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had **faith** to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy fee. And he leaped and walked" (Acts 14:9-10)*

B. OBTAINING THINGS FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS AND THE GLORY OF GOD - FAITH IS THE REALM OF ACHIEVEMENT - FAITH FOR THE GREAT WORK OF GOD THROUGH THE WORLD.

1. We dare not be selfish and merely pray for blessings for ourselves. Selfishness will be a real hindrance and will paralyze faith. Faith is utterly unselfish. It is possible to so believe that we can precipitate the blessings of salvation, and real revival upon others!
2. It appears from a study of the Scriptures [especially as summarized in the 11th chap of Heb] that little or nothing is ever accomplished on earth that concerns the welfare of mankind especially in relation to his moral and spiritual nature, that is not brought to pass because of some body's faith! This is an astounding statement, and yet we believe it is in accordance with the Word of God. Not only **CAN** we believe for others, but somebody **MUST** believe before victory in the work of the Gospel is won.
3. Here are just a few of God's challenges: *"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).*

"*Fear not; believe only, and shall be made whole*" (Luke 8:50). This had reference to the raising of one who was dead.

"*Where is your faith?*" (Luke 8:25). This refers to stilling a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

"*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you*" (Matthew 17:20).

"*Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 18: 19).

"*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father*" (John 14:12).

Here is a mighty Niagara of power for the believer! The great question for the Christian to answer is not "*What can I do?*" but, rather, "*How much can I believe?*" for "*all things are possible to him that believeth.*"

George Muller has been referred to as the "**modern apostle of faith.**" The marvelous story of how Muller operated a great orphanage *by faith* has thrilled readers everywhere. During Muller's lifetime almost ten thousand orphans were sheltered, fed, and educated in his orphanage located at Ashley Down, Bristol, England. The cost of caring for these orphans was almost eight million dollars. You might say, "*Well, Muller must have been a rich man to have such large sums of money available for the support of so many homeless children.*" No, Muller himself was very poor - it was his heavenly Father Who was rich! At the age of 93, shortly before his death, Muller was able to say, "***Never have I asked a living human being for a penny, nor allowed a helper to make the needs of the orphanage known to anyone.***" He asked no one but the God of heaven to supply the needs. Because of Muller's *simple faith* God sent him millions of dollars for the benefit of others and for the glory of God.

Near the close of his life, someone asked Mr. Muller the following question, "*Have you always found the Lord faithful to His promise?*" The reply came, "*Always; He has never failed me! For nearly seventy years every need in connection with this work has been supplied. The orphans, from the first until now, have numbered nine thousand five hundred; but they have never wanted a meal. Hundreds of times we have commenced the day without a penny; but our Heavenly Father has sent supplies the moment they were actually required. There never was a time when we had no wholesome meal. During all these years I have been enabled to trust in the living God alone. Seven million five hundred thousand dollars have been sent to me in answer to prayer. We have needed as much as two hundred thousand dollars in one year, and it has all come when needed. No man can ever say I asked him for a penny. We have no committees, no collectors, no voting, and no endowments. All has come in answer to believing prayer. God has many ways of moving the hearts of men*"

to help us, all over the world. While I am praying, He speaks to one and another on this continent and on that, to send us help. Only the other evening, while I was preaching, a gentleman wrote a check for a large amount and handed it to me when the service was over."

If we, by imagination, place ourselves in Muller's position - a position of have no finances at hand on hundreds of occasions, and having the responsibility of feeding, clothing, educating, and providing for as many as 2000 persons at one time, then we are able to see what **faith** was required on his part. In the book entitled "*The Path of Prayer*," by Samuel Chadwick, we read of an interesting incident which occurred with Mr. Muller invited Dr. A.T. Pierson to spend a few days in the orphanage as his guest.

"One night when all the household had retired he [Muller] asked Pierson to join him in prayer. He told him that there was absolutely nothing in the house for next morning's breakfast. My friend tried to remonstrate with him and to remind him that all the stores were closed. Muller knew all that. He had prayed as he always prayed, and he never told anyone of his needs but God. They prayed - at least Muller did - and Pierson tried to. They went to bed and slept, and breakfast for two thousand children was there in abundance at the usual breakfast hour. Neither Muller nor Pierson ever knew how the answer came. The story was told next morning to Simon Short of Bristol, under the pledge of secrecy until the benefactor died. The details of it are thrilling, but all that need be told here is that the Lord called him out of bed in the middle of the night to send breakfast to Muller's orphanage, and knowing nothing of the need, or of the two men at prayer, he sent provisions that would feed them a month. this is like the Lord God of Elijah, and still more like the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

When the aged Mr. Muller was asked if his faith was being tested and tried in the last years as much as it had been in the earlier years of his life, his answer was, *"My faith is tried as much as ever, and my difficulties are greater than ever. Besides our financial responsibilities, suitable helpers have constantly to be found, and suitable places provided for hundreds of orphans constantly leaving the homes. Then often our funds run very low; only the other week we had come nearly to the end of our supplies. I called my beloved helpers together, and said to them, "Pray, brethren, pray!" Immediately five hundred dollars was sent us, then a thousand, and in a few days seven thousand five hundred came in. But we have always to be praying, always believing. Oh, it is good to trust in the living God, for He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5. Expect great things from God, and great things you will have. There is no limit to what He is able to do. Praise for ever to His glorious name! Praise Him for everything! I have praised Him many times when He sent me ten cents, and I have praised Him when He has send me sixty thousand dollars."*

C. The measure of accomplishment

How much will I see done? Matthew 9:29 states, "*According to your faith be it unto you.*"

Big faith - big achievement.

Little faith - little achievement!
No faith - no achievement!

God will give us whatever we believe for. If it is for little, or for much, He will honor our faith. The story is told of an imaginary scene in heaven. An angel comes to God and informs Him that a certain individual, down on earth, has just prayed and sent a request to heaven. The Father asks, "*What did he send up his faith in?*" The angel looks around and searches and finally, after some time and effort, he locates a thimble. "*Here it is*" he says, "*Here is what he sent his faith up in.*" The Lord replies, "*Fill it up for him and send it down.*" And the angel fills the thimble up and sends it back full of the requested blessing. Some time later, the angel comes into the presence of the Lord and informs Him that someone else is praying, someone else has sent up a request. "*In what did he send up his faith?*", is the question that is again asked. The angel knows better than to look around inside and so goes outside to find what the faith was sent up in. After some time, six stalwart angels come trudging along with a great hogshead...[a large cask which holds up to 140 gallons]...on their shoulders. "*Here is what he sent up his faith in,*" they said. "*Fill it up for him and send it down,*" the Lord says, and so they fill the great hogshead to the brim and it is sent down laden with blessing.

"According to your faith be it unto you."

D. An illustration of how faith operates

Faith may be aptly likened to a power cable, over which the electricity runs, between the dynamo and the machinery, or other electric appliance. Without that power cable, or electric wire, the machinery would never turn, for there would be nothing by which the power could be transmitted from the dynamo to the machine. The cable is vitally necessary, for it is the avenue over which the power flows. The very moment the connection is made between the dynamo and the machine, the power begins to flow and something is accomplished. So it is with faith. God is the great dynamo - He is omnipotent. We are the machines through which He seeks to operate in the world, but if there is no connection between us and the Eternal Dynamo - nothing will happen. Faith is that connection, that cable, that avenue, over which the power of God flows into our lives and, through our lives, to others. Without faith - all the machinery of Christian service is dead, but the very moment, - in vital faith, - we touch the source of heavenly supply - great things are done for God. And as long as the connection is kept intact the blessing will flow; but let something break that vital connection of faith and the power is cut off. Let us, then, keep our faith strong, and our connection with the Infinite Source of power secure.

IV. Hindrances to Faith

Man has a natural tendency is to believe in people. A baby is born trusting everyone. A child has to be "*educated*" **not** to believe in people. Even when we are deceived many times, we still have a desire to trust our fellow men. It seems apparent that man has a natural desire to believe in God. There is something within the human heart that desires to believe in the reality of God. If we do not have a simple confidence in God it is because something has come into our life to counteract, or neutralize, our faith.

Jesus said in Mark 9:23, "If you **could** believe, all things are possible to him that believes." Notice, that Jesus did not say, "if you **would** believe," but, rather, He said, "if thou **could** believe."

There are times when we would like to believe and, yet, we are utterly unable to do so. Why is this so? The reason it is so, is because there are times when certain **hindrances** make it impossible for us to believe.

If we could only discover what these "hindrances" are that keep us from believing and, if we can learn how to remove them, then we would be able to believe God as He desires that we should.

WHAT ARE THESE HINDRANCES THAT KEEP US FROM BELIEVING?

There is no doubt that Satan is behind all the hindrances that keeps us from believing. He concentrates on hindering our faith. There are several ways in which he attempts to hinder us from believing in God. Let's look at a few of these methods.

1. Satan attempts to hinder our faith by keeping God's Word from bringing forth faith in our heart. Satan attempts to take God's Word from our heart before it has a chance to generate faith. Jesus taught in Luke 8:12, "*Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts lest they should believe.*" How does Satan attempt to take God Word from our hearts?

First, Satan attempts to take God's Word from our hearts by causing us to **neglect** the reading and study of God's Word.

Secondly, Satan attempts to take God's Word from our hearts by filling our minds with so many other things that we do not have room to retain God's Word.

Thirdly, Satan attempts to take God's Word from our hearts by throwing doubt, and questioning, on what God has said. If Satan cannot take God's Word *out of our hearts* **immediately**...by neglect or preoccupation...he will seek to cause us to **doubt** it.

Remember, what Satan said to our first parents in the Garden of Eden? He approached them by questioning, "*Yea, hath God said?*" [Genesis 3:1]. And, then, this doubt, which Satan planted in Eve's mind, bore fruit and prepared the way for a flat denial of God's Word, when he said, "*Ye shall not surely die*" [Genesis 3:4].

Another methods Satan uses to hinder our believing in God's Word are:

SIN

Sin in the life of God's children utterly paralyzes faith. David said in Psalm 66:18, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" There can be no confidence that God will hear us, **IF** our hearts and conscience condemn us. 1 John 3:20-21, "*If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*"

DISOBEDIENCE

"Faith is a flower that grows in the pathway of obedience"

Nothing stimulates faith more than obedience to God's commands. There are always conditions to God's promises and when we obey His commands and fulfill our part of the conditions, we can have nothing but perfect confidence that God will fulfill His part. However, on the other hand, disobedience completely destroys this confidence. 1 John 3:22, *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."*

Refusal to walk in, or pray according to, God's will constitutes disobedience, and faith can only operate when we ask according to God's will. 1 John 5:14-15 states, *"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."*

It is important for us in understand faith that countless prayers are often nullified by the appendage, ***"If it be Thy will."***

The only time that this phrase is prayed in Scripture was when Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, concerning His drinking the cup of bitterness... [becoming sin for the mankind]...and Jesus was **not** praying in doubt, that is, it wasn't that He did not know what God's will was in this matter, He **did** know, however, He was praying, ***"since*** this Your will, Father, I will drink of this cup.

I trust I will not be misunderstood, of course, all prayer, must be according to God's will. However, rather than paying in doubt, *"If it be Thy will,"* it would be far better if we would determine what God's will is before we ask without having any idea of whether God wants to answer our request or not.

The word *"if"* brings a wavering to one's praying and, James 1:6-7 teaches, *"he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."*

We can know God's will. Ephesians 5:17 teaches, *"Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."* If we determine what God's will is before we pray, then we will have no doubt that the petition we pray for will be granted, and our prayer will certainly, be greatly enhanced and faith our strengthened.

LACK OF LOVE

Another method which Satan uses to attempt to hinder us from believing in God's Word is a **lack of love toward God**. Faith works by love. Galatians 5:6 teaches, *"But faith which worketh by love."* Often we do not have faith because we do not obey God's commandment, and the reason we do not obey God's commands is because we do not love Him as we should. Jesus said, *"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me...If a man love Me, he will keep My words...He that loveth*

Me not keepeth not My sayings" [John 14:21-24]. Love brings obedience and obedience brings love!

SELFISHNESS

Selfishness, or a lack of love toward others, is another method Satan uses to bring hindrances into our lives and keep us from exercising faith in God's Word.

If more of us would enlarge our horizon and begin to be more concerned about others ...Christian and non-Christian...there would be a great deal more faith springing up in our hearts. Many have become so self-centered that all they can see is their own need and, because they have not been able to get their need met, what faith they had, is gone! If we would only forget our own self for a while and begin to take on our heart the burden of others, many of our own needs would be met in the very process of believing for others.

FEAR

The words "*Fear not*" occurs 86 times in the Bible. It is necessary that we hear these words today. Where there is fear, there cannot be faith.

Fear intimidates. When you are afraid, you cannot even do what you are otherwise quite able, ordinarily, to do. Timidity, or fear, is the very opposite of confidence and faith bring courage.

Fear paralyzes How many times, when frightened, have we felt "*frozen to the spot*," unable to do a thing? Fear, also, paralyzes spiritual movement, however, faith is active.

Fear magnifies difficulties. How often, when we are afraid, a mere shadow has assumed tremendous proportions. Fear causes present difficulties to appear insurmountable, but faith will minimize every obstacle.

God will judge the fearful. Revelation 21:8 names the, "*fearful*" first in the list of those who will be judged, and states that they "*shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire.*"

WORRY

God's Word teaches, "*Fret not thyself*" [Psalm 37:1]. Jesus said, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled*" John 14:1 Philippians 4:6 states, "*Do not be anxious*" If we trust, we do not worry, and if we worry, we do not trust. This is the test of our faith; Asking ourselves, "How much do we worry?"

We often excuse this characteristic and feel that we just must do a certain amount of worry. We are prone to think that things would not keep going if we did not worry - just a little! After all, didn't mother always worry? It must be born in us to worry! Yes, worry is a most *natural*, however, let us not forget that we are *spiritual*, now. The sooner we condemn this thing that we have been excusing and see it in its true light, as robbing

us of so much that God has for us, the sooner will our faith increase.

A man once said to a Christian lady who always seemed cheerful, "Suppose you got sick and, as a result you lose your job, and you couldn't pay your rent, how cheerful would you be then?" The Christian lady responded, "**Stop it!** Stop all your *supposings*. It is all these supposes that makes you so miserable!"

I like what the little boy said, when someone asked him what the preacher said. He couldn't remember exactly what the preacher said, so he put it in his own words, and he said, "*The Lord is my shepherd, I should worry?*"

Worry is not only a sin against God, it is a sin against ourselves! Thousands have shortened their lives by worry Millions have made their lives bitter by allowing the gall of worry into their souls!

We have a right to ask God for strength equal to the day, but we do not have a right to ask Him for one extra ounce of strength for tomorrow's burden. When tomorrow comes, grace will come for it, and sufficient for the tasks, the trials, or the troubles. **God does not give strength enough to stand the strain of present duties AND tomorrow's duties and sufferings piled up on the top to them**

LAZINESS

This age is an age of ease and ease is no stimulus to faith. Faith grows and develops in the heat of battle! Your struggle may be hard and you wondered why God led you into it, however, if you persevere and overcome you will emerge from the battle with your faith strengthened and your confidence in God renewed.

Many have "*little faith*" because they are just too lazy to pray and spend the time necessary to study God's Word Faith is restful, but it is not lazy. Isaiah 64:7 states, "*Let us stir up ourselves and take hold of God.*"

PRESUMPTION

Some characteristics of presumption are:

1. There is a fanatical side to every Bible truth! Any truth can become overbalanced and its power and blessing will be lost as it turns to fanaticism. The fanatical attitude toward faith is presumption!
2. Presumption is set in its views. It is severe and harsh with those who differ in opinion. Remember, that faith works by love, and that a harsh, set, unkind attitude, which repels instead of draws, is not true faith. You cannot tell a presumptuous person anything, because he thinks he knows it all
3. Presumption is spectacular. It continually calls attention to the individual rather than to the Lord. It is certain it cannot be wrong. Presumption claims it has "*heard from heaven.*" A presumptuous person will state, "*the Lord told me so,*" with emphasis on the **ME** rather than on the Lord, however, true faith is humble!

4. Presumption is a spurious counterfeit of faith that causes one to repent of sin **when he plans to commit it again**. For one to declare Biblical principles to others and, yet, have his heart filled with anger, or to claim to have love for others and yet, have bitterness in one's heart, is to be a terror to relatives and friends!

Jesus' great concern that He would not "*tempt the Lord God*" [Luke 4:12], certainly, indicates His attitude toward presumption. Jesus never did one thing for spectacular purposes. While Jesus never performed a miracle to *impress* the Temple throng, nevertheless, whenever there was a need...out on a lonely hillside...on wave-tossed sea...or...on the distant mountain, He preformed miracles aplenty! Great droughts of fishes were provided, loaves multiplied, blind eye were opened and graves despoiled. Not once did Jesus ever perform a miracle for Himself. Every miracle Jesus performed was for someone else.

HOW TO AVOID PRESUMPTION

The only way one will ever avoid presumption is by examining their motives. True faith is utterly unselfish! It never seeks personal aggrandizement, or self exultation.

To avoid presumption one needs to ask him self the following questions:

1. Whenever I ask God for a request is the desire that motivates me solely for the glory of God alone?
2. Whenever I ask God for a request is there no hidden reward for self?
3. Whenever I ask God for a request am I perfectly willing that it should not be granted, providing God has some other way?
4. Whenever I ask God for a request am I perfectly willing for the answer to come to another. Would I have a twinge of regret if someone else carried on my desire and wins success by the answer to my request? Am I willing to I sink into obscurity and be laid on the shelf?
5. Am I willing to wait? Perfect faith is patience lifted to the "Nth" degree!

V. THE SOURCE OF FAITH AND HOW TO OBTAIN IT

Faith is a gift, not something that someone can generate by tightening his muscles and going through some kind of mental concentration or contortions. Faith cannot be worked up by desperate shouting, or any physical manipulations. Faith is given by God, and not one atom of faith exists in the world except as God has given it!

Faith is a gift of all the members of the Godhead.

First, the Father, because Romans 12:3 states, "*According as God hath dealt to every*

man...[that is, every believer, according to Romans 1:7]... the measure of faith."

Secondly, the Son, because Hebrews 12:2 states, "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*"

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit, because 1 Corinthians 12:9 states that the Spirit gives, "*To another, faith by the same Spirit.*"

LIVING IN CHRIST'S FAITH

The secret of living a victorious Christian life, be it in the realm of our faith or any other spiritual characteristic, lies in our appropriation of the blessings and victories of our Risen Lord and Savior. Paul's victorious life was not lived by his own faith, because he tells us, "*The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me*" [Galatians 2:20]. In other words, Paul was appropriating Christ's faith - and every one of us can do that! What a blessed privilege! What masterly faith would be ours if we could have the faith of the Son of God. This wondrous possibility is worked out, practically, in us through the truth of Colossians 1:27, which states, "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" If Christ abides within us, then we can have His faith. Hallelujah!

Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9). This is the highest kind of faith. It is faith for spiritual ministry rather than, primarily, for personal needs.

Since faith is a **gift**, let's ask for it! A gift is never merited, but, rather, it is always of pure grace. Don't try to work up faith, just ask God to give it to you. Do not make the mistake of just saying, "*Well, since faith is the gift of God, if He wants me to have it, He will give it to me.*" The air to breathe is the gift of God, however, you must breathe it to have it. Water to drink is a gift of God, however, you must drink it to have it. Faith is a gift of God, but you must actively appropriate it. It is not the **amount** of faith that matters. We often hear people say, "*I do not have enough faith.*" It is not the quantity that counts it is just having it. Faith is very concentrated and "*a little goes a long way.*" Jesus said, "*If you have faith as a **grain of mustard seed**.*" The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds, however, it multiplies tremendously whenever it is planted under proper conditions. God is pleased with faith, as He states in His Word, therefore, He is especially pleased to give us the faith which we desire of Him!

Faith as a development

Galatians 5:22 states, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is...faith.*" Faith is the only characteristic that is said to be both a Gift of the Holy Spirit and a Fruit of the Spirit. The significant thing about fruit is that it does not grow *suddenly* nor of its own strenuous efforts. Fruit develops gradually, steadily, and each day there is a further development in its progress. So it should be with our faith. The one requirement for fruit growing is *abiding*.

First, in John 15:5 Jesus said, "*He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*" A continual, steady, abiding walk in the fellowship of Jesus will - without any conscious effort on our part, result in the growth of the fruit of the Spirit - **faith** - upon the branch of our life! Do not try to force it, nor generate it! Keep abiding in Christ and it will automatically grow, slowly, steadily, but surely!

Secondly, Romans 10:17 states, "*So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*" Faith comes as a result of reading and studying the Bible.

- a. Faith must be based on fact and not on feeling. Fact leads. Faith, with its eye on fact, follows, and feeling, with its eye on faith, follows. All goes well as long as this order is observed, however, the moment faith turns its back on fact and looks at feeling, the procession wobbles. We dare not base our faith on our feelings. Feelings are too uncertain.

Isaac is one man in the Bible of whom we read that he went by his feeling. When Jacob appeared before his father, who was now old and blind, and told him it was Esau, with his pot of venison ready, Isaac said, "*Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not*" [Genesis 27:21]. Esau was a hairy man - and - Jacob a smooth man, however, Jacob had covered his arms and the smooth of his neck with goat skins, and as Jacob went near his father, his father felt him. And his father, Isaac said, "*The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.*"

Isaac went by his feeling instead of the voice, and the mistake was made. If we go by the Word instead of our feelings, our faith will be greatly increased and we will not make mistakes as Isaac did.

John 20:29 states, "*Jesus saith unto him, `Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*"

- b. Faith is not something which you feel. It is not something of which your physical senses relate to you. You may *feel*, or *not feel*, that you have faith, however, faith is not the result of feeling. Nor does faith stop at feeling, but, rather, it simply stands on God's Word, regardless of how one feels.
- c. Don't be constantly looking to your faith in order to generate more faith. Simply keep your eyes on the promises of God and faith will automatically take care of itself. Many say, "*If I only had more faith*" and, then, they are constantly looking within to see how much faith they have. They find that they do not have very much faith and that fact discourages them and they immediately lose whatever faith they did have. Let's say that you put your confidence in an individual, do you waste time looking in your own heart to see if you can trust him? No! You examine the character of the individual. You seek to learn as much as you can about him and then - (if you are satisfied with your investigation) you trust him. You don't try to generate confidence in him. No, your confidence in him naturally comes as a result of your investigation. You don't look within yourself to find more faith in God. You keep your eyes on Him and consider His power, and His faithfulness. Seek to learn more of Jesus Christ and faith will, unconsciously, grow. It seems that those who have the greatest faith are conscious of it the least. The only thing they are conscious of is that they have a Mighty God! As Hudson Taylor said, "*It is not a great faith in God that we need, but faith in a great God.*" Remember, it is not *your faith* which saves; it is the grace and power of God. Faith merely brings God's grace and power into your life

d. Faith is not based on the observance of miracles. Many say, "*If I could see a real miracle, then I know I could believe.*" It seems like a logical thing, however, in the final analysis, it is not true. Real faith must be based on the Word of God, not on anything one can see! Seeing a miracle can reinforce the faith one already has, however, if there is no real faith in one's heart all the miracles in the world will not produce faith. The very ones who rejected and crucified Jesus were those who had seen an abundance of the greatest miracles, fresh from the hand of the Son of God, and yet they did not believe! They continually clamored, "*Show us a sign and we will believe.*" They had seen miracles and healings galore and still they did not believe, and even went to the extent of saying, when Christ was hanging on the cross, "*Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe;*" however, they would not have believed even if Christ had. If you want more faith, get into the Word of God and let it get into you, and faith will grow within your heart.

Thirdly, Faith is a development in answer to, and as a result of, prayer

Luke 17:5 states, "*The apostles said unto the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'*" If the apostles prayed for their faith to be increased, should we also pray to have our faith increased?

The very act of praying, whether we are asking for faith specifically or not, will increase faith. Prayer brings the soul into the very presence of God so that He is made real and His promises become tangible, and spiritual things become vital and near, making it easy to believe. It is difficult to believe in A God Who seems so far off, but as He is made real in the secret place of prayer; to believe Him is the most natural thing in the world.

Fourth, Faith is developed and strengthened through use and testing

The trial of faith is not to be feared, but, rather, to be welcomed. What good is faith, if it cannot stand the test? How many times we have passed through the fire, only to find that when the battle was over, and we had gained the victory through faith in our Mighty God, our faith was strengthened many fold, and we felt ready for other encounters. Flabby muscles never welcome or respond to a strain, however, when they have been constantly in use, they welcome the effort demanded of them. So it is with *faith* that has been kept active 1 Peter 1:7 states, "*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, through it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*" Jesus said to Mary and Martha at Lazarus' grave, "*Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe*" [John 11:14-15].

A man once asked George Muller, "What was the best way to have strong faith?" This patriarch of faith answered, "*The only way to learn strong faith is to endure great trial. I have learned my way by standing firm amid severe testings.*" How true that is!

George Muller went on to say, "*Our faith, which is feeble at first, is developed and strengthened more and more by use. We ought, instead of wanting no trials...to be willing to take them from God's hand as a means. I say - and say it deliberately - trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food for faith. I get letters*

from so many of God's dear children who say: 'Dear Brother Muller: I'm writing this because I'm so weak and feeble in faith.' Just so surely as we ask to have our faith strengthened, we must feel a willingness to take from God's hand the means for strengthening it. We must allow Him to educate us through trials and bereavements and troubles. It is through trials that faith is exercised and developed more and more. God affectionately permits difficulties, that He may develop unceasingly that which He is willing to do for us, and to this end we should not shrink, but if He gives us sorrow and hindrances and losses and afflictions, we should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us."

Someone once said to George Muller, "I could never have the gift of faith as you do," to which Muller replied, "*This is a mistake - it is the greatest error - there is not a particle of truth in it. My faith is the same kind of faith that all God's children had. All Christians may obtain the like faith. My faith is their faith, though thee may be more of it because my faith has been a little more developed by exercise than theirs; but their faith is precisely the faith I exercise, only, with regard to degree, mine may be more strongly exercised.*

"Now, my beloved brothers and sisters, begin in a little way. At first, I was able to trust the Lord for ten dollars, then for a hundred dollars, then for a thousand dollars, and now, with the greatest of ease, I could trust Him for a million dollars, if there was occasion. But first, I should quietly, carefully, deliberately examine and see whether what I was trusting for, was something in accordance with His promises in His written Word."

THREE SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE FAITH IN YOUR HEART:

1. *Settle it once and for all in your mind that the Word of God is true.*

So many attacks are being directed against the Bible today that many Christians are wavering in their confidence in it. Settle this matter, of God's Word being absolutely truth, once and for all. Wavering will bring no blessing and certainly no faith. Modern Science, so called, is changing every few years and its books must be constantly revised and re-written. God's Word has never changed though the centuries. True science corroborates, but never contradicts, the Bible. Let us not be afraid of the Bible failing or being overthrown. Spurgeon was once asked if he could defend the Bible, '*Defend it?*' he replied, "*I would just as soon defend a lion. Let it out, it will defend itself.*" Scripture says, "*Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.*"

2. *Consider the Holy Spirit's dealings in your life.*

Think back over all the way you have come. Has God ever failed you? Have you ever known a time when you earnestly called upon Him and He failed to hear and meet your need? Look back, and, like Samuel, raise a few "*Eben-ezers*" over the places of God's great deliverances in your life and say, "*Hitherto, hath the Lord helped us*" [1 Samuel 7:12]. "*Hitherto*" means "*Henceforth*." If God is "*the same yesterday, and today, and forever*" [Hebrews 13:8]. Will He not still deliver as He has in the past? 2 Corinthians 1:10 states, "*Who [Jesus Christ] delivered us...and doth*

deliver...we trust that He will yet deliver."

3. *Never relax confidence in the fact that God answers prayer.*

This has been proven through the ages. Never doubt God's Word! Do not let Satan cheat you out of your faith by whispering that those blessings and deliverance for which you prayed just happened to come and would have come if you had not prayed. Satan could not tell the truth if he tried. God answers prayer! He has placed Himself in that position where He is bound, by His own Word, to hear and answer prayer - **your** prayer! He has even said, "*concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me*" [Isaiah 45:11].