

Confident Faith

We all have faith. Not everybody recognises this, but it's true. We can't exist without faith.

When you go out in the morning, you have faith that the bus will turn up, or the car will start. You have faith that the shops will be open. If you had no faith, you wouldn't bother getting out of bed.

Of course, your faith is based on facts – it's not blind faith. Suppose you want to go into town. You could sit down by the side of a random road and wait for the right bus to come along – that would be blind faith. You'd probably be waiting for a long time. Or you could look at the timetable to check where and when the bus goes, then wait at the bus stop at the right time – that's faith based on facts. And that way you'd be much more likely to get to town.

The point is, as you stand and wait at the bus stop you don't know for certain that the bus will turn up, but you have faith that it will, based on your knowledge of the facts.



The Christian life is also a life of faith. This is not blind faith, but confident faith based on knowledge and experience.



Christian Faith

A friend once said to me, “I wish I had your faith!” This was a very sad thing to say – it implied that my faith was somehow out of reach for him. That's not true. I think what he really meant was, “I'd like to have your faith but I'm not prepared to give it a go.”

Faith in God is not difficult to achieve. The apostle Paul puts it succinctly:

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

That's all there is to it! Read the Bible with an open mind and a teachable attitude. God's word will then do its job and it will instil faith. It may not happen overnight, but it will happen. Here are three ways in which it can do this:

1 – Fulfilled Prophecy

“You are My witnesses”, says the LORD, “and My servant whom I have chosen. That you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me” (Isaiah 43:10).

In this chapter God is talking to the people of Israel. He is saying, if you

want evidence of My existence just look at yourselves!

Whatever you think of the Jews, you cannot deny that they are a remarkable people with a remarkable history. The Bible is largely concerned with the story of the Jews, from its beginning with Abraham 4,000 years ago, right through to a time that's still future to us. It tells us about the blessings that were promised to them; their failings, faithlessness and folly; God's patience and love for them; their disasters and triumphs. We can marvel at the numerous prophecies that God gave concerning them, many of which have been fulfilled in staggering detail, while others are being fulfilled at the moment and some still remain to be fulfilled.



As you read these prophecies and see their fulfilment, it will require an enormous feat of cynicism to deny that you can see God Himself at work. The prophecies concerning the nation of Israel are just some of the amazing prophecies in the Bible which have been fulfilled, and are still being fulfilled.

2 – Superhuman Wisdom

God gave the Jewish nation a law, which we know as the Law of Moses.

It's contained in the books of Exodus through to Deuteronomy. To modern readers, much of the Law of Moses might seem curious at first sight. However, it is increasingly recognised as being far ahead of its time, for example in terms of medical practice, public health and economic legislation. Moses told Israel:

I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them... Be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people' (Deuteronomy 4:5-6).

The Law of Moses is just one example of how the Bible contains knowledge about the world and how it works, that was well ahead of its time.

3 – Written That You Might Believe

The Gospel of John has a lot to say about belief – which is another word for faith. John focuses on eight particular miracles of Jesus, which he calls 'signs'. These signs are each accompanied by teaching, and usually John takes pains to point out how the sign made people believe in Jesus. Then towards the end of the Gospel he addresses the reader:

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31).

The miracles Jesus performed were compelling aids to faith, for those who witnessed them. And here we are,

2,000 years later, able to read for ourselves the things that Jesus did and taught, and make up our own minds. Elsewhere in this issue of *Glad Tidings* you can read about the reliability of the Gospel records.

Being Certain of Things You Can't See

Hebrews chapter 11 is often called the 'faith chapter', because it is all about faith – what it is, why it is essential, and how to get it. The chapter starts by explaining this about faith:

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

What exactly does that mean? Another translation puts it: *"Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see."*

The chapter goes on to list great men and women of the Bible who lived by faith. Noah believed God when He said He was going to flood the earth, and so he built a massive boat on dry land (no doubt to the derision of his neighbours), and was saved when the Flood washed them away. Abraham left his comfortable life in the civilized city of Ur, in order to become a nomad in the dangerous outback of Canaan, because God made him promises of future blessings and he believed them. Moses turned his back on the life of a prince in Egypt, and instead led the slave-people of Israel to the Promised Land.

What marked out these special people was that they looked beyond the everyday, the things that preoccupied everyone else. They listened to

God, believed Him, and did extraordinary things. The attitude of faith is summed up by Paul:

We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Christians live by faith. They follow Jesus' instruction, "Seek first the Kingdom of God" (*Matthew 6:33*). The things they believe and the things they do might make little sense to people who don't share that faith – but it's always been that way!

Waiting for the Bus

The Christian's faith is not blind faith; it's based on reason and gives great cause for excitement. The Bible provides ample reason for faith.

Imagine you're walking down the street and you see a group of people waiting at a bus stop. You can't see a bus, but that doesn't mean that it isn't coming. It means they've looked at the timetable and they know what they're waiting for. They are acting in faith.

Imagine that this particular group of people is very happy and excited. Wouldn't you stop to see what they are so excited about?

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