

Faith

comes by

Hearing

by David Falk

visionone
[grey bar] .org.au

Faith comes by Hearing

David Falk

July 2009

Published by **visionone**

© Vision One inc. 2009

c/- Toowoomba Christian Fellowship

10 Old Goombungee Road

Toowoomba QLD 4350

Phone: +61 1300 885 048

Email: [info @ visionone.org.au](mailto:info@visionone.org.au)

Restoration Fellowships International Inc

For a full catalogue of our Christian music & publications,
please visit:


visionone
[grey bar]
.org.au

Faith comes by Hearing

I think we would all agree that we cannot know each other unless we communicate; we need to exchange words. We may pass people on the street, but if we don't speak to them, there is no possibility of knowing them. This principle also applies to our Christian lives. The Scripture is quite clear. We read in Paul's letter to the Romans that 'faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ'. Rom 10:17.

It would seem obvious that our relationship with God the Father and with the Lord Jesus Christ, is based in a word. Of course, this would presuppose that we are communicating with Him and that He is communicating with us. However, there is often no spiritual engagement in our secular society. There is no word coming from God to you or to me but that is not because God isn't speaking. It is because we are not listening and, therefore, cannot hear.

I have been considering the spiritual nature of many of the communities and societies around the world. In these communities, spiritual realities are an accepted part of each day. People in India, China and South America, for example, have a spiritual awareness that is second nature to them. But the Western world is largely agnostic and materialistic.




We have become completely secularised in our thinking and our communication is only concerned with what we observe and what we perceive to be factual. Faith is regarded as a kind of 'believism'; people believe in something that is 'out there somewhere'.

But the Scripture makes it clear that we live in a spiritual world. There are things which are visible that are not eternal, and things which we do not see that exist in the spiritual realm. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that there were 'things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man'. 1 Cor 2:9. These are the things 'that God has prepared for those who love Him'. There are certain realities which are not visible to our natural eye but we see the effect of those things. Jesus said, 'The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit'. John 3:8.

We read in the book of Hebrews that without faith it is impossible to please God. Heb 11:6. We could define 'pleasing God' as 'engaging, relating, communicating and knowing Him'. We get faith by engaging the Lord, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We must listen for His 'word' which is not simply found in the written Scripture. Jesus said, 'You search the Scriptures because

you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; And you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life'. John 5:39-40. Jesus was telling them to engage Him in a dialogue. We can also engage Him by having an active and viable devotional life where we are waiting and listening. It is interesting to note that Paul said concerning salvation, 'If anyone loves God, he is known by Him'. 1 Cor 8:3. When He speaks to us, He demonstrates that He knows us and this conviction brings us to faith or a belief in God.

We often use the word 'belief' or 'believing' in the same way that we would use the word 'faith'. Of course, there is a problem with this definition because as James wrote, 'Even the demons believe'. James 2:19. In our secular society today, there are many people who 'believe' in an afterlife without believing that God is engaging them day-by-day and is involved in their lives. And, of course, there are those who don't believe in an afterlife. From my late teenage years, my desire was to know God. This desire came from a creeping awareness from about thirteen years of age. Through my adolescence, there were times when I avoided this growing awareness and there were times when I came back to it. I became hostile and then amenable to it. But by one way or another, the gradual, emerging desire to know God permeated my life and by seventeen years of age He began, in various ways, to break in on me. In the same way




that CS Lewis described in one of his books, 'I gave up and believed'. I stopped pro-actively resisting the word that was coming to me.

When we are young Christians, the Lord often speaks to us in the night. He also speaks to us in song and in general communication. People will say things to us and be unaware of the impact of their words. When He begins to break in on our lives, He demonstrates that He knows us. To me, this is the word of God. It is the word that comes to us from Him. It is His word about us. And of course, everything in our lives must measure to the word that He is speaking about us. In this context, the verse 'without faith it is impossible to please God', begins to make real sense. God is not happy with those who refuse to believe, but He is also displeased with people who believe but have no relationship or engagement with Him. For those of us who have been Christians for many years, we can't just put this verse in the past tense as if it belongs to younger people or to new Christians. We may have served the Lord for ten, twenty, thirty or forty years but might now be slowly drifting into a secular mindset where we no longer listen or wait daily. We need to commit ourselves devotionally to the Lord with the same kind of intimacy reserved for special friends. If we do not talk, we are at best, neutral in our relationships. Our relationships will not be growing.

The book of Habakkuk contains a pivotal statement regarding faith. Paul quoted it in the New Testament in both the book of Romans and Galatians. 'The just [or the righteous] shall live by his faith.' Hab 2:4. We often miss the personal pronoun in this verse and mistakenly read, 'The just shall live by faith'. Rom 1:17. Gal 3:11. But the book of Habakkuk says, 'The just shall live by his faith'. We note the small 'h' in his is significant. We can assume it means your faith or my faith.

It is impossible to please God without faith. And without faith we cannot live the life that He has predetermined for us. But if we decide to live by faith, we can be certain that an ever-flowing stream of righteousness will follow us. When we consider words like 'righteousness', 'holiness' or 'sanctification', we mostly think of 'moral virtue'. However, a righteous or sanctified person is not more morally excellent than anyone else. Righteousness simply describes the justified pathway which each of us can walk. Righteousness is like a highway which has breadth as well as direction. In the book of Proverbs, we read of the path of the just or the path of the righteous. Prov 4:18. In his letter to the Romans, Paul said the 'righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith'. Rom 1:17. Righteousness is taking us somewhere. Therefore, we are not referring to a static 'believism'. Instead, we are talking about a dynamic




engagement where the word of God comes to us and breathes on us.

His word makes us alive and brings us to faith. It is not a difficult thing to negotiate a belief in God. Even the demons believe. James 2:19. For me, coming to Jesus Christ was not fundamentally a matter of believing. I had always believed. He broke in upon me with a word concerning my life. He birthed faith within me by that word, because 'faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ'. Rom 10:17. When we embrace the word that comes, He opens up a pathway or a highway which takes us 'from faith to faith'. We read in the book of Hebrews that 'faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'. Heb 11:1. Faith calls into being, things that do not exist. Rom 4:17. But these are not the things of our imagination, our goals and desires. God does not simply give us everything that we ask for. That would be a dereliction of duty. Why would He give us something that is going to harm us?

There are a number of things that the apostles said about faith. Paul told the church at Thessalonica that their faith was 'greatly enlarged' and their love was increasing. 2 Thess 1:3. Faith comes by hearing a word but it works by love. Gal 5:6. By faith, the dead are raised and mountains are moved. Matt 17:20. Faith is the power

of God but love is the motive. The word of God comes to us as the expression of His love for us. He is engaged with us. If we ask for a fish, He's not going to give us a serpent. If we ask for bread, He is not going to give us a stone. Luke 11:11. But conversely, if we ask for a serpent I don't think He's going to give us one!

In the Old Testament, the word for 'faith' is almost universally translated as 'faithfulness'. This definition gives a lot of practical meaning to the verse 'the just shall live by his faith'. It would now read 'the just shall live by his faithfulness'. We are to be faithful to the word that He has said concerning us. Faith is also quite widely interpreted as 'responsibility'. The word that comes to us creates in us a sense of responsibility toward the fulfilment of that word. 'Faith' also means 'steady'. I think of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where he encouraged them to be 'steadfast' and 'immovable'. 1 Cor 15:58. And the final meaning is 'trust'. Faith involves trusting in the word of God. This is both the written word and the specific word we each hear in our dynamic relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. As the word of God is coming to us, it is alive, powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword; penetrating our hearts and resonating true. Heb 4:12. The word of God touches us and creates faith in us. We need to trust because Jesus said it is only those who endure to the end who will be saved. Matt 24:13. If we don't have trust, we don't have anything.



In the book of Proverbs, we are told to ‘trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Lean not to your own understanding’. Prov 3:5. The nature of your faith and my faith is now better understood. The just or righteous man shall live by his faithfulness, responsibility, steadiness and trust.

In the language of the Old Testament, ‘faith’ was not a static concept. The Hebrews did not define their faith by their belief. They did not say, ‘I believe that God exists, therefore, I have faith’. Everything was dynamic for the Hebrews. Their language and their thinking were ‘circumlocutory’. Whereas our Grecian way of thinking in the western world is logical and linear, the Hebrews thought in a circular way. The good thing about a circle, of course, is that we can break in at any point and we will find ourselves at the beginning. This is the amazing thing about the Scriptures. We can start anywhere and it will become the beginning point of our understanding. Our Christian lives also begin this way. We can break into Christ and He into us at any time. Those looking on may be surprised because the circumstances of our conversion may defy logic. I remember one fellow who said he became a Christian when he heard a sermon about the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. After hearing about the red, white, black and dappled horses, this man gave his life to Christ. The word of God came

to him and faith was born and began to increase. We each need to hear a specific word concerning our lives to enable faith to be birthed in us.