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## **Introduction**

You may have heard the expression 'Blind Faith' to describe someone's attitude or behaviour. But as Christians the one thing that is clear to me is that faith is not blind. It is not simply a matter of groping in the dark, of blindly trusting some vague being or promises we know. The writer to the Hebrews tells us: "*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" *Tell story of abseiling incident.* I could not be sure that that rope would hold my weight until I went down it. I had to put my trust in it. A notice on it saying "I am strong enough to hold you" wouldn't work – because in the end I would still have to decide for myself if the rope would hold and if I thought it would, I'd go down. If I didn't I'd stay on the top. – It held.

There are many different uses of the word faith which can make this sort of study slightly confusing.

- Faith can indicate the way we believe: for example faith in Jesus, Faith in myself.
- It is also what we believe – the body of theological propositions that define our understanding of God and which are encapsulated in the creed.
- It can be used to indicate intellectual consent, which even the demons give, to the fact of God's existence. I believe he exists.
- It can be used to describe a deep personal commitment to God which only Christians can give. And
- It can be used to show trust. I believe that chair is here but do I trust it will take my weight if I sit in it. I might believe God exists but do I trust him with my daily life which leads to the deep commitment I just described.

The writer to the Hebrews is describing faith as a trust in God that enables a deep personal commitment to him and a willingness to follow and obey his commands.

This passage tells us three very important things about this sort of faith

- 1.** Faith accepts God's word
- 2.** Faith wins God's approval
- 3.** Faith recognises God's power

Let's look at each of these characteristics a bit more closely.

### **1. Faith accepts God's word.**

Faith is a person's response to what God has said. So, for example, Noah built the ark because he believed God when he said that there was going to be a great flood. He did this despite the fact that he lived miles inland and all the people around him laughed at him. Noah knew and trusted God and when God spoke to him Noah responded. He probably wondered at times whether he was on the right track but he believed God and responded to his word to him.

Mary responded to the word of God brought to her by the angel Gabriel that she would become pregnant and that the child she would carry would be the saviour God was sending to rescue his people. Her response to God's word was immediate – "let it be done to me according to God's word". She trusted God and it was this faith in what God told her that enabled her to get through the difficult and embarrassing times that lay ahead of her.

Faith accepts God's word. It takes seriously the message of God's revealed truth in scripture. It doesn't merely agree with God's word but acts on it. Jesus told some people who called him Lord, "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but only those who do the will of my father in heaven. Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock." God's word to us, in Holy Scripture is not simply to be read and admired. It is to be taken seriously and put into practice in our lives. We need to obey its commands and trust its promises to us.

Faith accepts God's word

It anticipates the future and looks forward to what is promised. It doesn't rely on the things we can see but it looks forward towards those things that God has promised us and that affect the way we live now. The people described in this chapter of Hebrews as people of faith didn't simply live for the passing moment they realised that there was a great deal more to life than the immediate and temporary scene. Life was a journey, a pilgrimage and they knew that there were better things ahead because one way or another God had told them so and they preferred to believe his word than the flimsy promises and false assurances of the world around them.

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

Faith accepts God's word. It evaluates the present and looks beyond what can be seen to understand how God is working

Faith in God makes great optimists. In Burma, a missionary called Judson was lying in a foul jail with 32 lbs. of chains on his ankles, his feet bound to a bamboo pole. A fellow prisoner said, "Dr. Judson, what are the prospects of the conversion of the heathen now?", with a sneer on his face. Judson's instant reply was, "The prospects are just as bright as the promises of God."

### **Faith wins God's approval**

By exercising the sort of faith I've described the people of old won God's approval. Without this sort of faith, the writer tells us in verse six, people cannot please God. and it is this approval that Luke

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describes as so important in our Bible passage. We are to set our minds on heavenly things, knowing that God has our best interests at heart and will always provide for us.

It is when we step out in faith trusting God to act that God brings his power into action. Very often in the walk of faith a person may believe that God is calling them to do something or to believe that he is going to do something – but until we step out in faith and trust him to accomplish it nothing happens.

It is when we step out trusting God's word to us that we see his power working in our lives and in other peoples lives. When Hudson Taylor the famous missionary went to China, he made the voyage on a sailing vessel. As it neared the channel between the southern Malay Peninsula and the island of Sumatra, the missionary heard an urgent knock on his stateroom door. He opened it, and there stood the captain of the ship. "Mr. Taylor," he said, "we have no wind. We are drifting toward an island where the people are heathen, and I fear they are cannibals." "What can I do?" asked Taylor. "I understand that you believe in God. I want you to pray for wind." Said the captain. "All right, Captain, I will, but you must set the sail." "Why that's ridiculous! There's not even the slightest breeze. Besides, the sailors will think I'm crazy." But finally, because of Taylor's insistence, he agreed. Forty- five minutes later he returned and found the missionary still on his knees. "You can stop praying now," said the captain. "We've got more wind than we know what to do with!"

### **3 Faith recognizes God's power**

The writer points us to creation to show us faith's ability to discern God's majestic power in the created order. Only by faith can we accept the astonishing statement that, "The visible came out of the invisible". He uses the Greek translation of the Bible in his writing and that version translates the beginning of the creation account in this way: "The earth was invisible *avoratos* the same word which is used later in this chapter of Hebrews to describe the "invisible God". God's incomparable power is such that he can call the universe into

**Readings:**  
**Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16**  
**Luke 12:32-40**

**Faith is not blind**

**Foxton & Fowlmere**

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being when there is nothing from which it can be made. He simply declared it was to be and when he had said it it was done.

It is this power that enables us to trust in God's word. He can call creation into being by simply speaking. He can do for us all he has promised us though his word and personally when he speaks into our hearts and minds. Faith realizes that the same power that brought the world into being is at work in our lives.

It sees that the same power that was at work when Jesus died on the cross and in his resurrection from the dead was available to change lives like Zacchaeus and Paul ... and our own here in the four church benefice. This is an uncertain time in our country and in the world. The future is perplexing and we don't clearly see everything that it holds for us but what we do know is that the same powerful God who has worked in our lives in the past is still present, still working and still delivering. One of my favourite sayings is, "You can't break God's promises by leaning on them" Faith is not merely your holding on to God--it is God holding on to you. He will not let you go!