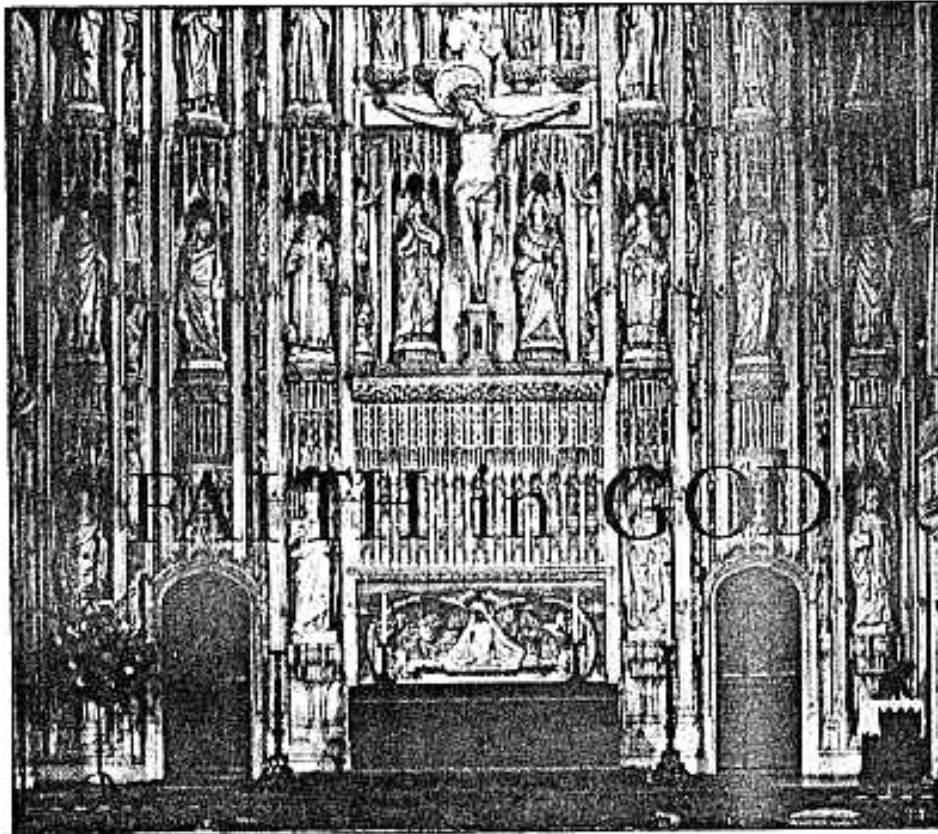


# FAITH

---



## FALSE VIEWS OF FAITH...

Faith follows on repentance in the list of basic teachings in Hebrews ch6, and it should go without saying that you cannot have the second without the first. But what is “faith in God”? There are still many people who think that faith simply means believing that God exists, or that Jesus exists, and that the things said about them in the Bible are true. But that is not faith. A lot more people, even in churches like ours, think that faith means making a decision to accept Christ as your saviour. But that’s not the faith that the writer of Hebrews means either.

## FAITH IS PASSIVE...

We have all heard of Salvation by Faith, and it is an easy trap for all of us, having realised that we cannot earn our way to Heaven by good works, to believe that we earn our way there by believing in Christ: faith,

we think, is something we do that pleases God. Not so. Faith, rather, is a passive acceptance of something God does, something that he gives to us. Look at ch3 v7ff, where the writer discusses faith by looking at those who don’t have it. “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts”: the children of Israel, referred to here (see Exodus ch17), were given every reason to believe that God, who had led them out of Egypt and given them all kinds of help, would continue to bless them by giving them enough to drink. They didn’t have to take a step of faith — just let God provide. But instead, they actively resisted God, hardening their hearts against him. So, unbelief is active — faith is passive. So it is with us. God has done the work of salvation by the cross, and speaks to our hearts of its truth. If we do not resist him, he will give us faith in him. Only our continued rebellion against him can produce unbelief. This is particularly a word to any who say, “I would like to believe, but I can’t” — Satan is fooling you,

## FAITH

friend! The truth is that God is asking you to believe, but you won't! Intellectual difficulties were never a lasting barrier to faith – they are easily answered. . The real barrier is our desire to build faith on our own terms. Not only does God not require us to work up faith: we cannot even if we want to, as it is not in our nature.

### GENUINE DOUBT...

There is, of course, genuine doubt, faith in two minds, to which we are all subject. As Luther said, "it is an ability that is born with us". But this is really another subject: doubt is uncertain faith, whereas what we are dealing with here is the opposite of faith, unbelief, which sometimes disguises itself as doubt. Those who doubt know the difference, for doubt is painful, whereas unbelief is not.

### FAITH AND DISCIPLESHIP...

But now look at the famous ch11, in which the Biblical heroes of faith march in a pageant of mighty works. Here we are shown the fruits of faith, but this faith is no less passive than that which brings us into the Kingdom. It is not a case of God's saving us, and then letting us get on with building our Christian lives as best we can. God has already prepared a glorious life of discipleship for each and every one of us (Eph ch2 v10), and as before, faith consists of letting God have his way in our lives. Growing in Christ means surrendering more and more of our nature to his control. That's why, if you feel you are doing enough for Christ now, you can be sure you have been beguiled by the Evil One, for even the greatest saints must say "we are unworthy servants — we have only done our duty". Equally, it is a nonsense to think there are some Christians whom God has called to "full-time" service, or to greater degrees of commitment. "You are not your own - you were bought for a price."

If you do not consider all your time, strength, talents and money to be at God's complete disposal, you are doing nothing more than rebelling against the Lordship of the one who died for you, whatever rationalisation you may put upon it. Only God knows the heart of such a person, but to the writer of Hebrews, he is at grave risk (ch4 v1-2). But, ch10 v39, "we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved".

### FAITH AVAILABLE FOR ALL...

Let us then be encouraged: this faith, which all of us feel we lack, is not a thing we need be supermen to achieve. There is faith aplenty in God's storehouse. All we have to do is to stop resisting the Lord's gentle efforts to give it to us, and to decide to obey his will for us now, at this moment, and to continue renewing this decision day by day, hour by hour. This is saving faith — perfecting faith — mountain-shifting faith. There is no other kind. If you have never yet learned to trust God for salvation in this way, why not do it today and know the freedom and confidence that can be yours through Jesus' blood.

Trust and obey,  
For there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus,  
But to trust and obey\*\*\*

JCG