

Wrong Attitudes To Faith

Here are some wrong unbiblical attitudes to faith we need to avoid:

The idea faith merits God's blessings

Some Protestants teach about faith in ways that infer our faith earns or merits eternal life, our inheritance in Christ, miracles and other blessings. They talk about these things as being like rewards for our faith. Even though some of these teachers talk about God's grace much and how we are not saved by works of Law, they talk about God's grace as though it was a reward. As a result of their misunderstanding the differences between undeserved grace and deserved merited rewards, these teachers bring their followers back under a legalistic mentality. Faith is *not the price* of salvation and associated blessings, but instead is the God-ordained means of receiving these. Flee from any legalistic teaching which infers faith is a *good work* by which we merit blessings from God.

Presumption

There are sadly many people who will not believe God to give them what He has specifically revealed is His will in the Bible. Such doubting God is sin. But there is also a false counterfeit for faith. This counterfeit is called *presumption*. There are many who mistake presumption for true Biblical faith because of poor teaching they have received and because presumption appeals to their self-centred flesh.

Presumption prayer could be described as trying to use God's miracle-working power in a way that is *not exactly promised* in the Bible or *exactly promised* by the inner guidance of His Holy Spirit. Presumption in prayer occurs when we expect God to do something for us, even though it *is not His will* for us. Presumption is attempting to believe with our hearts and speak with our mouths that God is going to do a specific miracle for us, even though this miracle *is not His will*. Presumption involves trying to manipulate God into building *our kingdom*, instead of His Kingdom. Presumption can *appear to be true Biblical faith*, even though it is not. Here are some examples of presumption:

- Some years ago, a Brazilian man in Rio De Janeiro put his arm into a lion's cage "*to test God's power*". He said he desired to "*offer one of his arms to the lion to test the power of God.*" He said, "*If God is so powerful, He will not allow the lion to hurt me.*"¹ As a result of this false "faith", the man lost his arm. His so-called "faith" was an example of testing God – a sin that Satan tempted Jesus with as seen in Matthew 4:5-7: "***Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: he shall give His angels charge concerning you, and , In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot***

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against a stone!’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’”

- This is similar to a young man whom a friend told me about. While at a McDonald’s restaurant, the young man asked the girl serving for a free ice-cream sundae. The girl replied, “No”. The young man then said if he kept believing and confessing enough for the girl to give the ice-cream to him, God will one day force her to do it.
- Another example of presumption imitating true Biblical faith can be seen in the following example. In 1994 in Munich in Germany, an Italian motorist let go of his steering wheel while driving and prayed, “*God can you drive?*” The car then swerved off a southern German motorway and crashed. The man’s lawyer foolishly said, “*The good Lord failed His driving test.*”²
- An evangelist I heard preach years ago said he had been believing and confessing God would provide him with some expensive sporting equipment to take back to the members of his church in his homeland. He went to a shop in Australia with his Australian pastor friend. Then he collected the various sporting implements that he had been confessing God must give him. He took them to the checkout counter. He had no money to pay for them, so he insisted that his Australian pastor friend pay for them. He did not politely ask his friend beforehand about this proposed purchase.
This example involved him treating both God and his friend presumptuously and rudely. But this evangelist inferred that his action was an indication of some sort of “great faith” on his part. How deceived!
- A tragic example of Christians in presumption demanding God to do something miraculous not specifically promised in the Bible occurred in a local church in Australia many years ago. A prayer meeting was begun that was kept secret from the church’s ministers. The aim of this meeting was to hear God’s audible voice.
After a number of weeks, a voice did speak audibly, giving some predictions which were later fulfilled. The listeners wrongly thought these fulfilled predictions were proof the voice was from God. At a later meeting, the voice told the people to share their “Christian love” by having a sexual orgy. They all obeyed and later backslid. By demanding God to speak audibly, they opened themselves up to demons pretending to be God.

The above examples of fleshly presumption are different from when born-again Christians rightly believe and confess what God has specifically promised in His written Word or by the Holy Spirit is His will. Refer to my book “PRAYING WITH POWERFUL FAITH” for much teaching on the difference between Holy Spirit-inspired faith for miracles and fleshly presumption.

Faith and being eaten by lions

Some Christians take Biblical verses about faith in unbalanced ways. For example, they see Daniel 6:1-23 reveals Daniel through faith was saved from being killed by a lion. Daniel 6:23 says: “...*So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on*

him, because he believed in his God.” These same believers then misinterpret this verse to mean the many Christians who were eaten by lions in Roman arenas did not have enough faith.

We see this is obviously a wrong interpretation when we read Hebrews 11:35-37 and 39: *“Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented...And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith...”* These people had great faith but still experienced dreadful persecution.

The idea faith is an infinite power or force

One cultic teaching about faith which has spread in recent decades is the idea faith is an *infinite power* or *force* by which God created the universe and all living beings. This teaching is contrary to the written Word of God. The Word teaches *God the Holy Spirit* has unlimited power and He created the universe and all living things. Genesis 1:1-2:7 relates to this. Genesis 1:1-2 records: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”* Revelation 4:11 states: *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”* Read also Psalm 102:25, Isaiah 44:24 and Acts 17:24.

When God commands something to happen by His Word, it occurs through the infinite power of His Holy Spirit. It is true God has perfect faith or trust in His own creative Word. But this faith is a *perfect attitude* occurring in His heart and is *not* an *infinite power*.

All believers are given by God a *limited measure* of faith (see Romans 12:3). This Holy Spirit-empowered faith is not an infinite force, but is instead a *God-appointed means* by which we can *receive* salvation, miracles and God’s other blessings through His *undeserved grace*.

This teaching that faith is a infinite power, turns Holy Spirit-inspired faith into a thing which even God must obey. So in the end, humans supposedly become like God’s boss. God becomes the obedient slave and believers become the commanding masters.

This cultic teaching on faith uses Hebrews 11:3 as its main supposed proof-text: *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”* This false view claims that this verse refers to God using the “force” of faith to create.

But note the following verses – Hebrews 11:4-5, 7-11 and 17-31 – reveal the writer of the Book of Hebrews consistently used the phrase *“by faith”* and then straight after referred to the person(s) who was exercising faith in God. These verses say, *“By faith Abel...”*, *“By faith Enoch...”*, *“By faith Noah...”*, *“By faith Abraham...”*, *“By faith he...”*, *“By faith even Sarah...”*, *“By faith Abraham...”*, *“By faith Isaac...”*, *“By faith Jacob...”*, *“By faith Joseph...”*, *“By faith Moses...”* (twice), *“By faith he...”*, *“By faith they...”* and *“By faith Rahab”*.

In *all* these above quotes in Greek, the expression *“By faith”* is the dative noun “pistei”. The same word “pistei” is translated *“By faith”* in Hebrews 11:3 and is followed by the words *“we understand”*. Therefore Hebrews 11:3 is teaching that it is we who by faith understand that

the worlds were framed by the Word of God. This verse is referring to us exercising faith and not to God exercising faith.

Biblical God-inspired faith which saved humans express, is *not* a *creative force* or *creative power*. Instead, God is the Creator Who has infinite force or power. Biblical faith is the *God-appointed means* of receiving His grace, power and miracles.

Being created in God's image and likeness, all humans have a natural creativity and inventiveness. Also, God working through believers can express His creativity. But this is different from saying faith is an infinite force or power.