



Does Faith Actually Do Anything?

An Investigation of the Book of Psalms
for Christians

S. Neil Von Fange

DOES FAITH ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING?
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PREVIEW EDITION

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DOES FAITH ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING?

DOES FAITH ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING? is an examination of the book of Psalms, which is a collection of songs about the dealings of the God of Israel among his people and in the earth.

The demonstrated magic of the kingdom of God is to be searched out by his people. There is a process for finding visibility with granularity into the dealings of the Most High with an individual. This process will be characterized by detective work as well as testing and hard earned rewards.

The culture of the kingdom of God will have to be recovered with a considerable and lifelong effort after a very long ignorant and absence. The urgency of this task is not to be underestimated.

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He originally comes from Montclair, New Jersey and then Indianapolis, Indiana. He makes his home in southern Indiana, where he remediates long standing erosion on his property with gravel, rock, and the transplanting of much myrtle.

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Dedication

This book is in memory of William Roper, a Methodist circuit rider of the first half of the 1800s. His ministry was in southern Indiana, near the area of my present residence, as well as the surrounding region.

Circuit riders of the early 1800s endured great hardships from the weather and terrain, hostile Indians, very low financial support, disagreements with other Christian sects, and so forth. Roper tells of the dangers he faced traversing rivers with his horse, sometimes in the dark and when lost. He counted 32 river crossings during one of his years of ministry.

In one case, very early before sunrise, his horse became entangled while swimming across a river. He was forced to swim himself while encumbered with a heavy coat and leggings. He managed to get hold of a tree branch and rest, until he could gather himself to make it to shore, where his horse finally made it as well.

While hanging onto the tree branch, he had the thought of his mother praying for him at this time. She was at home, about 80 to 100 miles away, and at that very time, as it turned out later, had a burden to pray with intensity, sensing that he was in great danger. After some time, she felt the peace of the Lord about the situation.

The story of Roper and numerous other circuit riders is contained in J.B. Finley's 1855 book, *Sketches of Western Methodism*. This book is dedicated in his memory, as well as many other true servants of Jesus Christ who have built upon the foundation set by the first century apostles.

These all set aside their lives and endured much hardship to fulfil their respective heavenly callings. Without their pioneering labors, this book would not have been possible.

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Preface

The glow of my first years as a Christian is a treasured memory. However, in subsequent decades an awareness of the Lord's presence seemed far and few between for me. I had to learn the hard way to adjudicate the apparent dealings of the Holy Spirit with me, and to filter out unholy ideas. Eventually I became more assured of what he wanted me to do, and of his overshadowing presence in my life.

In the midst of my career, I attended one meeting in which I absorbed brutal treatment by a sharp and undeserved rebuke in front of my co-workers. After leaving this withering meeting, I drove my car for about an hour, during which my prayer language (page A1.2) was most helpful. When I returned, the anointing lifted, and I felt much better.

That evening, I was to travel to an out-of-town Christian conference. Within a collection of meetings, during one of the messages, I recognized the Lord telling me how he was going to use me in a coming time. I took the overall experience as the Holy Spirit having set the background for speaking to me.

Those who are in training as disciples of Jesus Christ are to bear in mind the illustration of Israel in its wilderness years, and must be prepared to be roughed up and face other anguish in a variety of ways. Christians are to take notice of their life circumstances and any straightforward correlations with their study of the Bible as well as their anointed prayer sessions.

Now in my retirement years, I have often thought about the witness and commentary of the Holy Spirit while I went thru a variety of life experiences. Finding visibility into the Divine hand of providence, for people and situations, has brought purpose and hope to me. I have boiled this process down in Appendix A.

Some will say that certain stories in this book, or elsewhere in the pentecostal tradition, have been cherry picked, and don't at all represent reality. My reply is that the demonstrated magic of the kingdom of God is to sought out by his people (Matt. 6:33). Such will have to be recovered with much effort after a very long ignoral and absence (Deut. 4). This effort should be with an awareness that God's dealings will be characterized by testing and earned rewards (Matt. 6).

This book considers what the Bible is actually saying about the Christian life versus the lifestyle of the world. I propose that Christians are to be a people of faith, and that this faith is intended to be dynamic, resulting in a profound interaction with their life experiences.

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Introduction

The thesis of this book is that David, king of Israel, was given not only the plans for the temple building (1 Chron. 28), but also the plans for the business of the temple, which notably included the prayers of the people of God (Isa. 56). David and other contributors to this tradition developed their case in the book of Psalms, which has applied to God's people in all their venues down thru history.

It is not uncommon among Christians to hear that faith is primarily for the development of character and is also to assist in extending love to one's neighbor. While these views can certainly be supported in scripture, I would point out that an actual goal of magnetic personality would be inconsistent with the message of the kingdom of God, which is available to those who may never be acceptable in the sight of the world.

Moreover, many aid-oriented individuals and community organizations carry out substantial deeds with heartfelt concern, yet are not representative of the true body of Christ. Christians need to establish assurance that their service is received before the Lord's presence, i.e. that they are not just another component of the well-meaning parade of the world.

Jesus Christ implies in Matt. 7:13-14 that self-learning, by supervision of the Holy Spirit, will be significant for his disciples. While church, group studies, Christian friends, etc. are meant for encouragement and working together, at the end of the day it will still be up to the individual to find his way into the kingdom of God.

Eternal life begins with and continues in an awareness of God's will during this present life. At the final judgment, all humanity will be rewarded for their efforts in this regard with very permanent consequences. It is therefore incumbent upon the Christian to find assurance of how God deals with him in the ordinary affairs of this life.

Some scholars (see e.g. R. Alter, *The Book of Psalms*) report not a few concerns with the transmitted Hebrew text. My reply is that every generation of God's people is expected to work with what it has; and while reasonable efforts are not to be dismissed, disciples must converge upon their calling and mandate.

A study of the Psalms is not to be an endless review of ancient Mideast culture, languages, history, geography, music style, etc.; nor are the Psalms primarily for literature or art appreciation. The Psalms portray a remarkable set of experiences which end up as a template for those who are in the service of the Most High. The Psalms are to be approached with a contrite heart by those who would seek to enter the out-of-this-world realm of the kingdom of God.

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Interlude – Psalm 27:7-14

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, "Seek My face", my heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek". Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me.

Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence.

I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!

Chap.	Verse	Terse Summary	Cat.	Inh'ce	Mgmt of R'ship	God Sets Envir'mt	Worship	Base Subject	Base Ref.
27 - HOPE FOR DIVINE PRESENCE AMIDST FORMIDABLE ADVERSARIES									
27	1	Y. as deliverer = no fear of people	C2.3			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	2	Failure exp'd by vicious advers's	C2.4			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	3	Assurance in face of formid. adv's	C2.3			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	4	Primary goal is dwellingplace of Y.	D1.2				x	Meaningful worship	Ref. Psa. 29:1-2
	5	Is shelter fr. adv's in time of trouble	C2.3			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	6	Result = worship in dwellingplace	D1.2				x	Meaningful worship	Ref. Psa. 29:1-2
	7	Concern is for Y. to hear his prayers	C2.2			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	8	Div. prompt = effort to find his face	B3.4		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	9	Concern is that he not hide his face	B3.4		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	10	Is a refuge when parents turn away	C2.3			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	11	Prayer for grace due to adversaries	C2.2			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	12	Prayer for deliv'ce fr. adversaries	C2.2			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	13	Mandate is to not give up hope	B3.2		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	14	Courage in distress by waiting on Y.	B3.4		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1

Legend for the above table:

Terse Summary – summation of the passage; commentaries, Bible dictionaries, etc. can be of assistance. See Appendix C for a list of takeaways or categories for the Psalms.

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PSALM 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.



A1.3 - SYNOPSIS:

Prayers are to be for Divine insight; wide ranging application in one's life; grace for side issues; and direction by the H.S.

Other passages: Psa. 119.

DISCUSSION:

During my university years, I spent much time in fellowship with other Christians. Our small group of young men invited a number of outside groups to present their Bible studies with us. One graduate student from a nearby seminary came to our dormitory for many months with a wide variety of Old Testament studies. We also obtained and listened to many teaching tapes. In time it became evident to me that my classes, labs, homework, etc. needed to come first!

One evening, one young lady from a group on the other end of campus decided to visit us. We had attended their meetings for some time, which were notably vibrant and resilient, and I had noticed that she did not seem a person to be taken lightly.

Our study that night was oriented around Biblical theology, and I will never forget her words at its conclusion: "But how do we apply this?" Perhaps such a comment would seem to be a distraction by some. But over the years, I have come to recognize that it is an astute and vital question which Christians must not ignore.

My reply to this concern begins with my previous two books. These are: *The Tools of an Intercessor*, where I analyze all the Lord's commands, which include takeaways from the Law of Israel; and *An Agenda for Teens*, where I analyze the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Christians must learn to converge upon their callings, and to establish God's will for themselves. There is far too much for Christians to read at a scan level, let alone study in depth, over their lifetimes. It becomes significant for us to assimilate commentaries, studies, sermons, etc. in a businesslike manner. As developed in other pages in this book, it turns out that God's dealings with the individual include answers to prayer, and there are individualized conditions for these dealings which have to be understood and met.

I maintain a set of event logs across multiple categories, e.g. residence; workplace; personal faith; service in the kingdom; other interactions; etc. In these logs I keep records of apparent activities by the Holy Spirit, and I look for long term insights over my career as a Christian. I also have a summation of past answers to prayer in the above categories. I often browse these logs to look for improved wording or insights, and to remember how the Holy Spirit has dealt with me in previous years.

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PSALM 18:43-45

You have delivered me from the strivings of the people; You have made me the head of the nations; a people I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me they obey me; the foreigners submit to me. The foreigners fade away, and come frightened from their hideouts.



A2.1 - SYNOPSIS:

God's blessings include: peace, direction; long life; family well-being; decisive presence in competition; respect; and safe sleep.

Other passages: Psa. 3-4; 18; 20-21; 23; 25; 28-29; 32; 34; 36-37; 66-67; 85; 91; 97; 103; 106-107; 111-112; 115; 125; 127-128; 132; 144-145; 147; 119.

DISCUSSION:

The grand daughter of a Connecticut shipbuilder tells the 1880s story of a freight steamer which was sent to his company for repairs. During the transit period, the very heavy ship broke thru the rails utilized for elevating it out of the ocean. Numerous efforts were made to recover the vessel out of the deep mud and rocks, but to no avail.

Facing a hopeless situation and financial ruin, the builder went to prayer until he found definite assurance. The next day, the highest tide ever known in the region lifted the ship out of its condition. This tide was not at the once per month moon perigee, and was the subject of conversations among the workmen for years. The story is found in the August 1953 issue of Voice of Healing, and the ship builder history is well documented in the public domain.

During my career years, I spent much time commuting to an out of town workplace from an apartment setting. For a long time, I had not had renters' insurance, but eventually recognized that such an investment would be businesslike. Not many months after I set this up, while I was on an out of town trip, I received a phone call from my apartment complex management.

There had been a kitchen fire in a downstairs apartment, and smoke had entered the next few levels, including my own. The management asked permission to move me across the hallway with a much better view, with no other involvement needed from me. It was assurance to me that the Lord had preserved my interests in an otherwise very expensive situation.

Many accounts of God's blessings and answers to prayer can be found among his people, many of which are unpublished. Some of these may verify Divine expectations for the individual, as in the apartment example above. Different types of prayer or levels of effort may be required. Across the board, a consistent experience is to be sought out by all Christians (Matt. 6:33), with a particular effort to maintain a life of personal holiness (section B1.1) as a significant condition. See also Appendix A for my summation of the primary aspects of faith which I have identified from the Bible; from the exposition of word ministry; and from my own experiences as well as that of others. A major development effort will be needful over a lifetime (Matt. 7:24-27) to establish God's dealings with the individual.

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PSALM 32:6

For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him.



B2.3 - SYNOPSIS:

Concern for time limit for dealing with sin due to limited lifespan and finality of the judgment. Other passages: Psa. 32; 39; 78; 81; 89-90; 95; 102; 106; 130; 119.

DISCUSSION:

Alpha Humbard was a traveling evangelist for better than 30 years during the pentecostal revival in the first half of the 1900s. In his book *From the Plow Handle to the Pulpit*, he tells of his call to preach as a youth brought up in abject poverty in Arkansas.

In multiple cases, Humbard tells of the Holy Spirit leading him to seek out an individual for the need to turn to the Lord before leaving the meeting, yet his efforts being rejected. One person became sick that very evening and was dead within three days. In another situation, the person had decided to end his resistance and come to Humbard's meeting, but before he could, he was killed in a backyard pump accident.

Christians should remember that after the exodus from Egypt, and with the visible presence of its God Yahweh in its midst, Israel only had about two years before the fate of that entire generation was set.

Those who pray for revival, and those who desire to see the more immediate presence and working of the Holy Spirit in their midst must do all they can to get their feet on the ground before he comes. A significant takeaway from revivals of the last several centuries is that the real presence of the Lord is to be characterized as one of conviction. The Lord is well aware of the shortcomings of individuals (Heb. 4:11-13; Matt. 24:43-44), and a prime directive for his people is to not underestimate his expectations when he really comes.

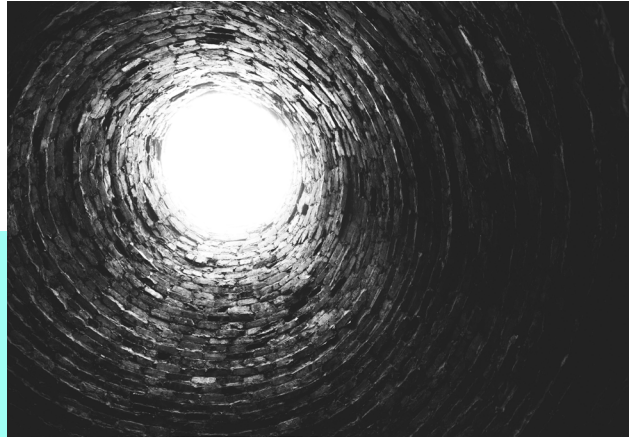
The cautionaries by Paul the apostle in Heb. 3-4 and elsewhere are not idle threats, even to those with a real salvation experience. Neither are the Lord's statements regarding entry into the kingdom of God to be taken lightly.

The currency of the kingdom of God is assurance within an individual Christian. Such is found in points of reference thru life, when replies can be developed for identifiable dealings of the Holy Spirit. Christians are to maintain a goal of making sure of their stance before the Lord in all of their activities, as well as his dealings with them.

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PSALM 40:1-2

I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.



B3.3 - SYNOPSIS:

Answered prayer after a real trial is assurance of one's standing before God.

Other passages: Psa. 18; 20; 30-31; 40; 61; 66; 71; 77; 116; 118; 124; 144.

DISCUSSION:

Murrell F. Coughram was a pastor, then a missionary to India, over his lifetime which was from 1908 until 1999. He also served as general superintendant for a major pentecostal denomination in the early 1950s. A March 1953 account in the Voice of Healing magazine relates his very public demonstration of answer to prayer.

During one of his commercial airline flights, when the aircraft prepared for landing, the aircrew was unable to lower the landing gear. The aircraft circled the airfield multiple times during its attempts to resolve the problem. Finally preparations had to be made for a crash landing, including the dumping of most of the remaining fuel. Ambulances and fire trucks were at the ready on the ground.

As the plane returned for its final landing, the pilot asked if anyone among the passengers could pray. After a few moments in which no one moved, Coughram stood up, grabbed the overhead aisle rails, and prayed aloud, despite the risk to himself. Then a harsh grating noise came from the fuselage, in which the landing gear came free and moved into position! The plane made a safe landing without further incident. In the aftermath, the pilot described to Coughram how he had been unable to free the wheels by his ordinary procedures.

Many other published and unpublished accounts of Divine intervention can be found in the context of accidents, disasters, etc. One such episode found in the public domain is by Norm Williams, who tells of his remarkable rescue during the 1977 Canary Islands jumbo jet disaster.

Over my lifetime, I have considered an array of apparent dealings with me by the Holy Spirit, as well as prayers answered and unanswered. I have summarized these in three columns, in which leftmost is when plainly visible confirmation was present. The middle column is for episodes in which I felt notable assurance by the Holy Spirit but not visible confirmation. The rightmost column consists of other experiences for which I can't identify any such clarity, but nonetheless I want to remember for context and sometimes further consideration.

Other reminders to assist in the identification of Divine dealings are summarized in my book *The Tools of an Intercessor*, in the section A Summation of the Context of Faith.

Chap.	Verse	Terse Summary	Cat.	Inh'ce	Mgmt of R'ship	God Sets Envirmt	Worship	Base Subject	Base Ref.
42 - HOPE AMIDST SKEPTICS AND DESPONDENCY									
42	1	Thirst like deer searching for water	B3.2		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	2	Desire to approach Y. presence again	D1.2				x	Meaningful worship	Ref. Psa. 29:1-2
	3	Chewing tears amidst vocal skeptics	C2.1			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	4	Emotion by memory of glory at feast	D1.4				x	Meaningful worship	Ref. Psa. 29:1-2
	5	Low makes no sense cf. Y. presence	B3.2		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	6	Withered yet remember fr. distance	B3.2		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	7	Overwh'g adversity = present exp'ce	B3.1		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	8	Mercy from Y. by day, song by nite	B3.4		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	9	Prayer - low is not consistent	C2.2			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	10	Bone crunching by vocal skeptics	C2.1			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	11	Low mks no sense cf. lifted up by Y.	B3.2		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
43 - HOPE AMIDST ADVERSARIES AND DESPONDENCY									
43	1	Prayer - godless nation + people	C2.2			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	2	Low makes no sense cf. Y. strength	B3.1		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	3	Y. assurance = return to his presence	B3.4		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
	4	Y. presence = heartfelt worship	D1.2				x	Meaningful worship	Ref. Psa. 29:1-2
	5	Low mks no sense cf. lifted up by Y.	B3.2		x			Distant God in need	Ref. Psa. 10:1
44 - HOPE FOR RECOVERY FROM DEFEATS									
44	1	Ancestral accts of Div. acts recounted	A3.3	x				Inh'ce of God's people	Ref. Psa. 48:12-14
	2	Israel conquest + Canaan cast out	A3.3	x				Inh'ce of God's people	Ref. Psa. 48:12-14
	3	Israel conquest was due to Div. favor	A3.3	x				Inh'ce of God's people	Ref. Psa. 48:12-14
	4	Prayer - victories by same King	C2.2			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	5	Expect'n of same for battles now	C2.3			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	6	Exp'ce is not about human capability	C2.3			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	7	Expect'n of same for battles now	C2.3			x		The usual adversaries	Ref. Psa. 3:1-2
	8	It is reason for continual worship	D1.1				x	Meaningful worship	Ref. Psa. 29:1-2
	9	Present defeat is by Div. opposition	B2.1		x			Ongoing or serious sin	Ref. Psa. 32:3-5