



Your Most Important Moment!

How Important is Faith to You?

Two weeks ago as I was ambling over to the church mailbox, I prayed that the Lord had money there. I hadn't prayed that sort of prayer in months...it certainly wasn't a regular request of mine. When I opened the mailbox, there was a check in it for \$1,200 made out to the church. I stood in shock at how amazing it was, this miracle of God. Three times in the past twelve months I've had this same thing happen. I've prayed for money to come to the church and a check was in the mailbox. Realize I didn't pray on any other days when this didn't happen. I've never prayed for money for the church and found there wasn't a check in the mailbox. Do you think God does such things...or more importantly that God did what I just described? Do you believe me or are you skeptical this happened? What sort of faith do you need to have to accept this as true?

There are plenty today who have decided faith is irrational, that it is not reasonable. And yet, faith is a critical part of thinking, of being human. Faith in fact is what makes thinking matter, what gives it value. If there is no faith to your thoughts, then you are just processing information, storing it and doing nothing with it. Faith is what leads you to get into your car and try to start your engine, to turn the key in the ignition. Without faith you wouldn't try because faith is what takes you from all your previous experiences of putting a key in the slot and turning it with the expectancy that you will have a car ready to drive. It is the same with approaching your husband or wife with your lips. You have faith that you will be kissed back, that the two of you will share a kiss or you wouldn't do it. It is faith that leads you to assume you won't be slapped or rejected instead! My kids went parachuting because they had faith the parachutes would keep them safe and the staff knew what they were doing when they instructed them. Faith is behind nearly every action you take; it is the most normal of all forms of thinking. It is the result of having observed and thought. Faith is not just Christian, it is human.

Faith is one of the most fascinating aspects of human thinking because it drives the bus so to speak of nearly all behavior...at least of the things we do that matter most to us. Consider these examples of faith from the Bible and decide what you think. When young David witnessed the challenge made by the giant Goliath, something happened in his mind that all of us have experienced at one level or another. He decided, in a moment of faith, that he could do something. Granted, what he thought he could accomplish was extraordinary. None of his older brothers had faith they could do what David was going to attempt. Not a single soldier in the Israelite army believed they were capable either. Even the king, who was a great big man and one of only a few who had an actual sword, was not willing to give it a try. David though had faith he could get it done! At what point did all the evidence David had gathered over the course of his life push him to believe, or have faith, he could defeat Goliath using only a sling and five smooth stones? A complex slew of experiences, observations, and thoughts, when combined together, led to his conclusion that Goliath could be had because God would make sure. Of course it turned out he was right, but before the battle actually occurred, David saw things as no one else did. We call that faith and rightfully so, but was his faith irrational?

Take note of Ruth, one of my favorite people described in the Bible. Being a widow, she was at the mercy of society. There were not many money making options for women back then and being young, the prospect of living by herself the rest of her life may not have been very appealing. In her hometown, she never remarried. We don't know why. Perhaps there weren't enough unmarried men available. Maybe she didn't see anyone she liked. In any case, she moved with her mother-in-law down to Israel and there she met someone who was interested in her. An older man who was successful, he most likely had plenty of potential marriage partners but for whatever reason, had remained single. After Ruth had known Boaz for several months, Ruth's mother-in-law told her to do something strange. **One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."** (Ruth 3:1-4 NIV)

My question here is the same as it was for David. At what point did Ruth have faith that Boaz would love her; that he wouldn't reject her if she did what Naomi suggested? When did she realize the risk of this action was worth it? She most likely took this extremely vulnerable step because she had some sense that Boaz did love her and wouldn't laugh at her revelation that she was wanting him to marry her. There is something that clicks in you when you look at all the evidence you have, whether it is large or small, and then believe...or don't. Faith comes as a result of evidence and thought. It is not irrational or blind. Now let us turn to the faith someone else developed, the faith of John the Apostle.

John, in his biography of Jesus in chapter 20 describes the moment he discovered Jesus' body really wasn't in the tomb. Let me share that text. **So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.** (John 20:3-9 NIV) The Apostle John, who is "the other disciple" discovered something in the tomb that led him to believe or have faith. The burial cloths were lying neatly there. This was astounding! If the body of Jesus had been stolen, the grave robbers would not have bothered to rip all the cloths off the corpse. They would have been literally glued to the body and taken a huge amount of time to remove. Secondly, it would have been foolish to do so because the rotting body, torn and ripped apart would have been disgusting to carry without the grave cloths holding it together. No body thief would have done that. More importantly though, the cloths were there in such a way that the only possible explanation for them being so neat and ordered would have been for the body to have passed through them rather than the strips yanked off Jesus' corpse. Because of what John saw, he believed this was not something ordinary but in fact miraculous.

Why should you have faith Jesus was raised from the dead? Here are three reasons. One. All of the Apostles died horrible, gruesome deaths for what they insisted they witnessed, and they never recanted. They said they certified that Jesus was resurrected three days after He died on the Cross. They knew He died. They saw, touched, smelled, and heard Him alive. At least one of the Apostles would have taken back his story to save himself from horrific suffering if it weren't so. Two. The Church exploded in numbers, had its start in Jerusalem where the crucifixion occurred and the facts of the story were known. If there was real proof that Jesus wasn't alive or the opposite were the case, there wasn't clear evidence He was, the Church would never have started there at the site of where everything took place. Three. The Jewish and Roman authorities never laughed off the resurrection as nonsense or irrational. They saw it as a very real threat, the resurrection, and did everything they could to kill the Church and stop news of Christ risen and alive from spreading.

So where are you on faith and believing in Jesus as your alive Savior? Do you really think that it is worth staking your life on Him as your living hope, for salvation? God won't force you to believe in Him to bring you eternal life...but why wouldn't you? Jesus' invitation to you is the same as it was when He first offered it. **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28 NIV)