

HAZARDS OF FAITH

Philippians 2:29-30

When we are children, we are called upon to have faith in our parents. As a small child this is easy to do since they provide everything for us. As we age and become more independent, we begin to question that faith in parents. In our teen years we get to a point where we think we were foolish to trust two people that are so out of touch with reality. We sail through those years and become an adult. Now we are called on to trust or have faith in lots of things. Like our economic system, credit, checks, government etc.

If we shift our focus to things spiritual, Christianity is also built on faith. Heb. 11:1 says, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:7, *“for we walk by faith, not by sight.”* Brethren, faith relates to the future, and so far, as human affairs go, the future is uncertain. Therefore, we say that faith means that we feel as if we take a chance; it ventures, or risks.

1. Let's Look at Phil. 2:30 first...

This is a strange word that the Holy Spirit chooses for us here. *Not regarding* is from *paraboleuomai*, which literally means: **“hazarding.”** Marvin R Vincent, a Greek scholar says of this word, “It comes from a root word which means, “1. Lit. to “throw down a stake,” and hence a “gambling term”. So, the bottom line is that when we make the choice to become a Christian we do so by faith and by doing so, we put at “risk” certain things. For example:

1. Family; security, etc.
2. Willing to venture.

There is a story of a Georgia farmer. He did not plant any cotton because of the boll weevil; did not plant any corn because of the drought; no potatoes because of the bugs. Then he said: “I played it safe!”

Brethren, we cannot be like this in our lives as Christians (cf. Eccl. 11:4). *“He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.”*

2. Hazards of Gaining Christ.

It is a spiritual truth that to become a Christian requires faith. Hebrews 11:6 says this plainly, *“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”* This truth is demonstrated throughout the New Testament in those who walked in faith in the early church. Faith cannot be bought; faith cannot be given to another; faith is not earned; faith is not inherited. Faith comes from hearing (which means to comprehend) the word of God. God’s word, the Bible is the foundation of our faith. God gave us His word to provide everything we need for life and godliness. 2 Peter 1:3 says, *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,”*

The Bible teaches us that faith is necessary to be a Christian but also to grow as a Christian:

- Necessity of active faith (Jas. 2:17).
- Necessity of sacrificial faith (Matt. 16:24).

Christian faith of necessity involves hazards and risks. We seldom think of faith in this way, but when we put our faith in God and His word then that can very quickly put us at odds with things of this world – like:

- The Hazard of estrangement (Matt. 10:35-37; Lk. 14:26). There have been Christians in my experience that have lost their family because they became a Christian.
- The Hazard of insecurity – some have lost jobs because they chose Christianity.
- The Hazard of contempt (Matt. 15:11; John 15:18; 1 John 3:13).

Think of those in the New Testament who hazarded all to gain Christ:

- **Paul.** He was an Elite member of the Jewish Community in his time. He would have become a leader of the Jews with great prominence. Listen to Paul, in Phil. 3:7-8, *“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ”*
- Paul put everything at risk - his economic security; his heredity; his status; even his life – “all things.”
- **Epaphroditus.** Paul says that this man put his very life on the line for the cause of Jesus. Epaphroditus held nothing back – he gave his all.

3. Hazards of Serving Christ.

Faithful service may mean risking one’s life. Had an Italian boy in my class at FC, Antonio Corroza. His Dad and Grandfather had been persecuted for decades as they preached in the shadow of the Vatican. The Corroza family spoke against a Pope; against many Catholic doctrines – at great personal risk. Many who served God throughout time risked all for God. Among them:

- Epaphroditus – took the Philippian’s gift to Paul while imprisoned at Rome.
- Paul often risked his life (2 Cor. 11:23-27; 1 Cor. 15:31; Rom. 8:36).
- David (1 Sam. 17). David risked his life to fight for the Lord.

Faith, love and devotion often involve great hazards. Nurses; doctors, are often at risk because of the patients they treat. That same Greek word, *paraboleuomai* was often used to describe those who tended the sick and buried the dead in times of pestilence. I’ve known many who took an oath to be willing to give their lives for others.

To what extent will you jeopardize your life for Christ? To minister to the sick (Matt. 25:45). To preach in a hostile environment (Rom. 1:14). There are lots of reasons to not get involved – and only one for involvement. A life of service to Christ is sacrificial by nature and hard by choice. But life is brief and uncertain (Acts 20:24). And if we lose our life in service; we will gain life in eternity (Matt. 16:25).

4. Hazards of Supporting Christ.

A. Takes faith to venture liberally.

1. Example from James (2:15).
2. The Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-5).
3. The poor widow (Mk. 12:41-44).

B. Liberality involves risks and hazards.

1. Risk of not supporting family (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8). Sometimes provide the whims and “necessities,” and give God what is left.
2. Risk of not providing for old age. Many are more interested in Social Security than in eternal security! It is fine to prepare – but remember Matthew 6:19-21.
3. Risk of missing some luxuries. Remember, we are soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3), and so life is sometimes hard.

CONCLUSION

True faith is surrender to the will of God.

It is signing your name on the “dotted line” and then letting God fill in the terms.

Faith that ventures will launch out (Lk. 5:4).

Question – what am I willing to risk for God?