

for Mo Siegal

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F A I T H

by Clyde Bedell

FAITH is an expandable word. Some words are thimble-size. Some are expansible almost beyond belief. Faith is. Because the word "faith" must be able to accomodate the entirely discrete personal faith of each and any individual, even unto his arrival ages hence--on Paradise. No small word "faith" could stand for the faith of Jesus, for instance, whose faith was so great he was literally dauntless and without fear. Faith, which may be small or monumental, is inevitably matched by its rewards or treasures. Monumental faith, monumental rewards.

Any one of us, on his own human scale can have small or great faith. Pause and think. If every desire that deprives you of spiritual progress and growth were swept aside, and if you were fearless, you could stand above every temptation toward spiritual compromise, one of our most common failings. You could defy every temptation to stand high in human regard instead of standing high in divine regard. Think what you might become! You could consistently place loyalty to God above loyalty to some human or humans. Very few people can do this.

Faith in one's self is not uncommon. But unless it is combined with faith in the rules and the rulers of the universe, its rewards can be terribly disappointing, even destroying. That brings me to the great and strange mystery connected with faith.

Young children generally have faith--faith in parents and faith in adults generally. A child will usually place its hand in an outstretched adult's hand. Faith is natural in a normal world of normal relationships. But as a child learns the ways of our presently disordered world, it usually becomes distrustful. Experience of unkindness, cruelty, unfairness, dissolves a child's trust, and the child loses natural faith.

We have all heard of being "born again". Being "born again" results in a rebirth or recapture of faith. At any age! It is a surrender of one's future to God in total confidence

of a future fruitful in the truly important things of life. And therein is the introduction to the great mystery of faith.

Suppose you knew precisely what reward you would get for being virtuous in a certain way. And suppose you knew exactly what rewards would be yours for a specific good act, for a generous gesture, or some kind deed. No faith would be required for you to risk time and substance doing good. You would know precisely what you would reap as reward, and on time. Under such circumstances, celestial powers that be, and God, would simply be shopkeepers selling rewards for specified performances on your part.

The world would soon wind up devoid of goodness, gentleness, ^{and} generosity, for their own sakes. We would all be constantly weighing rewards against their costs. There is much of that in the world even as it is.

However, to foster noble and constructive living, and efforts to make the world better, God tells us to have faith in his goodness, to risk our time, effort, and substance in aiding others--in leavening the world with truth, beauty and goodness--and rewards will follow. There is vast mystery in the laws of compensation. If we can be just, fair, patient, kind, merciful, generous, the immutable laws of the universe are such that rewards flow to us. Not always material rewards, but rewards we deem even more precious.

If religion, which is brought to mind by faith, set forth tables of rewards against tables of acts, there would be only justness and fairness meted out to us. Goodness, mercifulness, generosity to us would not be called for. How different is God's--the universe's--method. It seems that every true religionist, every real Golden Ruler, every lover of God, has risked much, is willing to risk again and again, much--or even all--he has, due to faith in God. And I believe I have never known such a confident religionist who could not be brought to the verge of tears of gratitude, of thanksgiving, of love, simply by pondering the goodness of God!--the rewards of unshakeable faith!

The beautiful mystery of faith lies in the vastness of our inability to fathom what may be the rewards of pinning our faith in God. The mystery is in the inevitable immeasurable precise benefits best for us that sooner or later flow from strong unquestioning faith. Doubt is man's one great enemy of incalculable spiritual progress, the only permanently progressive progress he may know. No reader of these words can possibly know what supernal happiness and satisfaction can be his or hers in return for faith. The one certainty about faith is the uncertainty of how tremendously great are its rewards. I refer to faith without doubt, without hedging, without fingers crossed.

Loyalty, we are taught, is wondrous and commendable. Our supreme loyalty should be to the rulers of our universe. Human love is great, but we are supposed to love God more than we love father, mother, or child. If we love our family members more than we love God, we will make family decisions favorable to family members that in the end will be harmful to them. And we will risk their celestial as well as their earthly potentials.

This returns us to faith. Faith and loyalty are inevitably partners. We must have faith in God's wisdom in all his guidance. We cannot say to ourselves: "God is wise as far as the Golden Rule is concerned, but I know more than He does as far as loyalty, or something else, is concerned."

If you have not total faith in God's plan for your life, in his instructions to you, in his teachings and guidance--your faith is impaired, imperfect. And the mysterious unwritten laws of faith and its rewards will be fractional for you, and your growth will be stunted. Loyalty to God is a fruit of faith in God. If loyalty to God is our supreme loyalty, then our loyalty to human beings will be in their best final interests.

An entire book could be written on faith. Involved in its mystery is its power "to remove mountains", its "release of our internal divine spark for superhuman activity", and its "secret of self-mastery". Through faith you are transformed from a "slavish part of the mathematical cosmos" to a "liberated volitional son of the Universal Father." You

can subdue evils and wrong intentions by faith, love, and trust. All permanent treasures for your eternal career are within "the grasp of living faith".

Finally, if you have high hopes, their realization must rest in faith, in yourself, yes, but also--without equivocation or reservation--in God. Man's life, its substance, its planning, wisdom, ethics, and ideals, cannot mount higher than his hope, his faith. Man cannot grasp the fullness of the value and vitality of faith and its great mystery of unmeasured rewards by reading words. He must think, and rethink, and think more, if faith is to fantastically reward him and serve him. Added to all lesser things it can expand his mind and ennoble his soul. Is anything more desireable?