

Faith Minus Reason Equals Irrational Unbelief

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:3–4

Code: B140401

This post was first published during April 2014. –ed.

Many people mistakenly think of faith as inherently noble. A once-popular song extols the virtue of faith, or believing: “I believe for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows.”

No one *really* believes that, of course, but that is not the point. The song is a paean to faith—without regard to the *content* of that faith. The *object* of faith was of no concern to the songwriter. The sentiment that song expresses is by no means biblical. It is an echo of one of the worst lies of our age—the notion that it isn’t important what you believe as long as you believe passionately enough.

Did you know that faith can be seriously harmful? Some varieties of faith actually lead away from the true God—they substitute superstition, falsehood, or faith itself in place of truth. Such faith inevitably leads to spiritual disaster. It is *reckless faith*.

Reckless faith goes to two extremes. At one end of the spectrum it looks within—relying on feelings, inner voices, fantasy, or subjective sensations. At the other extreme it fixes its hope on some external human authority—the teachings of a supreme leader, religious tradition, magisterial dogma, or some other arbitrary canon.

An obvious non-Christian example of the first extreme is New Age mysticism. A similar example of the second is Islam. But even among groups that profess Christianity, both varieties of reckless faith are clearly seen. The charismatic movement, for example, tends toward the first extreme; Roman Catholicism epitomizes the second.

(Interestingly, there have been recent developments of a strong convergence occurring between the charismatic movement and Roman Catholicism. Such a bizarre unity reminds us that the vast spectrum of theological errors all flow out of one satanic origin. More on that in the coming weeks.)

Note that at both poles, reckless faith seeks spiritual truth apart from Scripture—and that is the very point at which it becomes reckless. Both kinds of reckless faith also have this in common: they are irrational and anti-intellectual. “Anti-intellectual” doesn’t mean they oppose intellectual snobbery. It means they spurn the intellect and encourage blind, uncritical trust. Anti-intellectuals often set faith *against* reason, as if the two were opposites. That kind of faith is gullibility. It is foolishness, and not biblical faith. Biblical faith is never irrational.

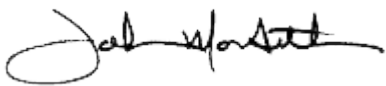
Authentic faith, in contrast, can never bypass the mind. It cannot be irrational. Faith, after all, deals with truth. Truth is objective data to be known, studied, contemplated, and understood. All those are activities that engage the intellect.

That means genuine Christianity *cannot* be anti-intellectual. The body of truth on which our faith is based has depths that are mysterious—unfathomable to the merely human mind, or inscrutable—but truth is *never* irrational. The difference is all-important. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Therefore what God says is true—and the antithesis of what He says must be false. Truth cannot be self-contradictory. Truth makes sense; nonsense cannot be true.

Moreover, the doctrine on which we base our faith must be *sound*—which is to say it must be biblical (1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:2–3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). “If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and *understands nothing*” (1 Timothy 6:3–4, emphasis added). Sound, biblical doctrine therefore underlies all true wisdom and authentic faith. The attitude that scorns doctrine while elevating feelings or blind trust cannot legitimately be called faith, even if it masquerades as Christianity. It is actually an irrational form of unbelief.

God holds us accountable for *what we believe* as well as *how we think* about the truth He has revealed. All Scripture testifies to the fact that God wants us to *know* and *understand* the truth. He wants us to be wise. His will is that we use our minds. We are supposed to think, to meditate—to be discerning. And that is what we will continue to pursue as this series unfolds over the coming weeks.

Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:2–6)



(Adapted from *Reckless Faith*.)

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