

Biblical Faith – Real faith

Turn to Rom 4.

While we were at Caloundra earlier on the year I read Bryson Smith's book called FAITH. It was our first book of the month. There was some great stuff in there and it convinced me it's worth having a look at BIBLICAL FAITH as a topic. So that's what we're looking at this morning.

We'll go to a few different places in the bible to help us. But there's one place in particular and that is Romans 4. So we'll have a look at that now to start with.

Romans 4.

It seems according to the apostle Paul that faith is best understood by seeing it in action.

So I think the best way for us to start. Is exactly that. That is to see some faith in action.

So what I need is a volunteer. I'm looking for a man or woman of faith. (Choose by picking the last person with their hand in the air.)

Chair, water.

Thanks to volunteer.

Pray

A reasonable faith

We've just seen our example of faith in action. And what we saw was pretty close to the picture you find in the pages of the bible. That is. A faith that's based on a proper and reasonable trust.

It was a proper and reasonable trust that we saw. And it was more than that wasn't it. What we saw was faith in action. It was a proper and reasonable trust which led to ACTION.

And I want to say. That's what Biblical faith is.

A proper and reasonable trust that leads to action.

Now, I don't know if that comes as a revelation, but that's not how our culture understands it.

On one hand. If you take faith in relation to people faith is almost like some sort of extra superpower some people have. That others don't. And the people that have this faith have an ability to do amazing things.

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So that's one way the word faith's understood in our culture. It's like a badge you wear.

But on the other hand when you talk about faith in God, when you talk about religious faith. It's got another meaning altogether. Faith in yourself and your own abilities. That's one thing. That's a great thing. But faith in God. Is almost the exact opposite.

Religious faith....is almost by definition.....WRECKLESS. Religious faith, is something with no basis. It's a sort of a leap in the dark. It's a blind faith.

It's Indiana Jones faith. One of the Indiana Jones movies. He's looking for the holy grail. And he gets to the edge of this bottomless chasm. There's no way across. But because this is a religious pilgrimage. He's chasing the holy grail. He remembers. It's a leap of faith. And so Indy closes his eyes. And he puts his foot out. He takes a big breath. And he blindly steps out off the cliff.

That's the way religious faith's understood.

If you go to www.dictionary.com. One of the meanings in the online dictionary for the word faith is belief that is not based on proof.

It's a trust that's devoid of rational explanation.

And here's another one. Faith is Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. Do you get the picture?

So a proper religious test of faith would have been for me to ask _____ to climb up to the top of the building, and to jump off. And just have faith that he/she wouldn't get hurt.

Do you see the difference? Religious faith isn't seen as a reasonable trust that leads to reasonable action.

Religious faith is more like a ridiculous faith, an unfounded trust that leads to a stupid action and more than likely a trip to the hospital.

And you wonder why people think you're a bit strange for being a person of faith.

And maybe YOU EVEN think that's the kind of faith God calls us to in the bible. If it is.... can I say. Our faith is WELL FOUNDED. That's not it at all.

When you turn to the pages of the bible. You might be surprised to find The picture of faith in the bible. Looks a more like the example we just saw.

I take it none of us thought _____ was taking a crazy and wreckless risk in doing what he/she did.

Let me just take you to verse 20 of Romans 4. Where Paul's talking about the faith of Abraham. Abraham's described by Paul as the Father of all who have faith.

Talking about Abraham he says.

He did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being FULLY PERSUADED that God had power to do what he had promised.

Do you see what Paul's saying. God's told Abraham and we saw the promises to Abraham last week in Genesis 12. God promises this childless man, this man that's getting old. A man who's wife can't have kids God promises Abraham he'll be a GREAT NATION. Which seems unrealistic.

But Abraham's not commended because he puts his brain into neutral and relies on blind faith. No, God proves himself faithful. God proves himself able. God proves himself willing to do what he's said

God calls Abraham out to go to the land of promise. And Abraham experiences God's blessing. Abraham grows in his knowledge of God. He grows in his trust. 'till he gets to the point where he's convinced. Paul says he's FULLY PERSUADED, that God had the power to do what he'd promised.

And Paul says. Here's the model for us to follow. Here's the kind of faith we're called to. It's not an irrational feeling. It's a REASONED TRUST. Biblical faith isn't the hopeful belief in the absence of evidence.

You see the same sort of thing at the beginning of Luke's gospel. Paul's writing to someone called Theophilus. And this is what he says. He says.

Luke 1:1-4 ^{NIV} **Luke 1:1** Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

This is the language of careful investigation. Eyewitnesses statements. Written down and kept. Careful investigation. That's what Luke's putting forward as the basis for faith.

So Theophilus, so we can have a certainty.

The good news about Jesus. The basis for Christianity, is historical reality. Jesus lived and died in real time. In the real streets of Palestine. The evidence can be scrutinized. You can compare the writings of the bible. Other historical accounts. Non biblical accounts. And come to a reasonable conclusion.

In Acts when Paul's on trial before king Agrippa. He's talking about the resurrection. And Festus the governor says he's out of his mind. He says Paul you're insane. Someone coming back from the dead. But listen to Paul's response. He doesn't say – you just have to have faith. He says

²⁵ "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.

Paul's not a lone, crazy man with some outrageous blind hope that Jesus might have been raised. First of all he's an eyewitness himself. He's seen Jesus alive. And it was so real to him he went from arresting Christians to being one. He was so convinced of the evidence.

And apart from that he says none of this has happened in a corner. he's pointing out the fact that this same news is coming from all over the place. News that someone called Jesus came back from the dead.

As Christians we don't rely on pure blind faith that Jesus lived. That Jesus died. That he rose from the dead. WE rely on reasonable evidence. Jesus appeared to 500 people we're told in Acts. The eyewitness accounts were around at the time. They've been written down for us. They're open for scrutiny. It's reasonable to think so many of Jesus followers were martyred for a risen savior. Because they were fully persuaded.

What's UNREASONABLE.....is to think they died for something they weren't sure of or even worse for what they knew to be a lie.

True and reasonable.

That's the biblical picture of faith. That's the first point I want to make. That's really the main point. But there are a couple of others that are important too. And you'll see them listed on your outline.

God calls us to a reasonable trust in him. To a reasonable trust in Jesus as our savior. But he calls us to have faith in what he's promised. And not in what we imagine he'd do for us.

And again. Abraham's a good model. Abraham's the father of those who have faith. But Abraham's faith isn't some sort of superpower. It's not as though Abraham because he's got all this faith that anything's possible for him.

My dad a while back. He was doing some work on the roof of his carport, which is about 9 feet or so. And he didn't have the right gear to get himself up to work at that height. So what he did. He had one ladder. And he put one end of a plank on this ladder. The other end he put across the top of a dodgy chair, which was sitting on top of a table. And he had faith that this setup would hold him up. Which it did. For about five seconds. Until the chair collapsed. The plank fell down. He wound up on his back on the tiles. With two broken ribs. And to add insult to injury he looked up to see the ladder falling down to land on his face.

It doesn't matter how much faith you have. What's important is what your faith is in.

And Abraham's faith isn't in himself. He's commended for his faith because of the object of his faith. He trusted in God who he'd become convinced was both willing and able to do what he'd promised.

And that's our model. Our faith's not in OUR FAITH. Which is the big mistake that gets made by a lot of people particularly in relation to healing ministries. If you don't get healed the problem is obvious. You didn't have enough faith.

But that's not the problem. You don't have faith in faith. Your faith is in the object of your faith. Your faith can't heal you from being blind since birth.

So Abraham's faith is in God. He's convinced God's able. But not only that. He's convinced God's willing. He's convinced God's going to do what he said he'd do.

was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being FULLY PERSUADED that God had power to do WHAT HE HAD PROMISED.

Which is the key. God never promises to do whatever you or I ask or imagine. . Which is a good thing. Seeing he's a little bit wiser than you and I and he knows what's best for us.

We have great faith that God will do what he's said he'll do.

We need to stop thinking God's some sort of cosmic servant who grants whatever foolish request you or I can think of. He's not a Jeannie in a bottle God.

Now of course. Let me just qualify that. That's not to say we don't ask for things. We're told to do that. Paul says God's able to do immeasurably more than we can even ask for.

That's not to say we can't have faith that he can do whatever he chooses. That he's able. But God hasn't promised that he'll fix your back. Or make you rich. Or give you the perfect family.

He has promised forgiveness. He has promised eternal life. For people who trust in Jesus death on their behalf. He's promised the church every spiritual blessing in Christ.

And Christian maturity is about discerning the value in what God's promised. As opposed to the relative value of what we might want or think we need.