

The Idol of Safety

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

- A. A mother asked her 5-year-old son to go to the pantry to get her a can of tomato soup. But he refused and protested, "It's dark in there." Mom assured Johnny, "It's okay. Don't be afraid. Jesus is in there." So Johnny opened the door slowly and seeing that it was dark, shouted, "Jesus, can you hand me a can of tomato soup?"
 1. An angel appeared to Gideon, calling him a "mighty man of valor" (Jud. 6:12) and then telling him to deliver Israel out of Midian's hand (v.14).
 2. Gideon's fearful reply was, "My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (v.15).
 3. Even after the Lord told Gideon that with His help he would defeat the Midianites (v.16), he was still afraid and demanded a series of signs to confirm God's help (vv.17, 36-40).
- B. What is the role of faith in a material and dangerous world?
 1. How does a Christian harmonize taking measures to avoid risk with his professed belief that God will take care of him?
 2. Preachers are in increasing demand because few young men are willing to expose themselves and their families to uncertain and unstable financial circumstances
 3. Christians compromise their faith in order to make a living:
 - a. Moving somewhere where there is no faithful congregation
 - b. Neglecting the spiritual needs of themselves and their families working too many hours
 - c. Elders who sincerely believe that the greatest good a Christian man can do is provide for his family; sometimes it is the only standard by which they judge a man
 4. When did our physical safety begin to take precedence over our spiritual well-being?
 - a. I have observed that some professed disciples will lie, break the law, or engage in any number of sins to protect, not just their lives, but their physical health and financial security
- C. Who taught you to believe that it was possible, by being careful enough, to protect you and your own from all risk of loss?
 1. Who told you it is acceptable to put the will of God aside in order to save what is important to you? - Matt. 14:28-31; Heb. 11:35-39
 2. How much faith do you have?
 - a. How much are you willing to depend on God?
 - b. What are the consequences if you do not have sufficient faith in God as He defines it?
- D. In reality, Christians live in a balance regarding risk and faith
 1. On one side, an overabundant concern for safety that leads to little willingness to expose oneself to risk, to manifest faith

- a. Some Christians are not tried because they refuse to risk going where the trials may be found - Acts 20:22-24
- 2. On the other side, a complete lack of concern for risk can lead to recklessness and poor stewardship.

I. RISK: COUNT THE COST

- A. Everything we do in life involves risk at some level
 - 1. When we love, get married, have children, have any kind of relationship, are employed, get into a car-- all are risks
 - 2. We are always, somehow or another, engaging in a cost-benefit analysis with risk
 - 3. We decide whether we are willing to take whatever risks in life-- is the prospect of the potential benefit worth exposure to the possible loss?
- B. Counting the cost important in the decision to follow Christ - Luke 14:26-33
 - 1. Is the risk worth it? Is it worthwhile to give up all that one has, all that one can feel secure about, and trust in God?
 - 2. If there is no God, there will be no afterlife to regret the apparent waste
 - 3. But if God is, and there is a judgment, then the risk will have been worth it - Acts 17:30-31; 2Thes. 1:8-9
- C. The Idol of Safety
 - 1. There is a great danger in attempting to put trust in the notion of safety
 - 2. Worldly wisdom would tell us that there is benefit in playing it safe
 - 3. One could say that it is "safer" to not get married, have children, be in relationships, for then one cannot get hurt...
 - 4. Ironically, one then risks the pain of isolation, loneliness, regret
 - 5. One could advocate safety in investments, work - Ecc. 11:4
 - 6. What did the safe choice get the one talent servant? Matt. 25:14-30
- D. Some level of risk, therefore, is utterly necessary in order to live
 - 1. "The unriskened life is not worth living"! (Socrates' defense at the trial where he was condemned to death for subverting youth by teaching them his philosophy)
 - 2. Where there is no risk, there is never any opportunity for real gain
 - 3. Unless, of course, one is worldly and materialistic and measures gain primarily by money or security

II. FAITH: TRULY TRUST GOD

- A. There is a wide gulf between believing in God and believing God!
 - 1. It is one thing to believe that God exists, and even to believe that God is able to act in miraculous ways
 - 2. It is quite another to hear what He says and place your complete trust in Him no matter how the situation may appear to your senses
- B. Abraham
 - 1. Abram hears from Jehovah to leave Ur and go where He directs, and He will bless him (Gen. 12:1-3)
 - 2. After getting to know God better, God commands him to sacrifice his son of promise (Gen. 22:1-2)

- C. Jonathan sees the Philistine host
 - 1. 1Sam. 14:6, 8-12 - Jonathan proves willing to trust in God, fight against the Philistines with his armor-bearer by himself
 - 2. Led to a great victory and rout over Philistia - 1Sam. 14:13-23
 - 3. We could go on, as the Hebrew author did in chapter 11
- D. These men were not successful because of their own strength-- they were successful because they trusted God and He gave them success
- E. But what about now?
 - 1. We seem to suffer some kind of paralysis in faith
 - 2. We confess that God is able to do these types of things, but we act as if He will not do so today - Rom. 8:28, 32; Eph. 3:20-21
- F. Godly balance in reasoning
 - 1. We must renounce all that we have to follow Jesus, and still provide for our own family - Luke 14:33; 1Tim. 5:8
 - 2. We must not expect to receive anything from the Lord if we are seeking to advance our own carnal desires - James 4:1-3
 - 3. We must make sure that we are not going beyond our God-given abilities and what is truly possible in our faith - 1Peter 4:10-11
 - 4. It may even be that we have trusted in the Lord and yet been disappointed somehow
 - a. We must then go through the examination: were our motives honest? Were we really trusting in God? Did we confuse our carnal will with God's holy will?
 - b. If we still believe that we acted honestly in faith, we must not give up; perhaps God's wisdom and plans are going in a different direction than we thought, or perhaps this is but one piece in a much larger puzzle
 - c. Perhaps the challenge was that our timeframe was not God's time frame
 - 5. Is it not true that our very existence and all that we have are gifts from God as it is?
 - a. Why, then, should we resist entrusting ourselves and all such things back to Him?

Conclusion:

- A. Risk is part of life, and there is value in risk
- B. But God has not called us to safe living with moderate, sensible, worldly ideals
- C. We are called to entrust ourselves to God and His purposes - Gal. 2:20
- D. Perhaps the reason we are not reaping the harvest of Bible times is that we are afraid of stepping out and taking the risks they accepted
 - 1. 1Cor. 3:5-7, 4:9-13
- E. Let us be willing to get beyond the safe life that really doesn't exist in this world, and live the true life of faith in Jesus Christ