



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – May 4, 2008

Heart to Heart...

I get e-mail forwards daily. Many friends and loved ones send them to me. I know many of you get them too. Many of the e-mails are religious in nature dealing with some story or idea, sprinkled with some verses in the Bible. Some are very moving. I am not against such and I do not want anyone to think I am. What I want us to realize is these "feel good" stories, even though they may speak of God, are not faith building! I know some may not like to hear this but we need to understand the nature of real, genuine, saving faith and the inspired faith building lessons as taught by Jesus. Many are equating faith with an emotion or an emotional stirring of the heart. When the heart is stirred by a story, they think that is faith, but it is not. We need to know the difference!

Jesus *alone* is the author and perfecter of one's faith (Hebrews 12:2). For faith to take root in us, it must come from Him and no other source. Jesus followed the word and will of God all His days on earth. God designed true, saving faith to come from one source. "*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*" (Romans 10:17) Notice the two ingredients to faith: (1) *Faith comes by hearing.* Hearing is not one of our physical senses but the internal, spiritual heart, accepting and acting upon what is said. The apostles spoke on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. They spoke the word of God/Christ. Some were hearers, but the majority was not. Some "*received*" the word and accepted it by bringing it into their heart and responded to what God asked. They had ears to hear and it brought about a saving faith that responded. (2) *Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ.* We hear a lot of things around us, but only by the word of Christ, the word of God, will our faith grow. God planned it that way. It does not come from someone's moving story but from His word alone. God's word is active, living and can get into the very depths of one's heart, soul and thoughts (Hebrews 4:12). God's word is the only thing that has the ability and power to get into our deepest parts. Faith is only produced in the heart (Romans 10:10) upon hearing the word of God and responding to what one hears. To try to obtain faith through other means can never happen. People easily deceive themselves into thinking what they feel is their faith!

Paul instructed Timothy the preacher to "*preach the word*" (II Timothy 4:2). The word is where the power of God creates a saving faith. The word of the gospel is the only thing that can save (Romans 1:16). To preach a moving story or the latest idea of someone's book is to take us into things that are powerless to help us overcome our fleshly desires. Overcoming our fleshliness is the key to growing or dying spiritually. Fleshliness keeps people from recognizing the true source of power and help. That may answer why so many are weak and fleshly in their lives and thinking because they rely on other things rather than God's word. The flesh says, "Give me something that moves or stirs my heart!" (That is a feeling!) Faith says, "Give me God and His word and I will stand on it, act on it and live by it!" The first one is just a story and is of no value in times of temptation or hurts. In the midst of difficulties and pain, people cannot recall or even think about a story they heard. Faith, saving faith can hold to the reality of God and His might, relying on His promises and move us forward when things around us are caving in.

Faith comes from hearing the word and nothing else. We need to understand and accept that. There is nothing wrong with stories, but never equate them with saving faith! Have you ever wondered why people do not send e-mails about the word of God alone? That might be telling us something. Think about it!!!

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