
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

September 6, 2015

Experiencing A Real and Vivid Faith

“Taste and see how good the Lord is! The one who takes refuge in him is truly happy!”
Psalm 34:8 (Common English Bible)

There are large numbers of people who have never experienced faith as a matter of the heart – a stirring of the emotions. They have a good mind, a strong character, and possess a genuine love for God. Yet, their faith is lived as a mental consent to the teachings of the Bible, the Church, and others who are respected and admired. What they lack – and may long for – is a genuine, personal encounter with the living God, a personal engagement with the holy.

Some time ago, I was sharing breakfast with a friend and we were discussing the story from Genesis where Jacob wrestled with God throughout the night. *“When the man (God) saw that he couldn’t defeat Jacob, he grabbed Jacob’s thigh and tore a muscle in Jacob’s thigh as he wrestled with him. (Genesis 32:25)”* My friend uttered impulsively – and sincerely – “I would be happy to walk with a limp to have had that kind of experience with God!”

A rare opportunity presented itself years ago for my wife and I to be present in the studio during the taping of Good Morning America. Emeril Lagasse was a guest of the show that particular morning. Sam Champion asked me to accompany him as Emeril demonstrated the preparation of a holiday dessert. At the conclusion of the demonstration, Emeril invited Champion to “taste” what they had created together. Sam Champion did and the look on Champion’s face pleased Emeril. What happened next was unexpected. Champion grabbed another fork, cut another “taste” from the dessert and held it to my mouth: “Doug, you have got to taste this!” I had two choices – the studio camera now on me as a national audience watched. I could demand that Champion prove to me it was as good as he seemed to think before I opened my mouth or I could simply “taste” and see for myself. Naturally, I did the latter. My conclusion concurred with Champion’s. It was perhaps the best dessert I had ever tasted.

Robert J. McCracken has observed that the experience of faith occurs in a similar manner, “It begins as an experiment and ends as an experience.”¹ McCracken says that too often faith is not lived authentically – an earnest effort each day to have our lives shaped by the teachings of Jesus. What remains is a faith that receives intellectual consent and lives in argument of what the Bible really teaches. A substitution is required. Substitute the practice of faith for argument and, in time, both a religious experience and conviction will be yours. Christ has pledged that it will be so.

Doug Hood

¹ Robert J. McCracken, **Questions People Ask: Sermons Preached in Riverside Church, New York City** (Harper & brother