

Faith | I Believe

Romans 17:16-23; 30-34

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase

—Martin Luther King Jr

THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO BELIEVING IN GOD

(v.16) While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was troubled within him when he saw that the city was full of idols.

Our biggest barrier to belief is often not doubt, it's idolatry...

“In Boston, they ask ‘what does he know?’ in New York, they ask ‘how much does he make?’ but in Philadelphia, they ask, ‘what family is he from?’”

—Attributed to Mark Twain

“In faith there is enough light for those who want to see, and enough shadows to blind those who don’t” —Blaise Pascal

WHY THAT BARRIER CAN CRUSH YOU

(v.18) Then also, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with him...

The Epicureans—the ‘Immoral People’ who live life in pursuit of pleasure...

The Stoics are the moral people who pursue power through goodness and control.

“If you worship money and things — if they are where you tap real meaning in life — then you will never have enough. Never feel you have enough. It’s the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly, and when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you. On one level, we all know this stuff already — it’s been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, bromides, epigrams, parables: the skeleton of every great story. The trick is keeping the truth up-front in daily consciousness. Worship power — you will feel weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to keep the fear at bay. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart — you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. And so on.”

—David Foster Wallace

This Barrier Can Also Potentially Crush Others

(v.18) Some said, “What is this pseudo-intellectual trying to say?”

(v.32) When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to ridicule him. But others said, “We’d like to hear from you again about this.” 33 Then Paul left their presence.

A FAITH THAT CAN FREE YOU

33...Then Paul left their presence. 34 However, some men joined him and believed, including Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day. That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing.”

—David Foster Wallace

Three factors necessary for a growing faith.

1. Trust in God
2. Understanding more about God & Self
3. Obeying God

Your faith is real—but it may not be mature. It may be a little shallow and superficial. But—and this matters enormously—faith can grow, and it strengthens as it grows. It needs to take root and grow into a strong, vibrant plant the problem lies not in the gospel but in the nature and depth of your response to it. You should see doubt as pointing to your faith possibly being based on weak foundations and it is those foundations that need attention.

—Alister McGrath

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Where is Your Faith?

—Jesus