

Text: Romans 5:1-2

"Leap of Faith"

You're at the age of eighty and someone says to you, "Jump!" Would you? How about at the age of fifty? Thirty? Fifteen? Seven? Or what about if you were just two years old? It's a hard question to answer not knowing just what the jump involves.

At the age of eighty, the chance of jumping anything, or to anyone, might be considered ludicrous or frightening. Bodies and bones at this age need special care not to be broken; to jump is not even a consideration when falling fills the heart with fear. But an elderly person will jump at the opportunity to share a cuppa and conversation to avoid loneliness.

At fifty one might consider jumping something, but hopefully wisdom is starting to kick in. So jumping a puddle or the fence should make way for one to find an easier way around the water or to find a gate through the fence.

Thirty, on the other hand, is a relatively better age to consider a jump of any kind. At the age of thirty one might even consider jumping out of a perfectly good aeroplane, as long as a parachute was strapped to one's back. However, if a father suggested a thirty year old jump into his arms, the father would be met with ridicule or even flattened if the thirty year old took up the challenge.

A fifteen year old, overflowing with oestrogen or testosterone might gladly jump into the arms of the one they adore. Or, they might dare do a feat that fills even a thirty year old with fear, jumping into something completely silly or dangerous. Thinking they were invincible, they might push aside their wellbeing for the thrill of a jump, making even jumping out of an aeroplane look safe.

A seven year old would possibly hesitate at taking an unsafe jump. Or perhaps they wouldn't even be old enough to dream up a deed that's too dangerous. But a seven year old would definitely be at risk of being reprimanded by a parent for jumping on the lounge or a bed. And most seven year old children love to jump on a trampoline.

A two year old, on the other hand, is still mastering the art of jumping. Their jump looks more like a hop to the rest of us. Their little feet barely leave the ground. Even just hopping without falling over sees the small

child filled with delight at their achievement. However, a two year old child will out jump every other person if asked to jump to their parents. Without hesitation a trusting child will lovingly launch into the arms of mum or dad!

So would you jump? It depends of the circumstances of the jump; the age of the jumper, their ability, perhaps their sense of what's right and wrong, and the environment of the jump.

Faith might be viewed in the same way as "taking a jump". In fact, the term "leap of faith" connects faith or belief and jumping or launching one's self. If we're to go back and look again at the calls to jump at different ages and replace jump with faith, what type of faith pictures would be painted? For an eighty year old, a thirty year old, or a two year old?

So how do these pictures of jumping or faith, fit God's view of faith? Does faith grow from the context of the circumstances, the abilities of the person, or even from the environment in which one is called to have faith?

As varied as the reason people might or might not jump, as we have seen, is also as varied as the views of just what faith is believed to be in this world. You see, everyone has faith in something. Even the most godless individual has faith.

If a person claims to be without faith they fail to have an existence. Or, at the least, those who can't grasp what they have faith "in", have trouble reconciling just what their being consists "of", in this life. So faith exists in every person but a faith in God often falls into confusion and misunderstanding.

There's just as much confusion over just what faith is in the church as well! What usually happens is some of us use our worldly understanding of this faith and then projects our ideas of faith onto what it is to have faith in God.

The result of this understanding of faith is that we credit ourselves for our faith, believing it comes from something we've done, or how we feel, or how we think or reason. Then when suffering comes and we're tested we find the faith we've had deserts us when we needed faith the most.

On the other hand, the faith God gives is different. We're told faith justifies us and gives us peace before God.

In Romans 5:1-2 Saint Paul addresses the origins of faith and what it does in us. He says, *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,*

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Note we are justified by faith, not justified by our faith. Paul repeats himself by then saying, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We hear before God we must be justified to have peace. Justification must occur for peace to exist, for peace to occur we must be made just or righteous before God.

So we are justified by our Lord Jesus Christ! We are made right before God by what happened to Jesus. We live in peace with God, through Jesus' faithfulness and love towards his Father, and towards us. For our sake and because he trusted his Heavenly Father he endured the cross and the grave. Jesus was faithful even unto death.

We are justified and have peace with God because of Jesus Christ and his faith. Therefore, we are justified by a faith that comes to us from Christ, a faithfulness that has already led to his death and resurrection, a faith which had caused us to be drowned in baptism and raised to new life because of his death and resurrection, and a faith which is leading us towards an earthly death but also towards the reality of a powerful resurrection into the peaceful presence of a loving God.

Saint Paul continues in Romans five verse two, *“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

That is to say, through Jesus we have also been given access by his faithfulness into his death and resurrection in which we now stand. Grace is nothing other than Jesus' death and resurrection – for me. Every eternal beneficiary of grace knows that despite their sin they can confess that Jesus' gift of grace is “for me”.

So our faith, the faith that saves us from the eternity of hell, is his faith and it comes as a result of the work he did on the cross when he faithfully stood under the condemnation of yours and my sinful reality.

Nevertheless, we now have access to all the blessings of grace; that is Jesus' death and resurrection for us, for me, as we stand or remain under the cover of his faithfulness.

Standing in the faith of Christ also allows us to rejoice in God's presence, despite the sinful nature which still struggles within. All believers stand as one in and under Christ. That is why we hear in Ephesians chapter four “There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord,

one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

From faith comes works, from faith comes understanding and reason, and from faith one gets to experience a myriad of emotions from troubling exasperation to joyful exhilaration. But it never works the other way around. Faith forms the foundation of our Christian being, and the being of the whole Christian church under Christ. But the things that come from our human beings are never the essential ingredients of faith. Why? Because every part of our humanness is tainted with the weakness of individualistic self-centred sin!

A little further on in chapter five Paul says, *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”* (Romans 5:6) We had a faith but this was the faith of the ungodly; it was a faith that was anti-God, and pro-everything else in his creation, but primarily centred on ourselves. In our weakness by our own efforts we’re only capable of unbelief when it comes to God.

But God came to us while we were sinners; Jesus died for those who are weak. This is the promise of a God who is faithful to you and me.

In the same way God was faithful to Abraham. This man struggled to believe he would have a son to Sarah. He even lay with Sarah’s maidservant Hagar to have a child, yet God was faithful to him and despite his weakness Abraham grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:20-21)

So as you struggle with your human weakness, know that while you were completely weak in your being Christ died for you! And the faith God gave to you in your baptism, was the faithfulness of Christ, so you might be fully convinced by what God has promised you.

You bear the faith enflamed by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God, the faith which lays you in the arms of Christ, and the faith which cause you to be at peace with God, confident to stand in his presence and name him Father, rejoicing and glorifying his holy name. Amen.