

The Reasons and Risks of Faith
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

“The very limits of reason make faith a necessity.”— Augustine

Imagine that it is 1936 and you are travelling through Death Valley, California. Your old car has broken down beyond repair. The temperature is a high 116 F. In the distance you see an old shack where you find an old-fashioned pump with a note attached.

It reads: “Dear traveller, this pump is alright as of September 1935. I put in a new washer and it should last a few years. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork-end up. There’s just enough water in the bottle to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour in about one quarter of the water and let her soak to wet the leathers. Then pour in the rest, medium stream and pump like crazy. Have faith, you will get water! This well has never gone dry. Signed, Desert Pete.”

You read the note; it is now 1936, 10 months later. You are hot, dry, thirsty and desperate, now fully aware that your life is in danger. In the shade of the shack you find the white rock and underneath is a container holding about a quart of water. You lick your parched, dry lips. What will you do? Drink the water, ignoring the note?

For you, the choice is clear. Will you believe only what you can see, touch and taste — in this case, stale water? Or will you follow Desert Pete’s instructions and have faith in the pump? There is strong evidence that the note is trustworthy, but you still have to prove your faith by proper action.

Note: This account is based on a true incident which took place in Death Valley in 1936. The writer of that story lived to tell it because he had faith in Desert Pete.

Perhaps we can identify with the experience of this individual in California. Surely it reveals that, even with strong evidence, you and I have to believe before we can receive. The world says, “Show me, answer my questions and then I will believe.” God says, “Believe, trust me and then I will show you.”

Every day we make decisions based upon faith. Therefore, to be fair, when it comes to the most important decision of life, namely our personal relationship with God, should we not be willing to exercise the same faith toward our Creator as we apply toward life in general?

Are you thirsty for more than this world can offer? Christ is offering forgiveness of sin, peace with God and the assurance of eternal life. It is all for the taking. The

next move is up to you. God will provide the evidence, but he will never force against your will. You alone must take that leap of faith.

Faith is the key that opens the door to many of life's greatest blessings.