

No Strings Attached Faith

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This might not be the most orthodox way to start a sermon, but how many here have ever been suspicious of someone, something, some organization, you get the picture? I think in a lot of ways we're suspicious by nature, and maybe the older we get the more suspicious we get. Well maybe that's a fault and maybe not, but either way, no one likes to be taken for a ride. Nobody likes to get ripped off, and nobody likes to be suckered into doing what they don't want to do.

Today we're going to look at what's called, "No Strings Attached Faith." So what exactly is that supposed to mean? Aren't we supposed to love God without any stipulation, love our neighbor as ourselves, and trust in the Lord with all our heart? Yes, yes, and yes.

The goal here today is to take a look from the outside in. So if you can think back to before you knew the Lord, or if you don't know the Lord today then contemplate what's going on in your life right now. Either way, everyone has a perspective they can focus on.

Big Country (Chris Schilling) and I were talking a few weeks back and he says that sometimes no matter how nice, or generous, or polite someone is, others will still think they're up to something? I have to admit that I have felt that way at times and you know what? Sometimes they were. But far more often that wasn't the case, it was just someone practicing a random act of kindness, and there's nothing wrong with that.

So where does all that hospitality originate anyway? Some might like to think that human nature is naturally good and that everyone really wants to do right. Whether that's true or not, the Bible teaches us in James that every good and perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.

What do people think of our friendliness, generosity, and willingness to go the extra mile? I mean, Jesus said that we need to let our light so shine before men that they would see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Are they suspicious of us before they really get to know us? Maybe so. More specifically, what are people sometimes thinking we personally stand to gain by them converting to Christianity? Do they think we'll gain monetarily, greater status, or we might have some hidden agenda? Could those things be true? Yes, yes, and yes. But are they more likely false? Yes again. Are we willing to accommodate people's initial skepticism?

Matthew 11:1-9 ...And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me...

But what do we really stand to gain by others coming to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and giving their life to God? That's more of a question for those on the outside looking in. A lot less than those who have a desire to make the change. Again, think back to around the time you first had an experience with the Holy Spirit, then God's people, an invitation to church, and then what were those first days, weeks, months like? A little suspicious perhaps at times, but what about that change for the better? What about the understanding of having our name written in the Lambs book of life? What about that peace that passes all understanding?

Luke 9:1-5 ...And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

I want to tell a personal story about one of my earliest experiences after getting baptized and giving my life to the Lord. I had a day off during the week, working night shift, and was over at the church down in Virginia. The head pastor at the time, Pastor Thomas, and a couple of the others working there that day, asked me if I wanted to get lunch and so I did. I remember getting a little suspicious of what I was thinking might happen after we got to the restaurant. Now you've got to know that I wasn't much of a church goer growing up, so all I could think of after a while was they were going to corner me into a tithes and offerings plan. The big money issue, oh yeah! It's funny looking back on it now, but there was this huge battle going on between my

ears. And you know what? We had a pleasant lunch, I wasn't roped into anything, and I have to say it was a real relief but also made me realize that these guys were the real deal.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient...

Hopefully we all remember a little of what it looked like from the outside in. A little suspicious at times I suppose. A little leery of being fed another line. A little cautious that we don't get ourselves into something we can't get out of. But just remember that there are no strings attached in Jesus. Just like Red Green says, "We're all in this together". That was just a brief cultural reference and some of you know who I'm talking about and some of you probably don't have a clue. Either way, God is looking out for the best interest of his people. Always has been and always will be. We'll look at one last verse and close with that.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.