

Believing in Christ

Hebrews 11:1-6

Did you know that believing in Jesus, as the Son of God is absolutely necessary for eternal life?

John 3:16-18 – “**For God so loved the world**, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷**For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.** ¹⁸**Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”**

Peter puts it this way in Acts 4:12, “***And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***”

Yes, believing in the name of the only Son of God is necessary if we are to have eternal life. It does not just believe God exists; it also believes in Jesus as God’s only Son. We must put our faith in Jesus. Jesus himself in John 14:6 said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes to the Father but through Me.” The way to God is through faith in Jesus; there is no other way and no other name by which this can happen.

I would like to start this sermon off by looking at faith from God’s perspective. We need to understand that salvation is not an entitlement that God owes us. It is a gift to those who believe. But we must understand the idea of believing as God teaches, and not try to read into it what we think it means. Let’s look at God word and I hope you take the time to listen to God. After all we must understand what God means by faith if we want to be obedient to Him.

Throughout the Bible, God distinguishes those who please Him, those who abide in His grace and have His approval, and those who don't. Hebrews 11:6 says, ***“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek him.”*** While it is true that we must believe in God, it is also true that we must know about the God that we believe in. We must know that He rewards those who seek Him. Many people believe a God exists, but the God they seek is not the God of the Bible.

Our postmodern society thinks it should design its own god and wants to sit in judgment of this god, rather than seek the God who created them. Some wish to manufacture a god that fits with the times. Faith in a culturally correct god is not the same as faith in the God who made the world and will one day judge it. We must believe in God as He reveals and defines Himself in His word the Bible, not in a mushy god popularized by our culture.

Our culture thinks of God as one who winks at sin, who never condemns anyone, and who believes everything that we believe. Many think the God of grace doesn't care about righteousness or truth. And others have forgotten that God is not just holy, but that He is utterly holy. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, ***“Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and you cannot look on wickedness with favor.”*** To many think that God doesn't care what we believe or do, but God is vitally interested in our living holy lives devoted to the truth, serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot of having faith in Jesus Christ but then believing anything we want to believe. Nor can we speak of having faith in Jesus Christ and living in any way we want. When a person comes to Christ as a believer, He belongs to Jesus. Paul told the

Christians in Corinth in 1 Cor. 6:19-20, “¹⁹*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,* ²⁰*for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*” If we wish to wear the name of Christ we can never forget to whom we belong – to Jesus as Lord and Master.

In Psalm 90:2 Moses wrote, “*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You return man to dust and say, “Return, O Children of man!”*” The eternal God stands above culture. The Lord is not subject to the changing philosophies of humanity. His holiness, His righteousness, His purity, and His justice do not change with popular opinions. We must accept Him and His revealed will in the scriptures as He gave it to us instead of trying to remake Him in our own image. Faith in God doesn’t mean we can believe whatever we please. How can anyone say He trusts in God, when he doesn’t believe what God says? Faith means we believe what the Lord Jesus teaches. Why? Because Jesus is Divine. He knows all things and has all authority. He gives us His wisdom in the Bible, this Word, because He loves us and wants us to know the truth.

Believing in the God of the Bible also necessitates trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. The O.T. prophesies of Jesus as the coming Messiah. The N.T. tells how He fulfilled all of the O.T. prophecies that dealt with the Messiah. Believing in Jesus means that you believe the claims He made to be God’s Son. Jesus said he would rise from the dead and he did. Jesus said that Jerusalem would fall, and the Romans destroyed the city in 70 A.D.

The Bible says in Jn. 1:11-13, that ***“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”*** Many people approached Jesus with preconceived notions about the Messiah. And since he didn’t seem to meet these notions they rejected Him. People still do this today. They don’t want a Jesus who judges people nor one who calls for moral change. But that kind of Jesus does not exist. To know the real Jesus, we must read the N.T. and accept what it says about Him – we cannot pick and choose the portions we want to believe and reject the others.

Jesus doesn’t play games. He came to His own people (the Jews) but they did not receive Him. The Lord only blesses those who believe in His name, who believe who He really is and what He really teaches. Only those are given the right to become children of God. Jesus loves you, but He is not obligated to save you unconditionally. Jesus isn’t your servant; He is your creator and Lord.

The Bible teaches that it is faith that stands between being accepted and being rejected. God made that decision, and we cannot overrule God. In Jn. 3:18 Jesus said, ***“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*** On another occasion Jesus taught the Jews that He had come from the Father in Heaven. He said in Jn. 8:24, ***“I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He you will die in your sins.”*** Believing in Jesus means believing He is truly the Christ, the Son of God. It means

believing that He is the fulfillment of God prophecies in the O.T. of the Messiah.

Saving faith is not simply believing in the act of believing. It believes in the Person of Jesus Christ. To believe in the Person means that you believe what He claims, what He says, and what He promises, that all these things are true. If I believe in the Lord Jesus, then I recognize His authority over my whole life. Faith includes duties and responsibilities. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6:46, “***Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?***” If I regard Jesus as Lord, I cannot pick and choose which of His commandments I will obey and those, which I won’t.

There are times where we all wonder why God commanded the things He commanded. But trust faith means that we act even when we don’t understand. Hebrews 11:8 says, “***By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not know where he was going.***” Abraham didn’t argue with God. He trusted God and obeyed. He showed confidence in God, though he did not know what lay ahead of him. We trust God in things that we don’t understand, because we find Him trustworthy in what we do know. We know Him to be a true and loving God.

The apostle Paul said in 2 Tim. 1:12, “***For this reason I also suffer these things, but I’m not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I’m convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.***” Paul could face the future with peace and confidence, because He knew God and how God kept His promises. We too can trust God in what we do not know, because God has proved Himself worthy of our trust in the things we do know.

Hebrews 11:3 says, ***“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”*** By faith we can understand God created this world in six days, just as He said in Genesis. While no one was around to witness the creation, we can trust God’s word about creation. Why you ask? Because we know God is trustworthy, and worthy of our faith.

The early disciples were willing to die for their faith for two reasons: **First**, they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Acts 1:3 says that Jesus, ***“presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days.”*** They saw Him, heard him and even touched His body. They were so convinced that when the Jewish Sanhedrin threatened them with punishment they replied, ***“we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*** They were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Second, they believed in Jesus, because they saw how he had fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the O.T. Had you grown up in the 1st Century synagogues your teaching would have consisted of a deep Bible teaching, which would have, included teaching on the coming Messiah. Jesus was born in the right place, at the right time, of the right family lineage, and with the right kind of mother – a virgin. A star announced His birth, and wise men came from the east to look for Him. The apostle Philip said to his brother Nathaniel, ***“We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”*** (*Jn. 1:45*). Throughout the book of Acts the apostles and evangelist all taught that Jesus was indeed the Messiah of promise.

What we know is true about Jesus is that He is the promised Messiah who arose from the dead as was prophesized in the O.T. And for this reasons we call Him **“Lord”** and **“Christ.”** Since we have confidence He is the Son of God, we can trust what He says about creation, about Adam and Eve, about the flood, about Sodom and Gomorrah, and every other O.T. story. When Jesus spoke of the O.T., He treated all of these stories as historical events. And for this reason we can believe the O.T. is trustworthy and true. Why? Because we believe and trust in Jesus Christ.

Because we have a living Savior, we want a living faith and not a dead one. James 2:14-18 says, **“¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”** You see, according to James, who was moved by the Holy Spirit to write these words, a dead and inactive faith is useless. It doesn’t reveal one who truly believes in Jesus Christ. It doesn’t save!

Saving faith is always obedient. Jesus in Jn. 3:36 taught, **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; and whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”**

You might can claim to believe; but unless your faith lead to obedience, you really can’t be right with God. Whenever the Bible speaks of saving faith, it is always an active, obedient faith. In Gal. 3:25-29 we read, **“²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into**

Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Do you want to be heirs of Abraham according to the promise – then you must have the faith that Paul spoke of here one where in obedient faith we are baptized into Christ and thereby put on Christ in this baptism – we are taught to obey, so as Ananias said to Paul in Acts 22:16, ***“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”*** This is the same obedient faith that all the apostles and evangelist taught – and I now ask the same question – why do you tarry? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sin, calling upon the name of the Lord! Will you not come as we stand and sing?