

CHAPTER 3

What Is Faith?

The Bible is crystal clear as to the one essential condition of salvation:

"B _____ and be SAVED" (Luke 8:12)

"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to _____ them that _____" (1 Cor. 1:21)

" _____ on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be _____" (Acts 16:31).

Man is saved "by grace through _____" (Eph. 2:8)

What is **FAITH** and what does it mean to **BELIEVE**?

FAITH (belief or trust) is not some difficult thing which no one really understands. People walk by faith every single day. When you sit down in a chair you have **FAITH** in that chair and you **BELIEVE** that it will hold you up and not break into pieces when you put your weight upon it! When you drive in your car you **TRUST** the brakes and you **BELIEVE** that when you need to stop suddenly your brakes will work! If you fly from one city to another, you have **FAITH** in the airplane and you **TRUST** that it will carry you safely to your destination without crashing to the ground. Whenever you eat food, you **TRUST** that the food has been properly prepared and not poisoned. When you go down into your basement, you **RELY UPON** the pillars and walls that hold up the ceiling over your head, and you **BELIEVE** that the house will not come crashing down upon you. When you climb a tree and hang all your weight upon one branch (30 feet above the ground!), you **TRUST** that the branch is strong enough to hold you up. Every time you drive or ride your bike over a bridge, you **DEPEND UPON** that bridge to hold you up and not collapse into the water or the highway below. When we pet a big dog, we **TRUST** that it is a friendly dog and that it will not bite our hand off! When your friend tells you that he will meet you at the park at 3 o'clock the next day, you **TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD** and **BELIEVE** that he will do what he said he would do! Can you think of other examples of how we live by faith every day?

Sometimes the brakes in a car do fail and a person might have an accident. Sometimes airplanes do crash and lives are lost. Sometimes chairs do break when people sit in them. Sometimes there is something wrong with the food we eat and it might make us sick! Sometimes the roofs on buildings do come crashing down. Sometimes branches do break when we climb trees. Sometimes friendly looking dogs do bite! Sometimes our friends do not keep their promises.

FAITH IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE OBJECT (person or thing) IN WHICH IT IS PLACED!!! Is it possible to trust something or someone that will never fail us? Is there someone that we can put our faith in who will never disappoint us or let us down?

The Bible tells us exactly WHO we should believe in and WHO we should trust completely. It is **not** Santa Claus, nor is it the Easter Bunny! It is *not* the President of the United States. It is *not* your school teacher or your Pastor, though these may be very fine people. It is certainly *not* yourself because often you will disappoint yourself and let yourself down. But there is a Person that we can SAFELY believe in. WHO IS THIS PERSON (see Acts 11:17; 16:31; 19:4 and 20:21)? _____

What does it mean to believe in the Lord? A missionary was once translating the Gospel of John into an African dialect. He had great difficulty in finding a word for the important word "believe" (which occurs frequently in John's gospel--see for example John 1:12; 3:16,18,36; 5:24; 6:35,47; 7:38; 8:24; 11:25-26; etc.), so he had to leave it blank. He continued his work but was constantly baffled by his inability to translate this key word. One day a native came from another community with a message of great importance. He had been running through the tangled underbrush for hours and so was completely exhausted. He blurted out his message and, being at the end of his endurance, threw himself upon a nearby hammock. As he went limp he breathed a sigh of relief and uttered a word in the African dialect which was new to the missionary. He asked the natives what the runner had said. One replied, "Master, it means 'I am resting all my weight here.'" "Thank God," said the missionary, "that is just the word I need for 'believe'"; and he proceeded to complete his translation. So too, believing is just casting oneself unreservedly into the open arms of the Lord Jesus and saying, "Lord, on Thee I rest my soul for eternity. I am trusting Thee to hold me up and to keep me safe and secure forever! I am depending on You and on You *alone* to save me!"

Yes, God wants us to lean with all our weight upon Christ. We must cast ourselves upon Christ Jesus and rest in Him and commit ourselves completely to the One who is able to S_____ (Hebrews 7:25)! He is our only hope of salvation!

What does it mean to believe on the Lord? Another illustration might help. The story is told of an expert tightrope walker whose tightrope was extended across Niagara Falls. Of course, to fall from this rope would mean instant destruction. Balancing his long pole lightly, he steps upon the rope and starts across. The crowd is silent. Finally he triumphantly places his foot on the farther bank and a great cheer rises even above the noise of the falls.

The man then turns to the crowd and makes a thrilling proposal. He offers to re-cross the falls with a man on his back! But who is to be the man?

"Do you believe I am able to carry you across?" asks the ropewalker turning to a likely individual.

"I certainly do," at once responds the one addressed.

"Will you let me?" inquires the waiting hero.

"Will I let you? Well, hardly. You don't think I am going to risk my life like that, do you?" and he turns away.

"And what about you?" as he asks another man who was standing by.

"I believe. In fact, I have no doubt about it at all."

"Will you trust me?"

"I will!"

Breathlessly the people watch as he climbs onto the tightrope walker's back and they begin step by step. At last they are over; their final step is taken and they stand once more on firm ground!

Bridging the gulf between time and eternity is the great rope of salvation. Jesus Christ alone is able to cross it. You may have heard all about it, and, like the first man, you may even believe that Jesus can carry you across. But not until you take the final step and commit yourself to Him will you ever get over. God wants you to trust yourself completely to His Son.

There is only one problem with this illustration. It gives the idea that trusting the Lord Jesus is something very dangerous and risky. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, trusting Jesus for one's eternal salvation is the safest thing a person can do! Human tightrope walkers sometimes fail and some have even plunged to their death. The Lord Jesus Christ has never failed and never will. Those who come to Him for salvation will never be disappointed! Have you done this?

WHAT MUST A PERSON DO TO BE SAVED? God's answer is clearly given to us in Acts 16:30-31. But many people refuse to believe what God says, and they have made up their own way of salvation:

1. **Try to live a good life, and thou shalt be saved.**
2. **Keep the Ten Commandments, and thou shalt be saved.**
3. **Love your neighbor, and thou shalt be saved.**
4. **Be baptized, and thou shalt be saved.**
5. **Observe the mass and the sacraments, and thou shalt be saved.**
6. **Do your best, and thou shalt be saved.**
7. **Go to church every week, and thou shalt be saved.**
8. **Live a good life, and thou shalt be saved.**
9. **Do good works and thou shalt be saved.**
10. **Say prayers to God and thou shalt be saved.**

But man's way will never result in salvation (see Proverbs 14:12). What does God say a person must do to be saved (Acts 16:31)? _____

Note: If you ever meet a person who belongs to a cult or false religion, you can always ask him this question: "What must a person do to be saved?" And then see if his answer is the same as what God says in Acts 16:31. Test all things by the Word of God!

Faith is simply resting all my weight on the WORTH (His Person, Who He is), WORK (what He has done) and WORD (what He has said) of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before a person can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, what must he first do (Acts 4:4; 15:7; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:13 and compare Acts 17:11-12)?

Can a person believe in Christ if he has never heard about Him (who He is and what He has done)-see Romans 10:14? _____ Carefully read Acts 18:8 and Acts 16:31 and then put these words in the correct order: BELIEVE, HEAR, BAPTIZED, SAVED

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

When a person truly believes on the Lord, some wonderful things happen! Please MATCH the following:

- | | | |
|----------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ | The moment a person believes all of his sins are forgiven.
Note: the word "remission" means "forgiveness." | A. Acts 10:43 |
| 2. _____ | The moment a person believes he is justified (declared righteous and seen as righteous before God). | B. Acts 19:2 and compare John 7:39 |
| 3. _____ | The moment a person believes he is sanctified (set apart as God's special person). | C. Acts 26:18 |
| 4. _____ | The moment a person believes he receives the Holy Spirit, who dwells within every believer. | D. Acts 13:39 |

Have you put your faith in a faithful Christ? Are you trusting Him for your eternal salvation? There is no other way to be saved (Acts 4:12; John 14:6)! The Bible clearly says, "He that _____ and is baptized shall be _____; but he that _____ shall be damned (condemned forever in hell)" (MARK 16:16).

