

Believing and having Faith in Jesus is the way to eternal life!

John 3:16-18, 36

To be a Christian do you know what it is that you have to believe?

In all sincerity you and I need to begin with at least these four things:

1. That Jesus was a real person, born of Mary;
2. That Jesus was God in the flesh, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit;
3. That Jesus died to take the punishment for my sin, for all sin; and
4. That he was resurrected from death to life and returned to heaven to be with His Father at the ascension.

Believing this much, in order to become a follower of Christ, an individual then needs to act on their belief by repenting and turning in faith to the risen and living Christ of heaven, ridding yourself of any pride that believes that you have any power whatsoever to save yourself and make yourself right with God in a divine relationship for now and all eternity. Only by accepting Jesus Christ as your LORD and Saviour can you be at one and in a right or righteous relationship with a holy God. The writer Kyle Idleman in his book, "Not a Fan" put it this way in reference to the seriously important nature of the action of belief for someone who desires to follow Christ and inherit eternal salvation, he said this under the banner of: **No Salvation Without Surrender**

“So in case some left it out or forgot to mention it when they explained what it meant to be a Christian, let me be clear: There is no forgiveness without repentance. There is no salvation without surrender. There is no life without death. There is no believing without committing.”

To become a Christian, to commit and surrender our lives to Christ as His obedient follower, in the first instance, we are required to have faith meaning we simply have to believe that Jesus died to take God's punishment for our sins and rose again from the dead. This is the good news of the gospel about Jesus. It is not that hard to understand. The problem or the great difficulty is the fact that you personally are required to accept it and act on it by trusting in God and owning the truth through receiving Christ as your own personal Saviour and Boss of your life.

This is the good news that Jesus was teaching to Nicodemus in our reading today. He shared with him of God's love for the world in giving his only Son for it that whoever believes in him has eternal life because they are not condemned. The moment a person believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God they have received salvation and therefore have eternal life. But whoever does not believe or rejects the Son of God does not have eternal life because they stand condemned and God's wrath is upon them v.36. Someone who does not believe does not have salvation and therefore does not have the promise of eternity at life's end.

So you can ask yourself the all important question today-

Have I personally taken this seriously important step of faith?

When you hear the good news of the gospel and understand it, there is still the action that is required to be taken and that is to turn in faith by first of all repenting from any self-confidence in being able to save yourself or earn your own salvation and make yourself right with and acceptable to God. Having done this we turn in faith to the risen and ascended Christ believing and receiving that only he can make us right and at one with God. And you should know that it is not how much faith you have that counts, it's all about what you do with it, in this case placing what faith you have in Christ, trusting solely in Him who saves us for now and all eternity. Have you personally taken that step in your journey of life and faith yet?

This should be good news for us all because it is reasonably easy to understand. However, the big problem with it remains because for the majority of people in the world it is very hard to believe, let alone accept and receive Christ in faith as your LORD and Saviour in order to be forgiven for your sins and inherit eternal life. Do not let yourself be fooled into thinking that the majority rules here with the majority opinion being the right decision because God said that it is only 'whoever' believes, those are the ones who will live forever. For those who find the absolute fullness of life, blessed and devoted to Me, for those who have put their trust in Christ in this life, in this world, they will live forever in eternity with Us. But as far as the other 'forever' group goes, the non-believers, they stand condemned because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. And so in their lack of trust, faith and belief- they will

Perish! As the condemned, the spiritually lost, I God will put an end to them by destroying and giving them over to an eternal misery in hell, all because they have rejected my Son (v.36) and therefore my wrath has not been removed by the only one who could do this for you in your place, so you will not live forever. Believing and having Faith in Jesus Christ my Son is the only way to eternal life!

And it is John, the disciple whom Jesus loved so much, who strongly desires to draw people's attention to such belief in Jesus in the gospel that he wrote from his first significant mention of it in the testimony of John the Baptist (1:7) and then another 99 times in his gospel. John uses the Greek verb for "believe" 100 times, the last being in John 20:31. The Apostle John had an evangelistic agenda in writing his gospel that is expressed every time he uses the word "believe". His purpose in proclaiming this truth was to elicit a response from his audience, a response that required action, to believe, just as Jesus called Nicodemus to believe in Him as the Son of God and that he must be born again. Believing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God means that faith here has content and this content is found throughout this whole gospel where John reveals to us the truth of how it is that Jesus is the Messiah, proving that he is the one and only Son of God. And I've written this says John so that you the reader may believe in him too and by believing you too may have life, but only if you will have faith that leads to life. But, be warned, you can only have faith in Him, in his name, if you want the life that lasts forever. You have to put 'all your eggs in one basket' all your faith in him, it doesn't matter how much faith you have, you just have to take all that you've got and put it in him and not anyone or anything else for your eternal salvation. You are putting it all into Jesus, all that he is, all that he stands for, and not into anything else. Believe in his name, Yeshua, God saves, by no one else or by no other name under heaven can a person be saved and live in eternity.

Such belief does not include the likes of momentary beliefs and doubts but speaks of a continued settled sense of conviction over time. We often do harbour or suffer momentary doubts that arise in our journey of faith which do not disqualify us as we seek to wrestle with the true and sometimes troubling or disturbing issues of our lives as they relate to our

faith. Such momentary doubts do not disqualify us from salvation as we continue to hold unswervingly onto our underlying trust in God and faith in Jesus Christ as his Son our saviour and LORD.

God loves his children and (John 1:12-13) membership into His family is by grace alone, it is the free gift of God. You cannot earn it or work for it by your own strength, by your own skills, talents or will power. These will get you nowhere with God when it comes to your eternal salvation. What will get you there says John is God imparting this very special gift to you, but only when you and me as a sinful human being's will both believe and open our hearts, which is putting our faith in action, something that we have to do in order to receive the gift of God. So let's make sure that we've done it in order to join the "whoever believes" group who will not perish but have eternal life. God, until Christ comes again, will remain motivated in this way by love for every single person and people group to be saved- this is God's one and only heart motivated plan of salvation for us today for all in the world that we might join the "whoever believes" group and as a believer be welcomed into God's family as his children forever all through what Jesus has done for us as His Son.

Some time ago, a 90kg teenager, Arthur Hinkley, lifted a 1360kg tractor with his bare hands. He wasn't a weight lifter, but his friend, Lloyd Bachelder, 18, was pinned under a tractor on a farm near Rome, Maine, USA. Hearing Lloyd scream, Arthur ran to him and somehow lifted the tractor enough for Lloyd to wriggle out. Love motivated him to do it. Our Father in heaven heard the screams of lost humanity, crying out for deliverance. He sent His one and only precious Son to the cross so that our sins could be lifted off of us and on to Himself. Love motivated Him to do it. Can you believe in this love and receive it for yourself today?

There is a story of a great theologian who was being interviewed by a group of seminary students. The question was asked, "What is the most profound thought that ever occupied your mind." The answer was, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so." You may study the Bible and even go much deeper in theology; you may become a scholar; you may become a philosopher, but you'll never ever understand anything more profound than to understand that God loves

you so much He gave His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not forget or avoid this simple truth. Believing in God's love and having Faith in Jesus is the only way to eternal life in his family and to receiving the peace and joy of the spirit of salvation that comes with it!

Next time you're at Auckland airport take a good look and notice the difference between passengers who have confirmed tickets and those on standby. Those who have confirmed tickets are relaxed, they are confident and expectant. Those on standby hang around the ticket counter, they pace then stop and stand shifting their weight from one foot to another, then pace and stop shifting weight...all because of uncertainty. God offers us freedom from the burden of uncertainty, so we can know for sure where we stand with God.

'Belief' is what will confirm your ticket to heaven, to eternity, in the airport lounge of your life because belief is what connects your own soul with God's love. If we don't believe, we forfeit the love of God and remain under His wrath. Believing in God's love and having Faith in Jesus is the way to eternal life! God so loved the world so that believers will not perish. That love is sufficient to save the world and efficient to save those who believe from perishing. The love of God does not have this effect in the lives of those who do not believe. They perish. So believing is absolutely essential. No matter what you choose to believe the world divides into two groups as the gospel moves through it- those who believe and those who don't. Those who believe are connected and able to experience the love of God and are rescued from perishing. Those who don't believe remain under the wrath of God.

So the Challenge Remains for each of us: Will you simply take what faith you have today, focus it all on Jesus and believe?

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Let's pray: Dear God, we both know that I am a sinner and that sin, including unbelief and pride, keeps me from you. I know that your Son paid the ransom price for my sin. In a simple step of faith I accept Jesus as my Saviour. Thank you for embracing me as a part of your family forever. Help me now to live my new life in a way that honours you with Jesus as my LORD. Amen.