

Believing to the Saving of the Soul (Hebrews 10:39)

"...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

...and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

Acts 16: 30-31; 33-34

Repeat after me, 'I accept the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.' "Now, there you have it, you are now saved." How often have you heard this said? How often have you said it yourself? This thinking expresses, "only believe and you will be saved." There are several problems with this type of thinking.

Accepting Jesus or Jesus Accepting

First of all, like A. W. Tozer once said, it requires that Jesus would "stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on Him, instead of kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting his verdict on us." The picture here depicts Jesus standing before you, the judge, having looked at all the evidence, and waiting (and hoping) that you will give the verdict, "I believe. I accept." Man is like that; he always wants to be in control. Yes, we have been given the freedom to make our own decisions, but it is God who is in control. Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you..." (John 15:16) He later said, "...but I have chosen you out of the world..." (John 15:19) It is God who will judge us. Paul said that the Lord is the "Righteous Judge." (2 Timothy 4:8) "...The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:30-31)

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement." (Hebrews 9:27)

A missionary was trying to translate the Bible into one of the local dialects. He was working on the Book of John and was confused on how to translate the word "believe." He asked a national working with him on the translation team. They finally came up with the solution. The word that was given meant "the heat in my heart." This "heat in your heart" will cause you to do something. The word "believe" in many cases in the Bible is an action word (verb). It is speaking about action.

In James 2 we find an entire chapter on faith (believing) producing action (works). James reveals that true faith is evidenced by obeying the Word of God (James 1); by action (James 2); and by words (James 3). James 2:19 reveals a surprise believer.

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

Do you think that the devils’ believing will make salvation for them? The devils will not be saved and will be cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:10) However, the devils believe more than some of us. They are doing as much as some churches say it takes to get saved. They just believe.

The devil knows that we like to have everything “the easy way” so he would like us to believe part of the truth and leave the rest. Daniel Mena in his tract, There is More To Being Saved Than Easy Believism states that a “half-truth is more dangerous than an outright lie. Only the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth will save a man or woman from sin.” He later counsels, “Eternity is too long to be wrong!”

E. L. Cole in his book, Strong Men In Tough Times, states “a person’s beliefs hold the greatest potential for good or harm in life. What is believed about God holds the potential for death or life everlasting.” He admonishes us that “...we must be taught not only to believe but to believe right...belief is the basis for conduct, character and destiny. Wrong conduct is based on wrong believing.” This is because believing produces action. A person who steals believes that he will not get caught. A person who always involves himself in fornication believes that he will not get AIDS.

To “believe” is to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ, considering that he is worthy of our trust and can be counted on to keep his promises. John said, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:31) This Scripture comes immediately following Doubting Thomas meeting with Jesus Christ. Jesus tells him, “...be not faithless, but believing.” (John 20:27) Thomas responded, “My Lord and my God.” (John 20:28)

When we believe, we entrust and commit ourselves totally to Jesus Christ. It involves a total commitment on our part. “...For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

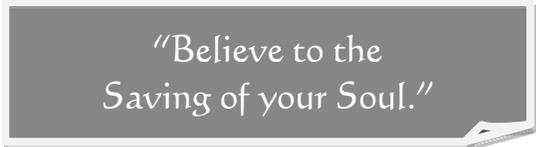
“If you are what you have always been, you are not a Christian. A Christian is a new creation.”

Simon the Sorcerer “believed” and was even baptized in Jesus name. (Acts 8:13,16)

“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” (Acts 8:13)

Do you think that Simon was saved? He started out believing, was baptized in Jesus name but then started looking, wondering, and beholding the miracles instead of putting his trust and confidence in the God of miracles.

“...For thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” (Acts 8:21-23)



“Believe to the
Saving of your Soul.”

When we read the whole story we see that Peter and John came down and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Ghost. There was at least one in the group who didn't receive it; Simon the Sorcerer. He offered money to receive the power to lay hands on people to receive the Holy Ghost.

Why didn't Simon receive the Holy Ghost? The baptism of the Holy Ghost cannot be given to someone who still follows sinful ways. The Holy Ghost is given to those who turn from sin and wickedness.

Peter's Analysis of the Situation

1. “...Thy money perish with thee.” (Acts 8:20) Is someone that is perishing saved?
2. “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter...” (Acts 8:21) Why not? Because, a person living in sin and wickedness cannot receive the Holy Ghost.
3. “...Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” (Acts 8:21) Is someone whose heart is not right with God saved?
4. “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness...” (Acts 8:22) Is someone that is wicked saved?
5. “For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” (Acts 8:23) Is someone in the bondage of iniquity saved?

Simon was not right in his heart, and had not totally committed his life to Jesus. Therefore, God rejected him. God accepts those that fear him and work righteousness (Acts 10:35) Simon believed, but we do not have a record that he believed to the saving of his soul.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Study Questions

1. What did A. W. Tozer say that the common view of accepting the Lord requires of Jesus?

2. Give two examples of those that believed in the Scriptures and still were not saved.

3. How did one missionary translate the word "believe" in the local dialect? _____

4. What did Edward Cole say about a person's beliefs? _____

5. According to James, how is believing (or faith) evidenced? _____

6. What was Peter's analysis of Simon the Sorcerer? _____

7. Is it possible for someone whose heart is not right with God to receive the Holy Spirit? Why or why not? _____

8. What does 2 Corinthians 5:17 say? _____

