

In a Word: Believe – Acts 16:31

Introduction

- Today, we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. But what does that mean?
 - When the bible uses the word “believe”, is it only speaking of a mental/emotional acceptance of God’s truth?
 - Or does it carry with it much more?
 - We see an example of the use of the word in the story of the Philippian Jailer.

(30) And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (31) So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (32) Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. (33) And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. (34) Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

(Acts 16:30–33)

- The jailer’s question: “What must I do to be saved?”
 - This is the most important question ever asked.
 - Is he asking to have his life spared because of the open prison?
 - No, Paul has already done that (v. 28)
 - Or is this an emotional plea because of the miraculous event he had just witnessed?
 - Paul and Silas give a spiritual answer...

I. Believe Defined

- a. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...”
- b. In this lesson, we want to look at the word “believe” as it is found in the New Testament
- c. Merriam-Webster.com
 - i. To accept something as true, genuine, or real.
 - ii. To have a firm or wholehearted religious conviction or persuasion
 - iii. To regard the existence of God as a fact
- d. According to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon and Strong’s Concordance
 - i. Greek – “pisteuo” (verb “pis-stee-whoa”) – To have faith, entrust, to place trust in God for one’s salvation.
- e. The word believe here and in other passages indication a strong emotional and moving acceptance and trust in God and in Jesus Christ for salvation.
- f. God has supplied man with what is needed for forgiveness, redemption and salvation.
 - i. By the Greatest of Sacrifices

By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
(Hebrews 10:10)

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.
(Romans 5:9)

ii. Grace and Mercy

(4) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) (Ephesians 2:4–5)

- g. So the instruction given to the Jailer is to believe on, trust in God's power to save
 - i. The gospel is God's power to salvation to all who believe. (Romans 1:16)

II. The Faith Connection

- a. How then is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and faith connected?
 - i. Is believing and having faith the same thing?
- b. The instruction given to the jailer was "to believe"
 - i. In order to be saved one must believe
 - ii. In order to be pleasing to God one must have faith

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
(Romans 5:1–2)

- iii. We are "saved by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8)
 - iv. So believing on the Lord Jesus Christ will develop faith that pleases God
- c. "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him"
 - i. If one does not believe, then there is no need to go any further.
 - ii. They continue with the gospel message, the question had not been completely answered. Then what was the word of the Lord?

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
(2 Timothy 3:16–17)

- iii. All scripture is good for doctrine (teaching). One part does not negate (cancel) the other
- iv. We note that Luke wrote nothing about repentance...

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent...

(Acts 17:30)

- v. If all people are required to repent, then the Philippian jailer would certainly be included
- vi. This passage says nothing about confessing Christ...

(32) “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

(33) But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 10:32–33)

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

(Romans 10:10)

- vii. This verse says nothing about a command to be baptized, yet immediately they were baptized in the next verse.
- viii. We have already seen this happen in a previous story from Acts 8:26ff

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. (Acts 8:35)

- ix. In this account, Philip must have included the need for one to be baptized as part of preaching Jesus, else why would the eunuch have asked for it?
- d. So we have to conclude that believing was the first step, if the jailer did not believe then why would he take the next step?
- e. You can’t have faith without believing, but you can believe without having faith.

III. There’s More to Believing than Believing

- a. “And immediately he and all his family were baptized”
 - i. There is also another connection we need to make. Believing and obedience.
 - ii. Luke made this connection by telling of their baptism, an act of obedience.
 - iii. Let’s go back to our definition: A strong, mental assent (acceptance) of the existence of God, the belief in the gospel story and deep commitment
 - iv. There is a difference in believing “in” Jesus and believing “on” Jesus
 - 1. Believing “in” Jesus is a mere acknowledgement that He exists
 - 2. Believing “on” Jesus is to accept absolutely, having no doubt or uncertainty.
 - v. If I am a believer, then I’m going to believe and do whatever the Lord says.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

- b. First, belief is not just the mental acceptance of the existence of God and Christ

And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, “You are the Son of God.” (Mark 3:11)

“Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” (Luke 4:34)

When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!” (Luke 8:28)

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! (James 2:19)

- i. Some may say, yes but this is not an emotional response, but look again.
- c. It is truth that...

For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13; Acts 22:16)

Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? ‘And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness (iniquity)!’ (Matthew 7:22–23)

- d. As we have established, believing and faith go hand in hand.
 - i. The response to God’s mercy and grace is obedience (our belief will move us into action)
 - ii. We’ve already seen God commands us to repent, confess and be baptized. Acts of obedience. God required obedience from Jesus, He requires obedience from us.

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: (Matthew 7:24)

Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him... (Hebrews 5:8–9)

IV. Don’t Stop Believing

- a. It is true, I cannot be saved without believing, without putting my trust in God.
 - i. But when I do, I will be moved to obey Him in all things and continue to do so.
- b. Because I believe...
 - i. I will walk in the light (1 John 1:7)
 - ii. I will not be condemned as I live for the Lord (Romans 8:1)
 - iii. I will live faithfully till I die (Revelation 2:10)
 - iv. I will live with my Lord forever in heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:17)