

"Believing in Christ"

Do you truly believe Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And welcome to our Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore what it means to believe, truly believe, in Jesus Christ.

Hello, and welcome. We're here to search God's word for the Lord's way. We believe God, so we believe what He says in His Word, the Bible. God has shown us the way to eternal life in Scripture. We know God will keep every promise, but we also realize that God makes a distinction between those who will obey Him and those who won't. So, we study the Scriptures and we strive to follow the Lord. We're delighted and thankful that you're on that journey with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Now if you wish to be right with the living God, faith is a necessity. You probably recall the verse that we all heard in Bible classes from our childhood. The Lord Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only (and some versions say only begotten) Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." But do you recall the next two verses, verses 17 and 18? The Lord also said, "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. 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."

Believing in the name of the only Son of God is necessary if we're to have eternal life. It's not just believing God exists; it's also believing in Jesus as God's only Son. We must put our faith in Christ. The Lord Jesus said in John 14 verse 6, "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. And we must put our faith in Him.

Now we're offering this free little booklet this month. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Hebrews 11:1 to 6, and we'll explore what it means to believe in Jesus.

Our reading today comes from the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verses 1 through 6. "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. 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 Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it's impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Your Word can teach us and help us to come to have faith in Your Son Jesus. Help us Father to believe in Him with all our heart and soul. And Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

For the next fourteen or fifteen minutes, I want us to look at faith from God's perspective. Many look at God and Christianity through the eyes of popular culture. Salvation is not an entitlement that God owes us. It's a gift to those who believe. But we must understand the idea of believing as God

teaches, not try to read into it what we think it means. Let's take some time to listen to God, asking what kind of faith God wants from us. We seek to please God.

And so, throughout the Bible, God distinguishes those who please Him, those who abide in His grace and have His approval, from those who don't. Hebrews 11 and verse 6 says, "And without faith it's impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek him." We must believe in God, but we must also know about the God that we believe. We must know 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 God rather than seek the God who created them. Some 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 all grace doesn't care about righteousness or truth. And others have forgotten that God is not just holy, but He's utterly holy. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor." Some think 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 speak 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 any way that we want to live. When a person comes to Christ as a believer, He belongs to Jesus. Paul told the Christians in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 6 verses 19 to 20 "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price." Now if we wear the name Christian and we believe in Jesus Christ, we can never forget that. We're not our own, we belong to Jesus. He's our Lord and Master, and we are His servants.

Moses wrote in Psalm 90 and verse 2, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." The eternal God stands above our changing 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 He 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 Old Testament prophesies of Jesus as the coming Messiah. The New Testament tells how He fulfilled dozens of prophecies. Believing in Jesus means that you believe the claims that He made to be God's Son. Jesus said that He would rise from the dead, and He did. Jesus said Jerusalem would fall, and the Romans destroyed the city in 70 A.D.

The Bible says in John 1 verse 11 to 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." Now as with God, many people approach Christ with preconceived notions. You see if Jesus fails to measure up to what they want or imagined, they aren't willing to believe. Some will only believe if

Jesus never judges anyone and never calls for moral change. Well that kind of Jesus simply doesn't exist. To know the real Jesus, we must read all the New Testament, all that it says about Him, not just pick out certain passages and ignore the rest.

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

Now faith stands between being accepted and being rejected. God made that decision, and we can't overrule God. The Lord Jesus said in John 3 and verse 18, that "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. And He said in John 8 and verse 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." Now believing in Jesus means believing He truly is the Christ, the Son of God. It means believing that He is the fulfillment of God's prophecies of the Messiah.

Saving faith is not simply believing in the act of believing. It's believing in the Person. Believing in the person Jesus means, and believing in Him means that you believe what He claims, what He says, and what He promises, that all of these things are true. If I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then I will recognize His authority over my whole life. Faith includes duties and responsibilities. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6 and verse 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 which I won't.

Now there are times when we wonder why God asks the things that He asks. But trusting faith means that we act even when we don't understand. Hebrews 11 and verse 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 knowing where he was going." Abraham didn't argue with God. Because he trusted God, he simply obeyed. He showed his confidence in God, though he didn't know what lay ahead. We trust God in things that we don't know, because we find Him trustworthy in what we do know. We know God is true and loving.

The apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 1 and verse 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 (he says) that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." Now Paul could face the future with peace and confidence, because He knew God and how God kept His promises. And we can trust God in what we do not know, because God has proved Himself worthy of our trust in what we do know!

Hebrews 11 and verse 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, chapter one. While no one was around to witness the creation, we can trust God's word about the creation. Why? 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. Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a *period of forty days*" according to Acts 1 and verse 3. They saw Him, heard Him, they touched His body. They were so convinced that when they were threatened by the Jewish council, they replied in Acts 4 and verse 20, "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 fulfilled Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Now if you had grown up as a Jew in first century, your Bible studies at the synagogue would constantly include prophecies about the coming Messiah. Jesus was born in the right place, at the right time, in the right tribe, with 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 looking 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” (John chapter 1 verse 45). Now as you read through the book of Acts, the apostles and evangelists time and again preached that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah.

What we know is true about Jesus is that He is the promised Messiah who arose from the dead. And for this reason 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 story found in the Old Testament. When Jesus spoke of the Old Testament, He treated what He read there as true, historical events. And for this reason we can believe the Old Testament is trustworthy and true. Why? Because we trust Jesus Christ.

Because we have a living Savior, we want a living faith not a dead one. James 2 verses 14 to 18 says, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? Now if a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what’s necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, ‘You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.’” You see dead, inactive faith is useless. It doesn’t reveal one truly believes in Jesus Christ. It doesn’t save.

Saving faith is always obedient. The Lord Jesus said in John 3 and verse 36, that “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.” Now you can claim to believe; but unless your faith leads to obedience, you really can’t be right with God. Now when the Bible speaks of saving faith, it’s always an active, obedient faith. Turn with me in your Bible to the book of Galatians, chapter 3, and verse 26 and 27, which says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Now James said, “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” Are you a doer or merely a hearer? You see faith means I’m willing to do what God wants me to do. I’m willing to be the kind of person God wants me to be. I’m going to hear what He says, I’m going to believe it’s true, and I’m going to do it, I, going to be obedient. Oh, the believer “has eternal life, but the one that does not obey shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3 and verse 36) Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father we’re thankful that You have given us so many evidences of Your Son Jesus that we might believe and know that He truly is the Son of the living God. And Father we praise You as a lover of all men because of Him, and because of what He did for us. Father help us to believe in Him and to be obedient to His Word. May Your will be done on earth as it is heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

After Lazarus died, Jesus visited his sisters Mary and Martha. In John 11:23 to 27 the Scripture reveals a conversation between Jesus and Martha. Jesus told Martha, “‘Your brother will rise again.’” Martha said to him, ‘Well, I know that he’ll rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ But Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. And whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'"

We need to ask ourselves at times, "Do you believe this?" Do you believe God created the world in six days? Do you believe the Bible is true? Do you believe that Jesus arose from the dead and is Lord? Do you believe Jesus' death on the cross can atone for your sins? Do you believe that you will one day be raised from the dead? Do you believe in the Judgment Day? Do you believe in Heaven and Hell? Faith in Christ means believing what He taught and what He did to give us eternal life.

If you really believe, put your faith into action by repenting of your sins; confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God; and by being baptized into Christ. Now baptism is an immersion in water of a penitent believer. It's done in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is the time when you become a child of God, free from sin, and added to the Lord's church. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." Oh we hope that you'll become a Christian today. Won't you.

Well we hope today's study about faith in Jesus has blessed you. We're offering this free little booklet "What Must I do," talking about what we must do to be saved. And we're offering them free. And if you live in the United States, you want a free printed copy of this booklet, or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses and study sheets that go along with this program. Now if you write to us or call us, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ in your area. Now if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.