

LESSON 4



EXCEPT YE BELIEVE ON JESUS CHRIST

Scripture Texts: John 3:14-18, 3:36, 5:24, 5:44-46, 6:29, 8:24; Acts 8:37; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:5

The way of life is believing. Repentance, which we have studied in an earlier lesson, is a NEGATIVE step. It is ridding oneself of sin. It is turning from and emptying out. Believing is a POSITIVE step. It is a turning to, an accepting or receiving of life of Christ Himself. One is not saved, or not alive in Christ, until he has believed on Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

John 3:36

The Way to Life

Believing on Jesus Christ completes the requirement for receiving Christ—being saved. This is belief in Christ's deity and power and love. It is full dependence upon His sacrifice to pay for our sins.

What kind of believing transforms a dead soul into a living one? Not merely accepting the fact that Christ lived nor the mental belief that He is good and God's Son. No, it is an opening of the heart to receive. God performs open-heart surgery on all who are saved. It is felt as much as thought. In John 3:16 we read that those who believe in God shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Does not believing IN make it more positive than believing ON? In John 5:24 we find that he that hears the Word of God—listens, receives—is passed from death unto life. Do we not have to listen to hear? What we listen to and hear has much to do with what we receive. Not with fleshly ears, but with the heart do men believe unto righteousness (Romans 10:10). In this he is passed from death unto life. This is resurrection, the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5-6). Now, we have just begun to live. Anything less than life in Christ Jesus is merely existing.

Hindrances to Believing

In John 5:44-46 we see that one attitude that shuts out belief is that of seeking honor of men, having our values out of perspective. Worldly values are external and fleeting. Honor God gives is quiet, spiritual, lasting, and precious. Jesus spoke here of the hindrance of unbelief in His Word. Jesus' hearers followed Moses in form but disbelieved his inspired writings in the first five books of the Old Testament. Today belief in the truthfulness and divine origin of the Bible is a basis for belief in Christ (John 17:17).

Dependence upon one's own efforts is another hindrance to belief in Christ. True belief in Him is dependence upon Him. It is casting oneself upon His mercy. It is taking His death as payment for one's sins. Some asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? What act, great effort, gift, kind deed, sacrifice, or penance? Something to earn salvation, produce life?"

God wants none of these. They cannot produce life eternal. The death of Jesus Christ won our salvation. Yield to His work, cast yourself upon it, believe He saves. Hebrews 4:10 says, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Necessity of Believing

In Acts 8:36-37 the Ethiopian asked Philip for baptism, the symbol and testimony of the new birth. Philip laid down one condition—if you believe with all your heart. Believing goes before conviction and repentance. The Ethiopian believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Himself said this belief is necessary (John 8:24).

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that in order to come to God, we must believe that He is. No atheist is saved. No agnostic is saved. The first believes there is no God. The other is not sure. The Christian is sure that God lives and that Jesus Christ is God, being the Father's Son. He believes both God's ability and His willingness to save, both His power and His love. These truths God says we must believe. What prepares one to place faith in Christ so much as believing that the Bible is God's Word? Does any other authority bear as great weight with an inquirer as to be shown a Bible statement?

Consider this illustration of believing and depending on God, or of depending on self: A little girl started for Sunday school wearing a new dress. "Take my hand," said Daddy. "It is icy and very slippery."

"No, I can walk by myself." A few steps and down she went, messing the pretty dress. Tearfully back to Daddy she turned.

"Now will you take my hand?" he asked.

"No, carry me, Daddy."

Power in Believing

In the search for power many miss the greatest power—that over sin and self (overcoming the world). We get it by believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God as we are told in 1 John 5:5. This means letting go of self and casting our broken hearts at the feet of Jesus, trusting His blood to cleanse from all sin and give us life. When repentance and faith are complete, the soul is born again a child of God.

What we truly believe, we dedicate ourselves to. The teachings of evolution and modernism rest upon unbelief of God's Word. How can we protect ourselves and others from their poison? How can we counteract the slogan that "there are no absolutes"? Truth never changes.

Parent, you have in your hands much of the believing of your children. The greater influence is in their early years. They must be taught to love, respect, read, and obey the Bible as the absolute authority. Can one believe for another? Where does this leave infant baptism?

JUST A THOUGHT

**It is not only necessary to have faith in a good cause,
we must also make an investment in it.**