



Believing in God
is not the same as
having saving faith from God

Believing in God is not saving faith

Many, many people who think they are part of the church today have a belief about God that comes from human determination, and are unaware that saving faith in God comes from the determination of God.

Believing in God is not the same as being saved by God. It's really very important we understand what saving or justifying faith actually is.

The Lord Himself warns that on the last day, some religious people will believe that they have been servants of Christ but in fact will be cast out of the kingdom because they never actually believed in Him enough to do His will.

Matt 7:21-23

There are many who believe but will not be saved because believing is only the beginning of the work of salvation. Those who are saved by God are secured by God; nothing can take them out of His hand. Rom 8:35-39 Eph 4:30-32

From this we have come to understand that there are two ways of believing in God, one

we call believing faith. This claim of faith in the person and work of Christ is limited to acceptance of the ideas and information about Christ.

Another way of believing is to have saving faith where the heart itself is spiritually convinced of the love of God and converted to the point of a willingness to die to self in order to gain Christ as the Lord of all.

Therefore saving faith includes placing all our trust in the One who rose again as Lord over all creation. Saving faith trust that God will fulfil all His promises in Christ for us in the same way He raised Christ from the dead.

Saving faith will continue to trust Him regardless of what is happening in the world. Saving faith places our lives in His hands, pledging ourselves to follow Him as His obedient servants no matter the cost.

Saving faith not only has absolute trust in God to bring us home to live with Him in glory, but saving faith also has a deep affection for Christ who made it all possible. When we surrender to His love, the Holy Spirit changes

the temperament of our hearts so that we see the sweetness of Christ and embrace Him above all things. Consequently saving faith includes a deep, passionate heartfelt belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Saving faith takes believing faith one step further, and it's a very big step, saving faith lays down its life in order to be enabled by God to live the Christ life.

In order to come to saving faith we need to repent. Jesus makes a big thing of the need for all people to repent. The word used in the original writing of scripture shows the need to change our minds, so the basic meaning of repentance is a complete change of mind and its outlook and purposes.

Romans eight explains this well. *'For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

Rom 8:5

Considering Jesus' call for repentance is framed in the context of the kingdom of God, repentance is about an inner commitment to

change from self will according to the world and our fleshly desires, towards doing the will of God according to His kingdom rule and dominion. It means giving up our worldly life by giving our complete allegiance to God by obeying His word as we follow the example of Jesus.

Examples of those who believed in God but were not saved

Eight times in the gospel of John we are told many believed in Jesus. In chapter 6:66 *many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore*. However when it was obvious He was going to suffer and to die, *all the disciples left him and fled*. But some who believed in Him had saving faith, in spite of the danger of their own persecution, they waited for the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Acts 2:1-4

Others also left. *'They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.'* 1 John 2:19

Paul wrote: *'For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me.'* 2 Tim 4:10 Demas had been one of Paul's "fellow workers" in ministry along with Mark, Luke, and others. (Philemon 1:24) During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, Demas was also in Rome. (Col 4:14) Then something happened. Demas abandoned Paul and the ministry and left. Paul wrote: *"Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica."* 2 Tim 4:10

Demas left Rome because he fell in love with the world. In other words, Demas chose the corrupt value system of the unsaved world over what heaven values. Demas *"loves the things of this life."* 2 Tim 4:10

Ananias and his wife Sapphira failed to persevere in their faith. (Acts 5:1-11) Ananias and Sapphira sold their land but secretly withheld a portion of the proceeds after saying they would give all to God. Ananias presented his donation Peter replied, *"Why is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?"* Peter stated that Ananias had lied not to men, but to God.

Ananias died on the spot and was carried out. Three hours after Ananias' death his wife arrived, unaware of what had happened. Peter asked her the price of the land that she and Ananias had sold, and she stated the same untruthful price that Ananias had given. She also fell down dead.

Judas Iscariot was a disciple and one of the original Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin in the Garden of Gethsemane by kissing Him and addressing Him as "*Rabbi*" to reveal His identity to the crowd who had come to arrest Him.

Believing faith is not enough *'Even the demons believe—and shudder!'* James 2:19

The religious self reliant believers who attend church need to take heed of the Lords warning that not everyone who says Lord, Lord will be saved. *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you;*

DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"

Matt 7:22-23

Those who are not genuine are self reliant believers working their way on the broad road.

Believing in the work of Christ can give the appearance of obeying God. For instance, self reliant believers may well accept that Jesus Christ died for our sins. Self reliant believers may regularly attend church, and self reliant believers may get involved in community work. Those who have some belief in God can follow a prayer schedule. They may teach Sunday school, play the church organ, or sing in the choir.

Self reliant believers may even preach the word of God and be continually involved for a time with the ministry of the Church, but the evidence will eventually show that they are firmly attached to the world. Those believing in God may even participate in signs and wonders, and also be able to cast out demons. But without saving faith we cannot please God.

Heb 11:6

Believing faith is a dead end. Believing in God is only the invitation to Christ.

In order to really live, we must die to the world and the life we had before hearing the gospel of Christ. The living faith gives all to gain all in Christ. *'And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"*

Luke 9:23-25

To just believe and not take up our cross to live the Christ life, trusting in Him for all things is self reliant believing, which is not saving faith.

Wrong teaching gets wrong results

One cause of believing without obeying has been that there have been many preachers who have only used Scriptures like the following, *"Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."* for *"Whoever will call on*

the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Rom10:11, 13

But this belief by itself is totally inadequate. Believing faith has its hopes in the present, its hopes rest on what can be gained from the world in the way of comfort and worldly success. This sort of believing is for self reliant person who relies on some ideas about God and their good work, but they will not enter the kingdom of God. *'Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.'* Rom 8:8

The words of Romans 10:11, 13, must not be taken out of the context of all of Romans that went before, as in Rom 6:6 where we see the one who calls on the name of the Lord has been crucified with Christ, and Rom 8:11-14 where they now live under the authority and dominion of the Spirit of God. If we have died to self we must be following another.

Jesus did say: *"whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* (John 3:16) Twenty verses later we are told that any offer of eternal life must include the following. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but*

he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” John 3:36

Shallow self reliant believing is like the seed that fell on stony ground and died from a lack of decent roots in good soil. *When affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.* (Matt 13:5-6, 21) It is like some seed that fell amongst the thorns and was choked out. *The worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.* Matt 13:7, 23

Believing faith is moved by the Spirit to become saving faith

Saving faith comes from God as Peter tells us in his second letter to the church. *'To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.'* 2 Pet 1:1

Our death to self in taking up our cross to follow Christ is our key to heaven's door. This is what marks the exclusive chosen people of God from those just believing in God. In this way the real church is made up of those who are called by God to saving faith and receive

the sealing of the Spirit of God so they persevere with living in holiness to the end.

Something else we receive when we're converted and we hold to be precious above all Jesus, He is our greatest treasure. Jesus said, "*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*" Matt 13:44

Jesus is the treasure hidden in a field, and real conversion is not only having our eyes opened to how valuable Jesus is, but also being committed to giving our lives to serve Him who is worthy. In this we trust Him to be all that He is for us as the supreme treasure of all.

This helps us understand there's a kind of believing that's not truly saving because Jesus is not valued above all we have in the world, even life itself.

Believing faith must come to the point of surrendering life to Christ. "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life*

loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him."

John 12:24-26

This grain of wheat that dies and the one who hates his life in the world are saved believers. When we will die to live, God goes to work in us. A refusal to die for Christ means we will experience eternal death.

Unless we are dissatisfied with the world and desperate enough to give our life to God in order to receive mercy, we will not enter the kingdom of God.

When we are willing to die to live we discover that saving faith is a work of God. Saving faith is a life directed and enabled by the Spirit of God to be about the work of God to the glory of God.

Without the Spirit in control there is no life. God told us of the work of the Spirit through the prophet Ezekiel

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

Ezekiel 36:25-27

This transforming work of the Spirit is the only way we can be with God. Unless we have a new nature born of God we cannot enter the kingdom of God. *'Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'* John 3:5-7

Unless there is a new root the tree will produce the old fruit. *"So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit,*

nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit."

Matt 7:17-18

When we trust God for our life, God cleanses us from sin, He gives a new heart, and a new spirit, He gives His Spirit, and causes the disciples to keep His commands. He will provide the motivation for our holiness.

In this work of God, the Spirit of God is absolutely committed to seeing the glory of Jesus working through the life of faith. In this way the Spirit works the love of God in heart of the believer.

This new life with God is a life made alive by the Spirit of Christ. *'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.'* Rom 8:9-11

Saving faith is the life of the Holy Spirit bursting into life in a receptive heart.

Saving faith is moved by the Spirit to produce the fruit of His life according to the purposes of God. Saving faith that is infused with the life of the Spirit sees the beauty of God which is more desirable than life. Saving faith says *'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'* Gal 2:20

Saving faith walking in step with God will see a life constantly growing in the knowledge and love of Christ as the disciple puts on the life of Christ.

Saving faith is a progressive work of God

Saving faith begins with spiritual infants who have a diet of milk (1 Cor 3:2) and are taught to obey the commands of Christ, (Matt 28:19-20) and this continues to maturity (Col 1:28) in Christ as God works in the individuals' life by using every situation for the good of His people in transforming them into the image of Christ. (Rom 8:29) We begin with beliefs about Christ and progress to putting on Christ.

Saving faith will be a life that bears the fruit of repentance. (Matt 3:8) Saving faith desires to do the will of God. (John 7:17) Saving faith is able to keep the commands of God by the power of the Spirit working in the heart.

Eph 3:20

Saving faith might look like believing faith for a short time but will quickly turn to the path of righteousness. When God is at work in us and we work out our salvation in awe of Him, (Phil 2:12-13) and we can be confident He will get the job done. *'And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.'*

Phil 1:6

Saving faith is willing to trust God regardless of the circumstances. *'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.'* Rom 8:28-29

Saving faith will have been buried with Christ in an act of total surrender. *'We know that our*

old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.' Rom 6:6, 8

The Holy Spirit is supplied to the faithful, so if we intend to live by the Spirit we also need to be in step with the Spirit. Gal 5:25

If we walk in step with the Spirit we will see faith working through Love. Gal 5:6

When God begins His work in us we can love Him with all our heart, mind and strength, and we can love our neighbour as ourselves.

Mark 12:30-31

Saving faith seeks daily intimacy with God. (John 15:9) Saving faith seeks no reward in this life but only looks to the kingdom to come. (Heb 6:18-20) Saving faith will want to keep the unity of the faith in the body of Christ Jesus according to His teaching. (Eph 4:3) Saving faith is the faith that is nurtured and strengthened by the word of God on a daily basis. 1 Pet 2:2 2 Thess 2:17

Saving faith is a life moved and directed by love to bring glory to God. (1 Cor 10:31) We show our love for God by doing all He asks of us, (John 15:10) and we love our neighbour by laying down our lives for their benefit in the kingdom of God. John 15:13

The more saving faith grows, the more it matures in faith, and the less it will look like believing faith and become a reflection of Christ by His Spirits presence.

Therefore those of saving faith will desire to become mature in Christ. 1 Cor 14:20

Saving faith will want to obey the teachers God provides to show them how to live in obedience in Christ. Heb 13:17

Saving faith will be eager to put to death the fleshly attitudes and ideas that remain in their thinking. Rom 8:13

Saving faith is a life lived entirely for the glory of God. Col 3:17

Saving faith must learn quickly that the re-born life in Christ is governed absolutely by the Spirit of God. Rom 8:14

To this end saving faith is a life that will produce the quality of the life of the Spirit, for the Spirit is the life imparted in the disciple by God.

Gal 5:22-23

The Spirit has been given to bear witness to Christ so the disciples of Christ will witness to Christ in the world.

Acts 1:8

The disciples' ability to overcome the world is their witness to Christ. *'And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.'*

Rev 12:11

Saving faith is obedience from the heart

God is looking for obedience from a humble trusting heart. (Phil 2:5-8) This is not obedience derived from the will of men, but the obedience that comes from the Spirit of God drawing the disciple closer to God as the living Father of all the brethren. This humble obedience will be rewarded with the light of God.

Jesus said, *"I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness."*

If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day."

John 12:46-48

The author of Hebrews says this about Jesus: *"He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."* (Heb 5:9) According to James, a *"faith"* that does not result in obedience to the commands of Jesus is not saving faith.

This teaching on obedience goes all the way back to Christ himself. He said in Luke 6: *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"*

Luke 6:46

Jesus rejected the religious people who claimed to be part of His followers because they didn't do the will of the Father, and the will of the Father are the commands of Christ. Jesus makes the point that a failure to obey means they were not known to Him.

This means those who think they are in the Church and don't keep all His commands are in the same sinking boat as unbelievers and need to be rescued. Obedience is the only appropriate response to the character of God.

'But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.'

Rom 6:17-18

Preaching salvation without explaining the cost is not a word from God

Preaching that says yes to anyone who claims to believe while the heart is still satisfied with the world is not from God. This easy way to God is only given by a man who doesn't really know the way of death in Christ.

The Saviour Himself made it quite clear that the cost of our salvation is all we have and are. We give Him all of our sinful selves and He gives us all of Himself. How could anyone with good conscience offer entrance to the

kingdom of God at no cost if they know what is required?

If the work of God is to see sinful people safely home in the kingdom, it would be an act of spiritual murder to give the impression the way is easy and no sacrifice is required.

Listen to Jesus; *'And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.'* Luke 9:23-26

There has always been opposition to saving faith

The Jews who killed the Lord had their heads full of religious knowledge and opposed the one who the knowledge was all about. The Roman Catholic church which persecuted the

believers in the inquisition were full of the knowledge of God. The leaders of the Church of England were not ignorant of the scriptures when they burnt faithful men at the stake.

Believing in God is not the same as saving faith from God. Real faith from God rejects false teachers, and believes in the risen Christ alone and the Bible alone. Therefore it rejects the traditions of men, the continuing sacrifice of Christ, the worship of Mary and the edification of idols.

Many today claim to be full of the Spirit of God but their focus is on the pleasures of the world and living a triumphant life while they shun the idea of taking up a cross to walk as Jesus walked in poverty and meekness so that sinful men may see the glory of God.

Saving faith follows the example of Christ.

We can tell the difference between saving faith and believing faith, only saving faith will endure to the end under severe persecution, simply because it is enabled by the power of God's Spirit. Others will get to the end and find the door closed to them.

Many who claim Christ have chosen the pleasures of this world over heaven to come; but the faithful have forsaken the world for the eternal joy of heaven simply because they believed in Christ and couldn't believe in this world.

We need to be sure we have saving faith if we intend to enter the kingdom of God

In this struggle we must hold fast to the word of God, and not the traditions of men, this means we have to make a determined effort to keep the faith according to the word of God.

'I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!'
Gal 1:6-8

'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.'
Heb 10:23

'Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.'

1 Cor 15:1-2

There are many pressures designed to keep us from saving faith by offering an easier way.

"Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."

Matt 24:12-13

Saving faith is proved when we hold fast to Christ and His cross even when we face persecution. *'For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.'*

Heb 3:14

Obedience and endurance in our struggle against sin in doing the work of God by taking up our cross and going into the world to shine the light of God while we proclaim the gospel of Christ is the evidence we have saving faith.

Not everyone who says Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of God.

'Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test?' 2 Cor 13:5

The easy gospel of faith without cost is a lie from the devil and will see many disappointed.

'Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practise these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

2 Peter 1:10-11

Believing in God is only the call to saving faith in Jesus Christ. *"For many are called, but few are chosen."*

Matt 22:14

Coming to Jesus is not a casual event, the Father gives those who are His to Jesus, so He can say; *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."*

John 6:37

It's not a question of being able to lose salvation, but making sure we have salvation.

Living Water Resources

Come to the River



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