

## Perspective – Thinking About Faith

A Chair and Faith:

Let's say this chair sits in front of us and none of us have ever sat in it before. It was just rolled in from another room. Now we sit around with the chair in the center of our circle, talking about this chair a bit, and come to the conclusion that it looks like a good solid chair. We all agree that if we sat in the chair it would hold us just fine without falling apart and letting us drop to the floor. This is an expression of our belief that the chair will not fail us. Is that faith?



Let's say that one of us gets up and moves the chair around a little, pushes down on the chair's back and seat with their hands and announces, "I believe this chair will hold me up just fine!" Is that faith?

Then another person stands behind the chair and firmly states with emotion, "This is a wonderful chair, anyone can sit in it and never fear that it will fail them. Come and sit down without fear or anxiety. Come now I invite you to experience it for yourself!" Is that faith?

Then a child walks into the room, not having heard any of this, walks over and sits in the chair; feet off of the floor and starts to drink a glass of water. Is that faith?

My suggestion is the only person who had faith in the chair was the child, as you might have known or guessed already. It makes a difference how you use the word "believe" where the concept of faith is concerned.

As recorded in James 2:19, "the demons also believe and shudder", but clearly their belief is not faith. At the same time we recall John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that who ever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life." James says that "faith without works is dead", and Paul writes about faith consistently but says little about "believing".

We use the word "faith" a lot, but what is faith?

Much emphasis is placed on faith within the doctrines of the church, and probably rightfully so since it is given so prommenate of a position within the scriptures. Faith is used over 230 times in the Bible. Four times in the Old Testament, and the rest are found in the New Testament.

Within the belief systems of organized churches the meaning of faith may differ. Sometimes various members, including spiritual leaders imply, or state clearly that the reason we do not experience more of God's miraculous power is that we don't have enough faith.

Jesus made it clear to two blind men He healed that their faith would impact whether or not they experienced God's healing (cf Matthew 9:29). How do we get enough faith? How do we know whether or not we have enough faith before trials come our way and we find out apparently we don't? Again, what is faith anyway?

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### Discovering Its Meaning

Webster defines faith like this: "2 a (1) : belief and trust in and loyalty to God (2) : belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion b (1) : firm belief in something for which there is no proof (2) : complete trust."

The writer of Hebrews says, "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) How do we take all of these thoughts and state something simple that we can remember about faith that we can use in our daily walk with the Lord?

Each of us may need something different. For me the definition of faith is simply, "trust in action."

We cannot believe in something that we don't trust, and just trusting something conceptually is only belief that is void of faith until we act on our trust; trust in action. Only when we act on something do we have "faith" in what is trusted; "faith" in what we have accepted to be the truth.

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When Jesus put clay on the eyes of the blind man and told him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash off the clay. It was by that man doing what he was told that his faith was proven to be real. (John 9:6-11)

He could have simply knocked off the mud and rubbed away the residue, blinked and saw nothing but darkness. Instead he waited, found his way to the water, washed his eyes, blinked and saw the world around him for the first time. That's trust in action.

It's painful for me when thinking about how many church-going-folk have been taught and accepted that it's enough to know about Jesus. Possibly many think they've gotten ahold of the blessings of God by knowing about God.

Those who have followed, or been led down this dangerous path have been converted to the idea and the true story of Jesus. They accept this information as being true. This, however, is not about how much we know, and have accepted as being true.

Demons “believe” that Jesus is the Son of God. More than that they know it to be a fact. They put their trust in Satan, not the Lord, and they act on that trust in Satan by being obedient to Satan and disobedient toward God. Therefore while they “believe”, they still have no “faith” in Christ. Instead they tremble in light of the reality of their judgment. (cf Luke 4:31-37; Luke 8:26-31)

Interestingly, the demon’s have a faith that results in death rather than a faith that leads to eternal Life. They trust and obey Satan regardless of their knowledge that Jesus is indeed the Lord of all, because they are in rebellion against God and will never change their perspective.

Their eternal choice was made long ago. What they want is for us not to trust God either. We don’t have to choose to obey Satan to join the demons, we can simply refuse to accept God’s gift of Life in Jesus Christ. Just refuse to trust Him for our forgiveness and His eternal Life. Fail to accept God’s free gift of Life and the result is the same for us as it is for the demons; eternal Death and suffering.

Salvation comes when we believe (trust that something is the Truth), ask, and receive the eternal Life that Jesus is for us, in us, and through us. What does that look like?

Four key elements include: 1) We confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, 2) Trust that Jesus is the Son of God, He died for us on the cross taking responsibility for our sins, and He arose from the grave three days later to establish eternal victory over Sin and Death, 3) We ask Jesus to give us His Life 4) We accept Him as the Lord of our new Life. This, however, is not a formula.

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Hopefully we realize that knowledge is not all that’s needed. We must trust God and act upon that trust. Through this we express our faith in God. Let’s praise God for each person who trusts in God, and acts on their trust in this manner!

The result is a pathway to God through Jesus Who is eternal Life for us. That pathway is not a what, it’s a Who. There’s only one “Who” that exists in which we can be made to be Alive eternally. That Who is Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Why can this happen? It’s because of what God has done for us through His Son Jesus. The price has been paid for us, for freedom from our individual sins, and from the power of Sin and Death.

Are there special words that we must say? Do we have to remember to do all that’s addressed in the last few paragraphs? No.

This is not about our knowledge and our ability to follow some set of rules. God is most interested in what is in our heart (mind and emotions); what we really want to do. If we are passionate in our desire to receive forgiveness and to receive His salvation through Christ, God will fully know that's the case.

People have accepted Christ in so many ways we could never list them all. The words they used may have been different, and their knowledge about God and Jesus likely varied greatly. God loves all people and His desire is to set us free, and fill us with the eternal Life that Jesus is and always will be. God wants us to be united with Him, to spend eternity with Him, and He wants to spend eternity with us.

We may question this often because we don't feel worthy of God. We think we are not good enough for God to love that much. Well, my friends God absolutely does love us all that much and eternally more!

Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8)

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The truth is we all have faith and use it all of the time. Every time we turn on a light switch without wearing a pair of rubber gloves we demonstrate our faith. How do we know we won't get an electric shock? Sure we've watched others, learned what happens when they flip the switch, but the first time we did it we just pushed the thing up or down without thought of injury. That's faith; trust in action.

We don't think of it that way, because we usually save the word "faith" for the spiritual or "religious" part of our thinking. There are many things in our experience, however, in which we have faith.

Do we have a sense of "assurance" before we flip the light switch, or do we have a sense of anxiety that it might not work? Can we "see" the electricity? Do we know all about the electrical systems? Yet we act with conviction that flipping up the light switch will result in the lights coming on.

My point is this, faith is not uncommon in our experience, it is common. We all have plenty of "faith". The issue is not whether we have "faith". What or who we put our "faith" in is what makes a difference.

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Whether or not we continue to exist after our bodies quit working is also not the issue. Every person born on this earth will exist forever. It's about where and how we exist forever. We can be Alive in Christ with God forever in the perfect place He's created for us, or Dead and existing within Sin and Death, in Hell, in the Lake of Fire along with Satan and his demons.

From my perspective this is not a hard decision to make. For some it is never addressed. They live and physically die on this earth without ever making a decision. To do nothing about our separation from God when we know there is something we can do that will resolve this equates to us saying a big "No" to God's free gift of eternal Life.

It's astounding how simple it is to hold on to just an idea that defines our eternity. We may think we know that we can control our destiny, or that there is no eternity, or thousands of other ideas that allow us to feel we are in control.

Perhaps the most powerful thing a person possesses is the ability to hold on to an idea so strongly that it defines who they are, and how they will exist forever. Get enough people to share the same idea, no matter how wrong it is, and get them to hold onto it as the truth that defines them, and most anything can happen. The Holocaust, and many other atrocities remain proof enough of that fact.

When we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord we move beyond an idea or set of ideas that define us. As was stated earlier, when we place our trust in Him and act upon that trust, it is no longer "what" but "Who" that defines us and our eternal existence.

Jesus' Life is freely given to us and He becomes our Life forever, by the power of the Holy Spirit Who comes within us and unites us with God. Then we know by experience who we really are due to God's free gift of Jesus-Life. We have become God's created eternally Alive beings; a part of God's family forever.

Our entire perspective can change and God's Truth can be revealed through us. Then we will not only know about the Truth; we know Jesus Who is the eternal Truth.

We can begin to understand the contrast between the Truth and the ideas we had been following. We can "see" that those ideas were in rebellion against God and the Person, Jesus Christ, Who sets us free from Sin and Death. The Spirit of God confirms within our soul that our act of trust, which is to ask God to save us, has been fulfilled as promised. Our faith will have resulted in us receiving eternal Life Who is Jesus Christ.

So have any of us sat in any strange chairs lately? Are we ready to give a new one a try?

How about trusting one of these? 😊

