

What Does Believe Mean?

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" John 3:36 (NIV)

In John 3:16 we are told, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* What does it mean to believe? Even though this is a simple question, it is very important to know what it means as it is through believing that we escape hell and inherit eternal life.

First, let's look at what believe doesn't mean.

In James 2:19 we are told that even the demons believe in one God but they shudder so obviously their way of believing does not result in eternal life. Demons can't be saved by the blood of Jesus and anyone who believes as they do won't be saved either as, in this verse, the word believe simply means to know about. So, believing in Jesus for salvation doesn't just mean knowing about things like His death, burial and resurrection. There is a deeper meaning.

John 12:42-43 give a clear example of how some people believed in Jesus but were not saved. The verses say, *"Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God."* These people believed in Jesus but they were not saved because fear and pride kept them from confessing their faith in Him. From these verses, we can once again see that believing for salvation requires more than knowledge. It also requires a confession of faith, a commitment.

Now let's look closer at what believing for salvation means.

The word *"believe"* in John 3:16 means not only to know about Jesus but also to commit to trusting in Him. The following story helps to understand this commitment of trust:

There was a man called Blondin who was a famous high-wire artist. He stretched a wire rope across the top of Niagara Falls and pushed a wheelbarrow across it. After doing this, he announced that he was going to wheel a man across in a wheelbarrow. A newspaper reporter came to interview Blondin about this:

"Do you think I can do this great feat?" Blondin asked the reporter.

"I really believe you can," replied the reporter, "I think you are the greatest stunt artist of all time!"

"So you believe I can do it," Blondin said. "Well then, you get in the wheelbarrow!"

This story is a good example of what we would need to do to show that we fully trusted someone. What would you do? I know for sure that I wouldn't get in the wheelbarrow no matter how much I trusted the man. The fact is, men can fail us. However, when we commit our ways to Jesus we have a 100% guarantee that He will never fail to protect us and save us eternally.

Finally

As we have seen, it's not enough to just know some things about Jesus to be saved. We have to commit to trusting Him for the forgiveness of our sins and confess Him as Lord of our life. Rom. 10:9 tells us *"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* Confessing Jesus as Lord means making Him our Master, our Boss, and this means that we must be obedient to all His commands. In John 3:16, the word believe is Present Tense which means that we must continue to be obedient if we want to inherit eternal life. If someone did get into Blondin's wheelbarrow then they would never have considered getting out halfway across the Niagara Falls. They would have remained in it all the way and, in the same way, we must remain in Christ if we want to get to the other side and inherit eternal life.

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