

I BELIEVE

By

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A person can grow only to the perimeter of his belief. While he may go through motions and set out principles he does not believe in, he is shamed and diminished by the hypocrisy, for a man is only that which he is in his own private conscience.

Therefore a person's faith — **his personal belief** — is the bond between him and God. Belief is the first and basic requirement for fellowship with God.

To be a Christian is more than merely to know that Christ lived, or does live. It is more than to consent to the fact of His deity as the Son of God. It is not just to believe IN Christ, but to believe Christ — his person, His work, His promises, his plan and purpose, what He said, what He did and what He said He is GOING to do. May own belief I here set forth.

I believe that man, created in the image of God and having spoiled that image by sin, is under the penalty of death (Romans 6:23).

I believe that God, being 100% just and also full of mercy and love, has interposed His own Son to take that penalty of death for all who submit to him.

I believe that Jesus is the Son of God who entered the stream of humanity to redeem man. God gave him a body through the miracle of the Virgin Birth for the specific purpose of His dying a flesh and blood death, the kind of death men die, that God's justice might be fulfilled through Him. Humanly speaking we see no other way that Jesus, as Deity, could become totally human, from birth to death, and hence take man's place in death (Hebrews 2:14).

I believe that Jesus was and is absolutely necessary because of two things: (1) the sinfulness of man, and (2) the justice of God. All things are given existence by God, and man's life is totally dependent upon God from one breath to the next. Having sinned, and broken fellowship with God, as well as the divine law of God, man was doomed because of God's perfect and complete justice. God, in absolute righteousness, cannot tolerate sin. He announced at the beginning that the penalty for sin is death. Therefore, if man were to be salvaged from death, it was necessary for a substitute to be provided, one without sin, to take the sinner's place under the just punishment of death. This Jesus did on the cross (I Peter 2:24).

I believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. This means that he was actually dead — or else there was no resurrection from death. In coming forth from the grave He was the physical, fleshly Jesus that died, not a mere spirit nor spiritual being (Luke 24:39). I believe that He ascended to heaven in the body, is in the body now, and will so return to the earth in His glorified and immortal body. (Acts 1:11, Colossians 2:9).

I believe that Jesus will return to this world again, and probably not too many years hence. He must return to fulfill His promises, to resurrect the dead, to "judge" the world, to destroy the earth and the sinners, and create a new earth "wherein dwells righteousness" (II Peter 3:7-13).

I believe in the final and eternal punishment of the sinner in Hell. I wish to be clear on this for some have falsely accused me on this point, and there is a great amount of confusion on the meaning of eternal punishment.

I believe in a literal hell, a fire that will burn and consume that which is cast into it, a fire that will burn the wicked as the chaff is burned from the threshing floor (Mt. 3:12). I believe in a hell of fire that will destroy the sinner, for he has no place in the final and everlasting universe of God (Re. 20:11). I believe that this fire will be eternal in its effect, like the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, which was called an “eternal fire” because those cities were forever destroyed (Jude 7). Obviously the fire itself did not continue to burn after that upon which it fed was consumed. So it is with the fire of hell: it is inextinguishable, cannot be put out, and shall not go out until all that is in its maws is totally consumed.

Hence, I believe in “eternal punishment” of the sinner, for his punishment is death. Once he has been put to death in the fire of hell, the punishment due him is eternally executed. He is punished by death, and that death stands for all eternity.

Moreover, this fire of hell not only destroys the sinner, but all else that is contaminated by sin, including the present earth (Rom. 8:20–23, II Peter 3:7). The first earth is to be destroyed (Rev. 21:1) and there will then be a new earth for the inhabitation of God’s people. The statement made by Jesus in Matthew 25:41, “then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels” is yet future. Jesus is describing what He will say to the sinner in the day of judgment. Therefore, hell is yet future. It exists now only in potential, that is the present earth is “stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” and is a “place prepared” (Mt. 25:41). But no one has suffered the fire of hell yet, for all sinners shall be judged and sentenced and executed AFTER Christ comes the second time.

I believe that all who are faithful believers in Jesus Christ will be spared this death in Hell, for the simple reason that Jesus has already suffered death in our place. Hence, we will be spared the “second death,” because “Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:21).

I believe in the resurrection of all the dead, the unbeliever to be destroyed in hell, the believer to receive an immortal body like Christ’s, and thus live forever (John 5:28–29). This life is to be lived in fellowship with all other righteous people, in a new creation yet to be revealed. Such life will be without sin, without death or sorrow of any kind, in the presence of God the Father and Jesus the Son.

I believe that to escape hell and attain immortal life, a person must repent NOW, and align his intention and desire with God, trusting God to save him through the only means He has provided, the sacrifice of Christ. Whatever else a person may believe, unless he believes in the fact of Christ’s death for his sin, he simply doesn’t believe in the Gospel, and therefore is an “unbeliever.” To acknowledge that Jesus was Deity, and that He was a great leader, a hero, a perfect man and perfect God — to consent to these facts about Him is not the same as believing in Jesus as Savior. The one preponderant purpose of His coming was to die the death for sinners. Speaking of His death, He said, “For this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27). He claimed to be the one God sent into the

world to die, to give His “flesh” for the life of man, and He said, “Except you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

I believe in baptism for the remission of sins. It is the point at which the believer exercises his faith in history; that is, just as Jesus reached the point in history where He submitted to death, so the believer must come to that point of submission and be immersed into Christ’s death. Apart from this submission and fiat hint he death of Jesus, baptism serves no purpose and fulfills no command of scripture.

I believe in the presence of the holy Spirit of God. There is no limit to the power of God through His Spirit; however, the believer may govern the extent of the Spirit’s power in his own life by his faith and actions.

The above is not all that I believe, but it is the core of my Christian faith. Also it is the mainspring of my life, the purpose of my existence and the hope of the future.

We are so accustomed to hearing people say that it really doesn’t matter what we believe, that the idea of setting forth one’s actual belief is looked upon by some a cardinal sin. We live in a creedless society, but the question must still be answered: “What think you of Christ?” The individual still must stand or fall on the basis of what he believes in respect to God and the One whom He sent. Furthermore, if the Christian is to bear witness to the world, the only witness he can bear is what he believes and no one is going to respond to a witness that says: “I don’t believe,” or “It doesn’t matter what you believe,” or whose belief is so general that it cannot be identified.

Maybe the reason modern man is so afraid of stating a belief is that he simply doesn’t have one, or maybe he has lost his conviction that Christ is going to be the Victor and he wants to wait and cast his lot with the winning side.

You cannot share a belief you do not have and if you cannot state your belief that is good evidence that it isn’t very solid. The Christian faith is bases on simple facts, the believing of which are essential to eternal life. Let us reject the nebulous generalities and wishywashyness of the indifferent religious. “Examine yourselves and see whether you are in the faith” (II Cor. 13:5). God has revealed Himself in the truth. We respond to Him by believing this truth. “For such does the Father seek to be His worshippers” (John 4::23).

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