

It Is Written

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Belief And Truth

By Irvin Himmel

No matter what your present belief, in this short essay I want to set before you the truth. Please study carefully the following points about belief and its relation to truth.

Believing Something Does Not Make It The Truth

The aged Jacob believed the story his sons told him which insinuated that their brother Joseph had been devoured by an evil beast (Gen. 37:31-35). So sincere was Jacob in that belief, and so emotionally moved by what he believed, he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, mourned for many days, and refused the comfort offered by other members of the family. Young Joseph was not dead although his; father sincerely believed he had been killed. Joseph was very much alive!

Saul of Tarsus strongly and earnestly believed in his early life that Jesus of Nazareth was an impostor, not the real Christ. He "verily thought" that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus (Acts 26:9). Saul's belief that Jesus was a fake did not make Him a pretender.

Truth is not determined by what someone chooses to believe. One may elect to believe the Book of Mormon, but that does not make the Book of Mormon true. One may choose to believe that the Pope of Rome is the Vicar of Christ, but believing it does not make it so. Some people believe man has the same nature of a beast and no other nature, but their belief does not make it true that man is wholly a material being. A lot of people believe miracles are being performed today (tongues, healing, prophecy, etc.), but their belief, which sometimes moves them in emotional experiences, does not make it true.

Failure To Believe Something Does Not Keep It From Being The Truth

Many of the Jews refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, even after He had preached to them, worked signs and wonders among them, and had demonstrated supernatural insight, but their lack of faith did not change the truth about His identity. Jesus explained, "for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). The truth about His Sonship did not depend on their belief in Him.

There are people who today refuse to believe there is a hell. They suppose that God thinks as men think, and in their human reasoning they cannot rationalize the idea of eternal punishment. But remember this: refusal to believe there is a hell does not keep the doctrine of hell from being the truth.

Some men refuse to believe there is a God. These men are called atheists. They suppose there is no being higher than humanity. This idea leaves them without any feeling of accountability to anyone except themselves. Refusal to believe in God does not change the fact that God exists and men are responsible to Him for their deeds.

Truth is determined by what the Scriptures teach, not by what someone believes, or refuses to believe. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16); that is the truth, and if every person on earth refused to accept it, that teaching of Jesus would still be the truth.

One Must Believe The Truth To Be Saved

Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Paul spoke of the "word of truth" as the "gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13). He explained that we are chosen to salvation "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13).

This New Testament teaching is a far cry from the popular notion that it really does not make a lot of difference what one believes. Some have the idea that one can believe to a large degree whatever he wants to believe and still go to heaven. To such persons it matters not whether one believes baptism is essential to

salvation or is a mere symbol of salvation; whether one believes in the impossibility of apostasy or that a child of God can fall away; whether one believes in immersion only or sprinkling, pouring, and immersion; whether one believes in tithing or giving according to ability; whether one believes Christians should keep the Sabbath (Saturday) or assemble for worship on the first day (Sunday); whether one believes Christ was born of a virgin or not; whether one believes in one faith or many faiths; etc., etc.

Refusal To Believe The Truth Brings Condemnation

Paul wrote about certain persons who did not love the truth, explaining, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12). We cannot obey the truth if we do not learn it and believe it. The word of God warns that people "who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," will receive indignation and wrath in the day of judgment (Rom. 2:8).

James taught that if one, errs from the truth and is turned back (converted), a soul is saved from death (Jas. 5:19, 20). This implies that if one turns from the truth he is headed for eternal death.

Truth is fixed by the word of God. Truth does not depend on what you and I believe or refuse to believe, but our eternal security does depend on our believing that which is the truth and not turning from that truth.

To Build Or Destroy?

By Dan Gatlin

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction" (2 Cor. 13:10).

Anyone who has ever worked on a home improvement project knows that doing demo is quick, easy and takes little to no skill. It's been said that a chimp with a hammer can do demo. Not so with construction. Building something takes time, talent, and careful consideration.

The same principle is true in the spiritual realm. Destroying the work of God is an easy thing. A false brother can divide a church, teach error, manipulate others to gain control, discourage young or weak Christians, etc. Some get a perverse joy out of doing such.

Much more difficult is the task of building up. In Corinth, Paul had enemies who questioned his authority and tried to undermine what he taught. The result was that some in the church came to doubt him. Paul summarizes a portion of their argument: "'For his letters,' they say, 'are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible'" (2 Cor. 10:10). They focused on the superficial, rather than the truth he preached.

Some younger preachers have been told by a few older brethren, "You're terrible, you need to get out of preaching." Rather than be an encouragement and build up the inexperienced, they choose to discourage. Why? What would motivate a brother to do such a thing?

Others have said such things as, "Why have gospel meetings? Nobody comes, it's just a waste of money!" It may be that in most groups of people there are "old curmudgeons" who objects to any effort to further the Lord's cause. They act not on faith, but on doubt.

What is expected of us? "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me'" (Rom. 15:1-3).