

Belief in God – First Peter 1:18-21

I. Introduction:

- A. Do you believe in God? Do you **really** believe in God?
1. I can ask that question in the context of a sermon, because no one has to take it personally.
 2. There are a lot of pitchfork Christians in churches.
 3. When the preacher lays something objectionable at their feet, they get out their mental pitchfork, jab it in and then throw it to the side or over their heads onto someone else's lap.
 4. Do you believe in God? Of course you do, so that question must belong to someone else.
 5. Now, if it was just you & me, and looking into your eyes, I asked that question, you just might be offended.
- B. Trying to avoid that offense, let me rephrase the question: Do you believe in God the way Peter did?
1. Peter said, *"Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for YOU, who BY HIM to do BELIEVE in GOD, that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory THAT your faith and hope might be in God."*
 2. Is your faith and hope in God **through** the Lord Jesus Christ?
 3. Do you believe in **the God** who is **described** in this chapter?
 4. Peter assumes you do, because the Holy Spirit through him is writing this letter to you and me.
 5. But are you sure this epistle belongs to you; that you are a true New Testament type of Christian?
 6. *"Forasmuch as ye know... ye were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ... who verily was foreordained... but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God."*
 7. For the next few minutes, let's think about this **verse 21** and my question.

II. WHO is this God in whom Christians believe?

- A. Peter describes Him in about a dozen different ways, giving us some details about the Christians' God.
1. The first thing is that the God in whom we believe raised Jesus from the dead.
 2. You have no problem believing that; right?
 3. The resurrection of Christ is so vitally important that Paul essentially makes it the hinge upon which Christianity swings.
 - a. *"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17).*
 - b. The Lord Jesus *"was delivered for our offenses (sins) and was RAISED again for our justification (our salvation)" (Romans 4:25).*
 4. To make the **sacrifice** for our sins **official**; to **prove** its **acceptability** before Him, God the Father raised Jesus from the grave.
 - a. Christ didn't use His own authority or power to facilitate His resurrection.
 - b. It was God who approved and empowered Jesus' resurrection.
 - c. And over and over again in the **Book of Acts** the disciples declare that God raised Jesus from the grave.
 5. Peter said, we are witnesses to the fact that God hath raised the Holy One, the Just One, the Prince of Life
- B. In **Ephesians 1** Paul agreed with Peter about the **resurrection** and then touched on **Peter's second point**.
1. Paul praised God the Father, speaking of *"the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*
 - a. *and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*
 - b. *which he wrought in Christ, when he RAISED him from the dead, and SET him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."*
 - c. God raised Christ from the tomb and then glorified Him in setting Him at his own right hand in Heaven.
 2. In God's eternal plan Jesus *"became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*
 - a. *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*
 - b. *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...*
 - c. *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:8-11).*

C. Who is the God that Christians put their trust?

1. **Verse 2** tells us that He is the **Father** of Jesus Christ, and the **omniscient God** who **foresees** all things.
2. And He is the God who **chose** and **ordained** certain people to save.
 - a. How many professing Christians are willing to say **that** is the God in whom they believe?
 - b. Many refuse to trust a God who practices election and foreordains salvation for specific people.
 - c. But that is the God Peter describes, and He is the God in whom Peter believed.
3. Our God is **merciful**, proving that mercy in **begetting people** unto a **lively hope** in regard to eternity.
4. He is **God enough** to **save** and **keep us** unto the end of our salvation through His **omnipotence**.
 - a. There are millions of professing Christians who don't believe God can keep us throughout eternity.
 - b. They believe in a God who cannot, or will not, keep His promises about eternal life.
 - c. But that is not the God of the people to whom Peter was writing.
5. Also, the God in whom we trust is **absolutely holy**, and He expects us to be holy just as He is.
6. And He is **not** a divine **"sugar daddy"** with never a frown when He looks in our direction.
7. **"He without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work" (verse 17).**
8. This is the God Peter has described to us thus far in this chapter.

D. A few years prior to this letter – not long before the crucifixion – Jesus was talking with His disciples.

1. And of course Peter was there, listening as the Lord shared what is called **"the upper room discourse."**
2. I know it's saying a lot, but **John 13** through **17** contain some of the most profound words Jesus ever uttered.
3. And among them was that blessed statement at the beginning of **John 14**: **"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."**

E. Let me rephrase my initial question, asking it once again in the light of **John 14:1**.

1. Do you **believe in** God the **Father** in **same way** you do God the **Son**?
2. Do you **TRUST** the Father just as explicitly you do the Son?
3. Is your faith co-equal toward each person of the co-equal Trinity?
4. Jesus said, **"Don't be worried or disturbed: you trust God, trust me in the same way, to the same degree, and to the same end."**

F. The other day I ran across a statement made by a Baptist preacher from a century ago.

1. I.M. Haldeman, pastor of the First Baptist Church of New York, wrote:
2. **"No man hath seen God the Father at any time, neither will He ever be seen apart from the Son, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father; He only hath declared Him.**
3. **With the profoundest reverence, therefore, I would say: all there is of God is in Jesus Christ, and apart from Jesus Christ there is no God.**
4. **Beyond all 'controversy' He was 'God manifest in the flesh' (I Timothy 3:16)."**
5. What do you think about that statement: **"Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no God?"**
6. Do you believe in a God without Christ?

III. Peter refers to the Christian's faith in God the Father.

A. Maybe you know **who** it is you should trust, but perhaps you don't know **how** to believe; **how** to trust.

1. There are about **as many different ways** to **believe** in things as there are **synonyms** for **"believe."**
2. **"Assume," "think," "opine," "apprehend," "entertain," "trust," "give credence" & even "hazzard" are synonyms for "believe."**
3. For example, Some drunk might wake up in a haze and say, **"I believe today must be Sunday."**
4. It is an accurate statement, but there is nothing special about what he believes or about the day.
5. And a theologian with three ThD degrees might say, **"I believe that Jehovah is the true and living God,"** but that might be nothing more than something he must say in order to hold his seminary teaching position.
6. And even if he believes it with all his heart, it doesn't make him a Christian in and of itself.

- B. Years ago Paul, Silas and Luke made a visit to the Macedonian city of Philippi.
1. Luke wrote in **Acts 16:16** – *“It came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us... and cried, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.”*
 2. This young woman was **demon possessed**, and it was through this demon that she said what she said.
 3. The Bible clearly shows that demons know about God, and they even understand that salvation from sin is through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.
 4. This woman and the demon who possessed her soul believed in God and believed in salvation from sin.
 5. But that kind of intellectual faith didn’t do her any good.
 6. Despite her faith – her faulty belief in God – she was at that point unforgiven, and if she had died, her soul would have entered hell.
 7. Despite what she believed, she was by God’s definition an *“unbeliever.”*
- C. Peter, in our scripture, refers to *“believing **IN** God.”*
1. Believing in God and believing in Christ are common, important Biblical statements.
 2. But that little preposition *“in”* can be misleading, although it doesn’t need to be.
 3. Much more concise for many people is the preposition *“on.”*
- D. Going back to **Acts 16**, Paul was so disturbed by the demon-possessed woman that he commanded, in the name of the Lord Jesus, that the evil spirit to leave her body. It did.
1. At that point the woman became useless to her wicked employers as a medium in their seances.
 2. So they had God’s men arrested, beaten and jailed.
 3. During that night, while the evangelists were worshiping the Lord, God sent an earthquake which shook the prison apart.
 4. The chief jailer, fearing God’s power, fearing that the prisoners would escape, and fearing his superiors, thought about suicide.
 5. That of course would have done him no good whatsoever, because it would have put him before God the Judge of all men.
 6. When Paul called out to him, the man *“came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas... and said, what must I do to be saved?”*
 7. *And they said, **believe ON the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...**”*
- E. There is a **significant difference** between **believing IN Jesus Christ** as a person and believing **ON Christ**.
1. There is a difference between believing a chair looks comfortable and actually trusting the chair enough to sit on it.
 2. To believe in God, may leave a person no higher than a demon, who believe there is only one true God.
 3. The belief in God which means something to the Lord is that kind which involves putting trust in Him.
- F. Peter says, *“You believe in the sense **that your faith and hope might be in God.**”*
1. That last phrase is a **description** of **what it is to properly believe** in God.
 2. When you think of God... as you practice your belief in God... are you filled with peace or fear?
 3. Is He your Saviour or your Judge?
 4. In the midst of the problems of this life – pandemics, imploding economies, potential world wars – does your belief in God give you the ability to cope and move on?
 5. Are you filled with hope, or is it worry, when you think about what would happen if a Korean nuclear missile landed on our city?
 6. The Apostle John once wrote: *“These things have I written unto you that **believe ON the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.**”*
 7. I know those words from **I John 5:13** are talking about faith in God’s Son, but to trust in one Person of the Trinity is to trust all three.

G. Remember what Peter tells us in this verse:

1. **Christ Jesus** was foreordained and revealed for you, *“who **BY HIM** do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”*
2. Doesn't the apostle say that the kind of faith we need to have in God comes through the Lord Jesus?
3. That is exactly what he says, because that is what he heard Jesus teach.

H. Peter was present when the Jews thought about murdering Christ in **John 5**, & he heard the Lord's response.

1. *“Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son (**I**) can do nothing of (myself), but what (**I**) see the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”*
2. The Father and the Son are linked more closely than anything we might imagine.
3. *For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.*
4. *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*
5. *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*
6. *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.*
7. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **heareth MY word**, and **believeth on HIM** that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”*
8. Hearing the words of the gospel through the lips of Christ, and responding by believing on the Father who sent him, are characteristics of people who are saved and have hope of everlasting life.

I. In **John 12:44** Jesus declared, *“He that believeth on me, believeth not on me (alone), but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth Him that sent me.”*

1. How did those Christians in Asia, many of whom were former heathen idolaters, come to believe God?
2. It was through their faith in God the Son, Christ Jesus.
3. And going back to **John 14**, Jesus said to Thomas and the rest of the disciples, *“I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*
4. No **one can approach God** except through the Lamb of God, who gave His life as a sacrifice for sin.
5. No one can have **peace with God** except through Jesus Christ.
6. And furthermore, it is **impossible to properly believe** in God except through Christ.
7. Christ Jesus was foreordained and eventually revealed to you, *“who **BY HIM** do believe in God.”*

J. Now consider one more point.

IV. WHY is it important to believe in God?

A. Isn't the question kind of silly? We need to believe in God **because God is**.

1. But what about all those people who worship God through different names, titles, avenues and sacrifices?
 - a. It is not about the differences in names: *“Allah,” “Jehovah,” “Baal,” “Ashtoreth”* and *“Molech.”*
 - b. The fact is they are all different gods, not the same God under different names.
2. We could talk about the **character** of those various gods, pointing out that most make no claim to be holy.
3. We could talk about **the way** different god's are **worshiped** – good deeds, financial sacrifice, vegetable sacrifices, and even human sacrifices.
4. There are **AS many differences** between gods as there are **names for the gods** throughout the world.

B. But these considerations are not as nearly important as a few of the declarations God makes in His Word.

1. The Lord said through the Apostle John: *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, **hath not God**. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”*
2. The people to whom Peter was writing possessed God and had a belief in God, because they lived and resided in Christ and His word.
3. To reject Christ, and all that is contained in Christ: His sinlessness, His virgin birth, His deity, and most particularly His sacrifice for sin, is to dig the canyon between God and you all the deeper.

4. And again, Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me."*
 5. Peter once declared *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*
- C. Despite the declarations and demands of the many world religions, there is but one God, the Father of Christ.
1. Paul says in **Corinthians**, *"To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him."*
 2. To the **Ephesians** he wrote: there is *"one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*
 3. And he reminded us through **Timothy**, *"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*
- D. The one true and living God created mankind for His glory, and if you choose not to personally glorify Him through our trust in Christ, then God will be glorified through your eternal judgment.
1. God the Father, *"hath highly exalted (His Son), and given him a name which is above every name:

 - a. that at the name of Jesus **EVERY** knee should bow...
 - b. and that **EVERY** tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*
2. This is the God in whom we are to believe.
- E. Why is belief in God important?
1. Because we are all sinners facing an eternity in either Heaven or the Lake of Fire.
 2. Only through our faith in God, by way of the Lord Jesus Christ, is escape from Hell possible.
 3. Furthermore, in this world of sin, chaos and disaster, we need the faith and hope which is in God.
 4. To be a Christian, through Christ, doesn't guarantee financial success, relational compatibility and worldly pleasure.
 5. But it does guarantee that *"all things will work together for good to them that love God and that are the called according to His purpose."*
- F. Do you believe in God in the fashion that born again Christians believe in Him?
1. Do you have a reverential joy in God, because you have been born from above through Christ?
 2. Do you have faith and hope in God?
 3. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."*
 4. *"For if, when we were enemies, we were **RECONCILED** to God **BY** the **DEATH of his SON**, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*
 5. *And not only so, but we also **JOY in GOD THROUGH our Lord Jesus CHRIST**, by whom we have received the atonement" (**Romans 5:10**).*
 6. Do you possess Christ's atonement? Are you a forgiven person before God?
 7. In other words, do you believe in the same God as Peter?