

DO WE BELIEVE THAT GOD IS? (Hebrews 11:6)

I. Do we need this lesson?

- A. Some have already tuned this sermon out because they have said in their minds, "Of course we believe that God is."
 - 1. Perhaps we do, but the faith of many is little more than borrowed faith.
 - 2. It is just a "hand-me-down religion" for some.
- B. What indicates this?
 - 1. Worldly lifestyles and attitudes by many in the Lord's church are signs of this.
 - 2. Non-involvement in the efforts of the congregation is a sign.
 - 3. Ignorance of the scriptures is a sign.
 - 4. Repeatedly giving in to temptation is a sign.
- C. The Bible talks about "sincere faith" and "unfeigned faith" (1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:5).
 - 1. The word "sincere" literally means without wax.
 - 2. The emphasis in these two verses must mean that there can be an insincere faith and a feigned faith.

II. The ingredients of personal faith.

- A. Someone has summed up genuine, personal faith into three basic elements:
 - 1. Credence (belief - John 8:24).
 - a. This is not only the what but also the why.
 - b. 1 Peter 3:15.
 - c. We need to know what we believe and why we believe it.
 - 2. Confidence (trust - 2 Timothy 1:12).
 - a. The word "persuaded" means to "have faith in a thing."
 - b. Real trust creates unconditional obedience: if we trust we obey.
 - 3. Constancy (faithful unto death - 2 Timothy 4:7-8).
 - a. Faith produces faithfulness.
 - b. Revelation 2:10.
- B. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your own faith in these areas?

III. The traits of mere tradition.

- A. Tradition simply refers to that which has been received, at least in the way we use in modern day language.
- B. In religion, some people's faith is nothing more than mere tradition.

1. These people have simply just been going with the flow.
 2. They are human chameleons, in that their convictions are not their own.
 3. For them, faith is a matter of convenience and not conviction.
- C. We must be sure to understand that the problem is not with tradition itself.
1. There is nothing wrong with tradition as long as its biblical tradition.
 2. We are fools if we throw things away simply because they are traditional (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15; 2 Thessalonians 2:15).
- D. The point is not that faith and tradition are opposites - it is that faith is more than tradition.
- E. The difference is not in the content, but the quality of our faith.
1. If our faith is mere tradition, it is weak.
 2. We probably have not examined it thoroughly or thought it through.
 3. It's probably never been seriously tested (1 Peter 1:6-7).
 4. It may be nothing more than abstract in our minds - God is an idea and not Someone real and close to us.
 5. Worst of all, we don't know why we believe what we believe.
- F. Three dangers of a faith that is mere tradition:
1. It won't stand the test of temptation.
 2. It won't stand the test of hardship.
 3. It won't stand the test of judgement (Matthew 7:22-23; 15:8-9).

IV. Steps we can take to grow our faith.

- A. Many never confront the issue of real faith until they're faced with some serious crisis in life.
- B. This is too important an issue to postpone until a crisis makes it urgent, because then it will probably be too late.
- C. We must decide right now to move from a "hand-me-down religion" to a deeper, real faith in God and His word.
- D. To do this we must do four things:
1. Be honest about our faith (Mark 9:24; Revelation 3:1 - 2 Corinthians 13:5).
 2. Feed our faith.
 3. Challenge our faith.
 4. Refresh our faith.
- E. Like most valuable things, faith must be grown.
1. Just as there are not real "get rich quick" schemes, there are not "get faith quick" schemes (1 Timothy 4:15).

2. We need incremental growth, little investments in our faith each day.

From a sermon by Gary Henry