

North Christian Church -

Pastor Ed Collins

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9/15/16 - The "Difficult" Passages - Believing

"The human heart has so many recesses for vanity, so many lurking places for falsehood, is so shrouded by fraud and hypocrisy, that it often deceives itself."

- John Calvin on human beliefs as relating to true saving faith

"believe"

from pisteuo - believe, have faith in, trust in; pass: I am entrusted with; in context, everyone believes something and everyone has faith in something (whether it's godly is another issue altogether!)

Not All Believing Is the Same

Nowhere in the Bible, does it state that all believing is godly. In fact, the Bible depicts man's heart as utterly deceitful.

Jer 17:9

The heart is more deceitful than all else

And is desperately sick;

Who can understand it?

It Matters What You Believe

Jesus stated that those who believed in Him (true "believers") would walk in the Light. (Jn 8:12; 1Jn 1:6-7)

"judge according to the flesh"

Jesus stated the root of the Pharisees' belief - the flesh. The flesh cannot be godly (1Co 2:14 - "...spiritually appraised...") - in fact, it cannot even appraise its own depravity...it doesn't suppose it's actually depraved, even.

Jn 5:39

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me."

The Pharisees' Belief

The Pharisees certainly believed in something, and it was based on the same word (the same Law) that Jesus based His personal belief on. While the vehicle for true faith, the Word, was the same, not all were "on the train" towards salvation.

"unless you believe [pisteuo] that I am He"

Jesus made the absolute distinction that "belief" must be in His person ("that I am He"). He wasn't refuting knowledge of scripture, He was explaining the chasm between knowing OF Him and actually KNOWING Him.

Believing In the Bible

Just because the word "believe" (or its derivatives) shows up in scripture does not mean all "believing" is the same! To the contrary, scripture contextualizes different beliefs, of which two categories arise: belief in Jesus Christ, or some other belief (unbelief in Him - eg: the facts or His offices only).

The Value of Context

Without the Gospel context, the rest of scripture becomes "difficult" to understand, often confusing, and as a result, frustrating. Satan loves it when a "well-intentioned" believer puts their Bible aside in frustration!

Jn 8:30 ff

The greater context of Jesus Christ's own thoughts about the heart of man regarding his ability to believe (Jn 2:23-24) implies that we must press on in this passage for additional, qualifying/clarifying context!

Evidence: Freedom Through Persistence

Jesus stated that a true believer in Christ would "continue in [His] word" and be set free!

"do the deeds of Abraham" - Jn 8:39

What the Pharisees didn't comprehend was that Abraham believed in Jesus Christ (the Messiah of the OT - Jn 5:39; 8:56) and therefore He did good deeds, as fruit of God-given faith (Ro 4:3-5).

Believing Implies Hearing

Mt 13:9 "He who has ears, let him hear." It's impossible to believe something that results in godly faith if you can't first "hear" it!

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Jn 2:23-24

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed [pisteuo] in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men.

Mt 13:20-21

"The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the

word, immediately he falls away.

"in a similar way" - Mk 4:16

Jesus implies that this second class of people fall into the same category as the first, namely, unconverted unbelievers (even though, for a time, they "believed for a while", as Luke described it).

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