

Biblical Faith—No. 2

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Faith and belief are so much the basic response God requires of men that one or the other is often used as a synecdoche (i.e., a figure of speech in which a part represents the whole) for **all** that one must do to be reconciled to God (e.g., John 3:16). The New Testament mentions repentance (Acts 17:30), confession of one's faith in Christ (Mat. 10:32), and baptism (1 Pet. 3: 21) in the same way.

If *believeth* in John 3:16 **includes only** intellectual acceptance of the Christ, it necessarily **excludes** any other requirement (e.g., repentance, confession, baptism, a life of faithfulness). Many passages teach that salvation is by faith/belief, but none by faith/belief **alone**. One might argue with equal force that salvation is by repentance **alone** (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). *Believeth* (*faith*) in John 3:16 (and many other passages) simply stands for all that men must do to be forgiven of their sins and saved eternally. All such conditions are expressions of faith or belief, just as rejection of any of them is an expression of unbelief. This comprehensive use of the terms is reflected in *believer* and *believed*: Those who had believed in and confessed Christ, repented of their sins, and been baptized unto the remission of their sins (Acts 2:37–41) are described as “all that believed” (v. 44; for additional examples, see 4:4, 32; 5:14; 9:42; 10:45; 11:17, 21; 18:8; 1 Cor. 9:5; 2 Cor. 6:15; et al.). After Pentecost, inspired men consistently used these terms to describe those who had **obeyed** the Gospel (2 The. 1:7–9), otherwise described as disciples, Christians, brethren, saints, and children of God (e.g., Acts 11:26; 14:22; 1 The. 1:7; 2:10, 13; 1 Tim. 4:12; 6:2; et al.).

These passages give us insight to the meaning of Paul's answer to the jailer at Philippi. When the man asked what he should do to be saved, Paul initially told him: “Believe on the Lord Jesus” (Acts 16:31). A bit more reading reveals that:

- (1) Paul and Silas taught the jailer and his family the Gospel, implying that he knew not what he was to believe (v. 32),
- (2) The jailer manifested his repentance by washing their stripes (v. 33a), and
- (3) He was then baptized immediately, though it was past midnight (vv. 25, 33b).

Only then (and this is significant) does the text say that the jailer and his family “believed” (v. 34). Those who insist that the jailer was saved immediately at the point of “belief” in its narrowest sense of acknowledgement of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, ignore the

definition of *believe* in the context itself. Such misinterpretation also causes Paul to contradict Jesus (Mark 16:16), Peter (Acts 2:38, 1 Pet. 3:21), and himself (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27).

Are men saved by faith. Absolutely! Are men saved by faith alone? Absolutely not!

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, August 17, 2007].

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