

Don't Blame God Because You Don't Believe

Jeff Peterson | 3/26/2021 | illbehonest.com

Among the many emails we receive here at I'll Be Honest, one topic which we receive quite often is one along the line of this: "I want to believe. I want to be a Christian, but God hasn't given me faith yet. What do I do, since I know faith is a gift from God but since He hasn't given it to me yet? Am I beyond hope?" They say the same thing about repentance. What does that person do? Are they beyond hope? We'll address that there in the next few minutes.

First, is that person correct? Is faith a gift from God? Yes, it is. Philippians 1:29 states so. Does our Bible say that not all have faith? Yes, it says that in 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 2. We know faith is necessary for a person to be saved. Without faith it is impossible to please God, says Hebrews 11:6. Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin, according to Romans 14:23. Whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life. We're justified by faith, according to Romans 3:25 and 26, and Romans 5, verse 1. Repentance is also a gift – Acts 11:18 and 2 Timothy 2:24-25. So, what about that person...maybe that person is you... what about that person who does not believe but says they want to believe, and they want to repent? ... but they claim to not believe or have repented because God hasn't given them faith and repentance? That person is in a dangerous place. Why? Because what they're doing is, in essence, blaming God for the fact they aren't saved. They're saying it's God's fault because God hasn't given them faith and repentance...and what does that do? It makes that person passive. They sit back. They wait. Where in your bible does it command anyone to do that? Where is anyone told to sit back and wait for faith? I want to look at a passage briefly and cover this issue.

The passage is Matthew 11, verses 25-30. Jesus has just finished pronouncing woes upon certain cities because of their lack of response to the mighty works done in them. He then prays to His Father and it's interesting what He prays, as He gives thanks – He prays in thanksgiving for this fact: the fact that His Father had hidden "these things" from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. What "these things?" The things concerning spiritual truths. The things concerning Himself. Hidden from people by the Father. Things which men needed to understand in order to be saved. Those things were revealed to "little children." That's a metaphor. The "little children" are men like Peter, Andrew and Bartholomew. Working men. Fishermen. Not professional theologians like the scribes and Pharisees. Then he says everything has been handed to Him by His Father and concerning mankind, no one knows the Father unless the Son – Jesus – chooses to reveal the Father to men. Men were lost. They needed truth to be saved and truth was hidden to some and revealed to others. Does Jesus then say those who had the truth hidden from them are off the hook? Are they not responsible? No – look at what Jesus says when He now evangelizes: "Come ALL who labor and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." ALL. Jesus places the burden squarely upon everyone within the sound of His voice that they should come to Him and receive rest.

Think about Jesus coming out of the wilderness after being tempted by Satan. What does He say? "repent and believe in the gospel." Think about all those times He told people to follow him. Think about the evangelistic encounters in Acts. The men at Pentecost were cut to the heart

and how did Peter respond to their question? Peter said “Repent.” He didn’t say, “Ask for repentance.” Paul and Silas said to the Philippian jailer in response to his question, “What must I do to be saved?” – they said “Believe.” Let’s be honest, though – did everyone always obey the command to believe and repent? Why? Why didn’t they?

They didn’t want to. Now, I know if you’re that person, you’re mad right now because I just told you the reason you don’t believe is because you don’t want to believe or you don’t want to repent. You’re getting ready to write to me here and tell me you do want to believe and repent – but it’s God’s fault you don’t. What does Scripture do, though? It lays all of the responsibility squarely in your lap to believe and to repent and the urgency of that is clear – you’re not supposed to wait for faith to fall from the sky or repentance to come in your next proverbial Amazon box.

When Paul talked with Felix about faith in Jesus Christ in Acts 24 and he did so by bringing up righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix did not respond by believing, but became frightened and said, “Get out for now.” Did Paul say, “OK. You better pray God gives you faith?” Not as far as we know – we don’t have any such thing recorded there... or anywhere else in Scripture when people refused to respond immediately with faith and repentance.

Scripture always presses people who hear the gospel to respond, and to respond right now... it never gives a person license to wait, does it? You have to be as desperate as Peter was when he started to sink as he was walking on water. Peter didn’t think about it, Peter didn’t pray about it, Peter didn’t sit back passively – he yelled, “Lord, SAVE ME!” That’s where you need to be at if you’re that person who says you don’t believe or you haven’t repented because God hasn’t given you faith or repentance yet – you need to be in Peter’s place as he’s sinking fast and he’s desperate – “Lord, SAVE ME!” You are responsible. Right now. You just have to want to be saved more than remaining where you are right now – and Scripture gives you no wiggle room here. Repent and believe now. Turn from your sin, and trust Christ now. Don’t presume upon the Lord’s kindness in giving you today. Please repent and believe. Now.