

FROM THE MINISTRY OF



THRU the BIBLE

FIRM UP YOUR FAITH

HOW TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN GOD

DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

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Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. –Hebrews 11:1, 6

What does it take to come to God?

Should I raise my hands to soul-inspiring music?

Should I make a big donation to a church or ministry?

Should I cry at the pastor's invitation to come forward at the end of a church service?

None of those things will get God's attention. But He told us the one thing that would: Faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Only by faith can we please God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Other Scripture says the same thing: When you come to God, you come with faith only in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:22-24 and Romans 3:28 say you don't come to God through the Law.

Galatians 5:6 says you don't come to God through circumcision (or becoming Jewish or any other religion).

To sum it up, you only come to God for salvation by *faith* plus *nothing*. God accepts you based on your faith in His Son alone—even if you did everything else to look religious. And if you did all those things—but did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ only for your salvation—you would still be lost.

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

–Galatians 3:22-24

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

–Galatians 5:6

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

–Romans 3:28

WHAT IS FAITH?

Considering it's the one thing we need to be accepted by God, let's make sure we know what faith is.

Perhaps it's helpful to know first what faith is not. Faith is not an abstract idea or theory. It's not mystical, outside reality. It's not your best feeling about God. It's not just anything that describes or touches our soul. Faith in faith doesn't matter—"as long as you have faith in something" doesn't amount to anything.

The best and only place to go to understand what faith is is the Bible. Ready for a really simple definition?

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him –1 John 5:14

Faith is a personal confidence in God. That's all. That confidence touches everything that we are.

As part of God's design for us as humans, we are made up of three parts—the intellect, the emotions, and the will—and they all three work together. Often the church directs its message to only one part and we only respond on that level alone. Nothing sustains us and the message is ineffective. But God directs the gospel to all three parts of man, and He invites us to respond in all three parts of our being.

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PART 1:
FAITH SPEAKS TO THE INTELLECT

Come to God with intellectual questions, and He will give you evidence for your mind to consider. Once you place your faith in Him, God moves in and the Holy Spirit makes it real to the heart and life. But God does not ask anyone to take a leap in the dark when they come to Him. Faith rests upon the tangible. Paul says in Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith is no gamble; it’s the surest thing there is.

Look at the very first man who responded by faith to God.

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts –Hebrews 11:4

How could Abel offer his sacrifice to God by faith? He could only offer it if God had revealed what pleases Him. Remember—“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Abel had heard something, either through Adam or God revealed Himself directly and said, “Now that you’re out of the Garden of Eden, it will be necessary for you to bring a sacrifice to Me. And that

sacrifice must witness to the fact that you are a lost sinner and only the shedding of blood makes it possible for Me, a Holy God, to forgive your sin. Bring a little lamb and it will be accepted because I in time will send my Son, the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world.”

So Abel *heard*, and then he *believed* God. Faith is confidence in God. If you had met Abel on the way to make his sacrifice and asked him what he was doing, he'd say, “Here's what I know: My father Adam was put out of the Garden of Eden because he disobeyed God. And I know I have inherited a nature that's in disobedience to God. God says because I'm a lost sinner and He's holy, I'm to bring this little lamb. So that's what I'm doing.” Abel evidenced that he believed and had confidence in God, and that faith came because he had a revelation—he had something from God. Cain, on the other hand, refused to believe God.

Our faith rests upon documented evidence, the Word of God.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. –John 20:30, 31

John says, “I could have written about many other things, but I have put down in black and white this tangible evidence so you can know Jesus is the Christ.” God's not asking you to take a leap in the dark. He only asks you to examine the evidence. Our Lord said, “He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.
–1 John 5:10

That's the reason it's so terrible not to believe God. When you don't, you make Him a liar. But when you do accept that record, you exhibit confidence in God. It's really quite simple:

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. –1 John 5:11-13

Believe God. That's all Abraham did. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). Abraham was a good man, but he did not count on his own righteousness. He was told to believe God, and Abraham said, "I believe You. I have confidence in God." That is what God asks of you and me.

Someone asked Martin Luther, "Do you feel you've been forgiven?" He answered, "No, but I am as sure as there's a God in heaven. For feelings come and feelings go. Feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the Word of God. None else is worth believing." He had documented evidence. My friend, God appeals to the mind and asks you to examine the evidence. If you think faith is contrary to reason or to knowledge, you're wrong. God begins with you there. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Our Lord said,

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. –John 17:3

This is how Paul could say,

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

–2 Timothy 1:12

Faith is not contrary to reason. God appeals to the intellect of man.

OUR FAITH RESTS UPON
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of God.*

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PART #2:

FAITH SPEAKS TO THE EMOTIONS

That will either encourage you or frighten you. Too often we swing to extremes when we consider we are emotional beings. That's how God made us. We either stuff our emotions and deny they exist, or we make them the engine to our locomotive. Let's be clear, emotionalism is not the way to get to God; however, God appeals to our emotions. Look at Romans 10:9,10:

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Look at how God appeals to our hearts. It's there where we live and move and have our being. Not in our heads. Many of us use our hearts more than our brains, and Scripture recognizes it. Look at Proverbs 4:23:

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

Even when our Lord walked among us, He knew what was in our hearts (John 2:24, 25). Jesus quoted Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet, who said, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips. But their heart is far from Me” (John 15:8). And in Matthew 15:19, Jesus taught that which defiles a person comes out of the heart. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

That’s an awful brood. We can’t deny these things are in our hearts. God knows it and it’s why He appeals to our emotions. Our problem is not in our heads—it’s in our hearts. We’re not silly; we’re sinful. We’re not weak; we’re wicked. The Oxford scholar, William Law, said:

“For this is an eternal truth, which you cannot too much reflect upon, that reason always follows the state of the heart, and what your heart is, that is your reason. If your heart is full of sentiments of penitence, and of faith in the divine mercy, your reason will take part with your heart But if your heart is shut up in death and dryness, your reason will ... delight in nothing but such dry objections and speculations as answer to the deadness and insensibility of your heart.”

That’s the reason the church needs revival; we need an atmosphere in which emotions can be expressed—*right* emotions, not just cheap sentiment. God appeals to our heart, but because we have no atmosphere for emotion, people turn away in unbelief, their hearts having become hardened. Our hearts need to be *stirred*. Just because we happen to be in a cold, indifferent atmosphere doesn’t mean God’s not appealing to our emotions. He is! But our troubles lie down in our hearts, not up in our heads.

PART 3:
FAITH SPEAKS TO THE WILL

Hebrews 11:1 says faith is “the evidence of things not seen.”

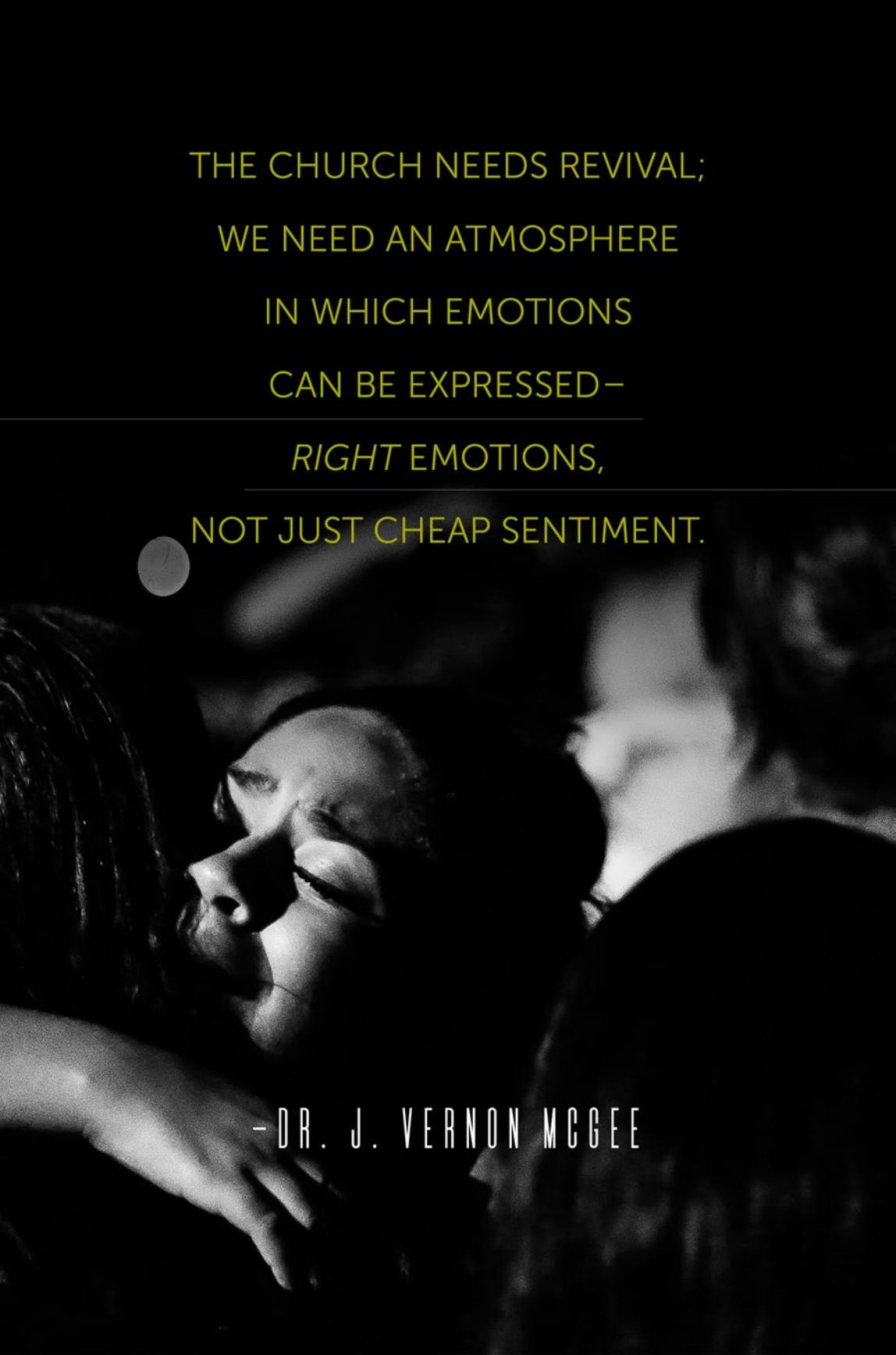
If it’s not seen, how can we believe it? Faith is a conviction—it comes out of the will. Every time God asks a man to believe, He always puts with it a little preposition that denotes *action*.

Let me show you what that means:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. –John 3:16

The original language, Greek, describes it vividly. Believe always has a preposition. It means “believe in.” When Paul was asked by the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul answered in Acts 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” God appeals to the volitional part of man—to our wills.

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God asks us to *do* something. Therefore, faith is more than just mental assent. It's more than just shedding tears. Faith is something we act upon. Salvation doesn't happen in the head, and it doesn't happen just in the heart. May I say, salvation is when we *act*—when we *believe on* Him.

Imagine there's an empty chair before you. Maybe you've examined the evidence of the gospel and intellectually you believe the things you've learned and examined. Likewise, you can stand right by the side of that chair and believe it will hold you. You can stand right there all day and all night, and that chair will not hold you up. It's not until you believe *in* or *on*—that is, take action by sitting down on it—that the chair holds you.

When Saul of Tarsus was converted, he asked two questions: “Who are You, Lord?” That's intellectual. And “Lord, what do You want me to do?” That's the will, volition. (See Acts 9:5, 6.) A lot of folk say, “Yes, I believe,” but they must believe *into*. They must rest in Christ. They must invite Him to be their only Savior.

FULL-BODIED FAITH

“By faith Abel offered to God ...” (Hebrews 11:4). Abel had confidence in what God said, and he acted upon it. He took that step of faith. Martin Luther wrote a statement about the letter to the Romans, and one night in London a man read it aloud at a service. A young man named John Wesley, who at that time was unsaved, slipped into the back of the church and listened:

“Faith is not something we fetch up from our imagination and put over on ourselves. Faith comes over us in the mighty impact of God’s revelation of Himself to us. It’s God’s own work in us, which changes us all over and makes us like new. It kills the past and utterly transforms us in heart, disposition, spirit, and all the faculties. Oh, it is a lively, busy, active, mighty thing! This faith, whereby the Holy Spirit regenerates us and pours itself in a steady stream of good deeds, it’s just a lively, reckless confidence in God’s graces so sure that the believer could die a thousand times for it. Such knowledge of God’s grace and trustful reliance upon it sets a man up, makes him cheerful, sure of himself, bold hearted, happy towards God and all creation.”

John Wesley later said, “That night I felt my heart strangely warm, and I did trust God.”

God appeals to you on all three fronts, not just one. My friend, have you come on all three fronts to God?

Have you been convinced intellectually that Jesus Christ died for your sins and He rose again?

Have you been convicted also emotionally, in your heart of hearts, that you have sinned and Jesus has invited you to believe in Him as your Savior?

And then by an act of the will have you trusted Him as your own personal Savior?

Today is your day to affirm these truths with your heart, your mind, and your will (if you're already saved, affirm your confidence in these truths again). It is your day to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and greenery.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from the TTB.org website. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

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