

In Mark 1:24, the **demons** called **Jesus** “the Holy One of God.” In Matthew 8:29, they said to Christ, ““What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” (“Before the time” is a reference to Christ as Judge at the Judgment) In Luke 4:41, the demons say to Jesus, “You are **the Christ**, the Son of God!” They acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah! If the exact same word for **believe** is used of demons in relation to God as Creator and Ruler, and if the demons acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, or Messiah, then **belief** involves much more than just being persuaded and confident that something is true about God and Christ.

Churches across America are crowded with people who have **acknowledged** in their **head** some facts about God and Christ to be true, but who have not personally **assimilated** those facts into their **hearts**. Consequently, there is little if any **application** of those facts in their **habits**. Their **history**, the auto-biography that they are **authoring**, is cluttered with the **artificial fruit** of **easy believism**. They are content with a religious status quo that may salve their conscience and give them an emotional fix, but will not pass inspection at the judgment. **What does it mean to assimilate the truth into our hearts?** The word **assimilate** means “to **take in** and **utilize as nourishment**: to absorb into the system; it means to take into the mind and **thoroughly comprehend**.” The word **heart** in the Scriptures refers to “the seat of the understanding, sensibilities, affections, emotions and desires...” We might say that **the heart is the essence of who we are**. When we assimilate God’s Word into our hearts, **we embrace it in the very core of our being**. A starving man can know the facts about food. Unless he takes the food into his body, he will die as an “**intelligent fool!**” The same is true spiritually. From a Biblical perspective, this raises the fundamental question of life—**what does it mean to believe unto salvation or to accept Christ into our hearts by faith?**

- I. What is the nature of belief or faith? (Romans 4:1-4)
 - A. Believe means “to have faith (in, or with respect to, a person or thing).” “To think to be true, to be persuaded of, to place **confidence in** the thing believed; to **entrust to**.”
 1. The word, believe is from the same root for our word, faith.
 2. Believing in Christ involves coming to Him (Jn.6:35), receiving Him (Jn.1:12-13), and loving Him (I Jn.5:1-2).
 - B. Belief is always accompanied by **repentance**.
 1. Acts 20:21, Mark 1:14-15.
 2. John Murray: “believing repentance” or “penitent faith”
 3. Intellectual (Ps.51:3-4), emotional (Ps.51:12, 15-17), volitional (Ps.51:10-13)
 - C. Belief is always accompanied by **public confession** of Christ.
 1. Confess: “To declare openly, to speak out freely with conviction.”
 2. Mark 8:38 Ashamed of Christ? Christ will be ashamed of you!
- II. **Obedience demonstrates** faith; it does not *determine* it.
 - A. Romans 4:5-12 underscores that faith saves, not works.
 - B. From the outset, Abraham’s faith was demonstrated through obedience. Gen.12:1-4 and Heb.11:8
 - C. Paul drives home the truth of salvation through faith in Romans 4:13-15.
 1. Likewise Ephesians 2:8-10, James 2:18 and Galatians 3:7-10
 2. In a sense, the nature of genuine faith is similar to the nature of genuine love; they both produce evidence of their existence. (Jn.3:16; 14:23)
 - D. “The obedience of faith includes a radical **reorientation** to God and to sin that governs all of life.”
- III. Saving faith also contains the element of **hope**. (Romans 4:16-20)
 - A. Hope is “joyful and confident expectation” that endures.
 - B. Hebrews 11:1 refers to faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
 1. Substance: “that steadiness of mind which holds one firm; it is the confidence of things hoped for.”
 2. Faith makes the unseen objects of hope become real and substantial. *Assurance* gives the true idea. It is the firm grasp of faith on unseen fact.” (Vincent)
 3. Hebrews 11:9-10 (pilgrim), I Peter 1:3-5 (living hope), I Thess.4:13-18 (sorrow with hope)
- IV. Saving faith involves **trust**. (Romans 4:21-25)
 - A. Trust means confidence in and reliance upon the character and ability of God to fulfill His promises.
 - B. Hebrews 11:17-19 Offering up of Isaac. Genesis 22:1-2, 7-8
 - C. Trusting faith: “God will provide Himself a lamb....”
 - D. When we cannot understand His providence, we can trust His character- love, grace, mercy, faithfulness.

Saving faith will **persevere** as the gift of God!