



# a word from Pastor Chuck



## Faith, Part 3: Faith in Whom, Exactly?

People are often quick to say, “I believe in God,” and many think that the declaration of that belief is enough to get them to heaven. But what is such a person’s definition of God? He might be referring to some unintelligible force in the universe. She might be talking about some ethereal essence of love. Or that person might even be talking about his or her own self.

When the apostle Paul visited Athens, the local philosophers invited him to come up to the Areopagus to expound his novel teaching. He began to address the Athenians:

*“I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. ... Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it ... in Him we live and move and have our being.”* Acts 17:22b-24a, 28a

There is only one true God, the eternal Creator of the universe. When the disciples of Jesus prayed, they said, “**Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them**” (Acts 4:24b). So when a believer in Christ says, “I believe in God,” he or she is talking about the eternal God, the Creator of all things, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Before anything else of importance can happen in your spiritual life, you must know that this one true God does indeed exist. So the writer of Hebrews said, “**Without faith it is impossible to please Him [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is**” Hebrews 11:6a). This is a first step.

### Believing with Your Life

But heaven doesn’t open to you just because you believe that God exists. James said, “**You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!**” (James 2:19). Heaven opens to those, not

who simply acknowledge God’s existence, but who by faith accept Who He is—Lord—by repenting of their sins and committing to follow Him.

Many of us recite the Apostles’ Creed: *I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered*

trying to put us under condemnation. “You are a rotten sinner,” he’ll say. “You have no right to come to God and ask for His help. Look at how many times you’ve failed Him! You might as well forget it. God’s not going to forgive you.”

Will you believe Satan? Or will you believe God who said that if you’ll confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that

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*under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.*

It’s important that we believe those things. But do we truly believe them, or do we merely recite the words by rote? Are we just mouthing familiar phrases but in our heart of hearts do not truly believe in such a God? The Creator sent His Son to this earth to die for our sins. On the third day, Jesus Christ rose again from the grave and today is in heaven, making intercession for us. Do we really believe this? Do we believe it more than we believe in our bank accounts, in our investments, or in our plans for tomorrow? Temporal things come and go; they change and wither and fall into decay. But Jesus Christ, the One in whom we place our faith, “**is the same yesterday, today, and forever**” (Hebrews 13:8).

### God’s Promises or Satan’s Lies?

Despite the many ironclad promises we have received from God in Christ, we always face the same question: *Will I believe the Bible or not?* God says one thing, but sooner or later Satan comes along and says the opposite,

God raised Him from the dead, you’ll be saved? Will you believe God when He says that if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins? Will you believe God when He says that although your heart may condemn you, He is greater than your heart and knows all things? Will you believe that God will impute Jesus’ righteousness to you, apart from your failings? Will you believe that God justifies the ungodly by their faith?

God said to Adam, *In the day that you eat of that fruit, you will surely die* (author’s paraphrase of Genesis 2:16-17). Adam told his wife about God’s warning—but Satan soon whispered to her, *No, you won’t die*. Eve was now faced with a choice: Would she believe God’s Word or Satan’s word? You know the answer—and you also know the catastrophic consequences that resulted.

Satan always contradicts what God has said. So when God promises something, the Devil comes right back with, “Oh, you can’t believe that. Be serious. Be practical.” So it becomes a matter of choice: Will we listen to Satan and doubt the promises of God—and so remain in condemnation, feeling worthless and under an unbearable sense of guilt? Or will we believe what God has said? 