

## “I Believe God”

According to the thinking of many today, the apostle Paul was a real “trouble maker.” He refused to let those in sin “rest in peace.” In Jerusalem certain ones went “*about to kill him,*” the city itself being placed “*in an uproar,*” Acts 21:31. He was apprehended, beaten, “*bound with two chains,*” and then, by request, given opportunity “*to speak unto the people*” in his own behalf. Later, he addressed the Jewish Sanhedrin, caused a “*dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadduces*” (he just wouldn’t leave people alone!), and became the planned victim of over 40 Jews who “*bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul,*” Acts 23:12. Protected and escorted by 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen, Paul was then carried to Caesarea, the Roman capital of Judea. Here he made his defense before and preached to Felix, causing him to tremble in awareness of his condition and the “*judgment to come,*” Acts 24:25. Later, he addressed Festus, and asserted his rights as a Roman citizen by appealing to Caesar, Acts 25:11. Festus, unable to determine what to write with reference to the charges to be named against Paul, enlisted the aid of King Agrippa, before whom Paul was then arraigned, and to whom Paul preached, causing Agrippa to be “*almost...persuaded...to be a Christian,*” Acts 26:28. It was evident that Paul had committed “*nothing worthy of death or bonds,*” Acts 26:11, but with his having “*appealed unto Caesar,*” Agrippa, therefore, sent him unto Italy.

Acts, chapter 27, describes the very eventful voyage to Italy, which enabled Paul to fulfill his long cherished desire to journey to Rome. In many respects his voyage to Italy typified the journey of life itself. Encountering “*contrary*” winds, they were sidetracked from following the planned sea route, the sailing was “*dangerous,*” as they were driven by a “*tempestuous wind,*” and for a while it looked as if all were doomed to drowning at sea. At this point, Paul, having been visited by an “*angel of God,*” addressed the people on board, saying there will “*be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship,*” Acts 27:22. After making known to them what God had revealed to him, Paul said: “*Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me,*” Acts 27:25.

“***I believe God!***” What a testimony of faith; not only in the existence of God, but more specifically, in the **revelation** of God. Paul’s motive and efforts were to save souls, but he, in the process, had aroused the prejudices and animosity of multitudes. He, therefore, was apprehended, bound, imprisoned, falsely accused, and now his life is in peril as he addresses his shipmates, declaring to them what God had revealed to him. With this background, and in these perilous surroundings, he said, “***I believe God!***”

How many people today (even religious people) would react as did Paul? Not many, I fear. Perhaps most in his condition would have said “If I ever get out this mess alive, I’ll tone down my speech and not be so vocal in my opposition to sin and error.” Some would even blame God for having let them down. But not Paul! He insistently and persistently laid the ax to the root of the tree, letting the chips fall where they may.

Thank God for Paul’s adversity! His faith in the midst of danger and difficulty influenced others for good. True, he was imprisoned twice at Rome, and eventually was “*offered*” (2 Tim. 4:6) as a martyr to the cause he loved, but souls were saved, churches were established, and while in a state of confinement his “*prison epistles*” (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) were penned, epistles to which we have access today, and which have blessed the lives of millions of people for nearly 2,000 years! Like Abraham, Paul could endure his earthly afflictions, because “*he looked for a city*

*which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” Heb. 11:10.*

But how many today can truly say, with Paul, “***I believe God?***” Across the land there are many brethren in the Lord who can’t really say “*I believe God,*” for they don’t believe what He said in the Bible regarding the all-sufficiency of the local church to do its work without the aid of human institutions. Many religionists don’t believe what God has said about the all-sufficiency of the Bible, nor His inspired warnings against adding to, taking from, or perverting the Scriptures (Rev. 22:18-19; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11). Witness, for example, the many human creeds, all of which reflect man’s attempt to circumvent the teachings of God for the doctrines and commandments of men. Sadly, many of our own brethren in the Lord can’t, in all instances, honestly say “*I believe God,*” for they don’t believe what He said about straight forward preaching, the kind which includes reproving, rebuking, and exhorting, 2 Tim. 4:1-2.

Oh how the preceding paragraph could be extended! Yes, Paul could truthfully and honestly say “*I believe God!*” But isn’t it sad that so many today, who extol the faith and virtues of this peerless “apostle to the Gentiles,” turn away from and even oppose the virtues, the conduct, and the plain preaching that made him so hated then, but so loved now? Paul’s faith fortified him before God, endeared him to his friends, and accompanied him through trials and tribulations that would make our “afflictions” pale into insignificance. Yes, He “*believed God!*”

Dear reader, I am not attempting to insult you by asking, “do you believe **in** God.” Rather, I am asking, do you “***believe God!***” Think about this question the next time you forsake the assemblies of the church, hold your peace in the presence of sin, worry about starving when urged to give as you are prospered, or complain about all you have had to “give up” for Christ and Christianity. Let us all soberly and seriously ponder these matters. You see, to truthfully say “*I believe God*” involves more than merely possessing vocal cords, sufficient breath, a tongue, and a mouth to utter the words. It really goes to the very heart of the matter and determines how we will react to, and bear up under the heartaches, the difficulties, and the disappointments that accompany life on earth. Let each of us grow in the faith to such an extent that — regardless of the this world circumstances in which we may find ourselves — we can truthfully say “***I believe God!***”

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