

Faith in Christians, or Faith in Christ?

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Have you ever been disappointed by someone you admired? Have you ever had high expectations of someone, only to discover they had done something you would not have expected them to do? When a Christian is the source of this disappointment, some would go so far as to turn their backs on God, which would be an extremely foolish choice to make. When disappointed by a brother or sister, it can be discouraging, but remember that even good-hearted people with the best intentions are fallible. Christians must be careful not to put all hope, faith, and trust into people instead of Christ. Paul said that Timothy had *“salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 3:15). If the foundation of one’s faith is not built on the Rock, Jesus Christ, then it is built on sand (Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 3:11).

Please consider this: What if Peter and the rest of Jesus' disciples had decided to stop following the Lord because of the actions of Judas? (Mark 14:44-46). Would that have made any sense? What if the early Christians decided to turn their backs on God because of what Ananias and Sapphira did? (Acts 5:1-10). What if Paul decided to “quit the church” because Peter *“walked not uprightly”*? (Galatians 2:11-14). What sense would any of that make? If one is thinking rationally, how can he justify the rejection of God (who is eternally perfect) because of something done by a man (who is fallible)? Unfortunately, this is something that takes place far too often. Those who are *“forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”* because of “hypocrites in the church” will find themselves stuck with those same hypocrites in torment, if they do not change (Hebrews 10:23-31).

The Bible instructs us to put our trust in the Lord instead of men: *“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord”* (Jeremiah 17:5); *“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man”* (Psalm 118:8). If we expect people to be absolutely perfect their entire lives, then we are bound for disappointment! All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23; 5:12), and even those who become Christians will not live an absolutely perfect life totally devoid of sin. In regards to Christians, John wrote, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:8-9). No Christian is beyond the possibility of sinning, but what separates the faithful from the unfaithful is the repentance of the faithful and his desire to keep marching toward Heaven in faithful obedience: *“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief”* (Proverbs 24:16). *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13).

It may be easier for us to remember occasions when others have let us down than it is

to remember the fact that we have probably let other people down as well. Let us remember that we all have needed forgiveness at some point, and we should be willing to forgive others when they repent (Luke 17:3-4). Christ said, *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matthew 6:14, 15). Paul wrote, *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Ephesians 4:31-32).

It should also be stated that there should be a certain amount of trust between brothers and sisters in Christ. Love *"thinketh no evil"* (1 Corinthians 13:5), and *"evil suspicions"* are spoken against in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 6:4). We should have a certain amount of trust and confidence in preachers, elders, or other exemplary members of the body of Christ who have shown their faithful devotion to God, but at the same time we realize they are not the Lord, and they are not infallible. So while some amount of trust is needed between brethren, it should not be to the point that we allow ourselves to be led astray from the path to Heaven, or that we allow sin to be ignored. The Holy Spirit called the Bereans *"noble"* for double-checking the apostle Paul, and it is still noble today to *"search the Scriptures"* to make sure we are all on the narrow way (Acts 17:11; Matthew 7:13-14, 21).

Let us be thankful that we can always trust in someone eternally dependable – GOD! God does not make mistakes! God does not sin! He will NEVER disappoint us! He is always true to His Word and His holy nature (Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 10:23, etc.). We should rejoice that we have a perfect Savior who, even though He was tempted in all points like we are, committed no sin (Hebrews 4:15; cf. 13:8). Because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can now obey the Gospel, which is the power of God unto our salvation (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 1:8). Once we are in Christ, we can confidently approach the throne of God *"that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16; cf. 1 Peter 5:7; Matthew 11:28-30). God is ever holy and faithful – therefore, may our ultimate confidence be in Him rather than ourselves or other people!

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