

Does faith REALLY MATTER?

By Clive Barber, Queensland, Australia

The answer to that question depends entirely in what or who your faith is in! Let me tell you my story of how Faith really does matter.

I was born in 1976 in Southeast London. I had a normal upbringing with my parents caring kindly for me. I have many happy family memories – treats, bike rides with my dad, hot meals, clean clothes, and a good education. One vital aspect of my upbringing was my association with a religious group called the Exclusive Brethren (now the PBCC). Born into this sphere, baptized as a baby and given the bread and wine (Lord's Supper/communion) each Sunday from as young as I can remember, I was taught that I was in a highly privileged position in the 'Holy Fellowship of God's Son'. I was also taught that the leader of the group was a man who



"I had until the weekend to move out of the house!"



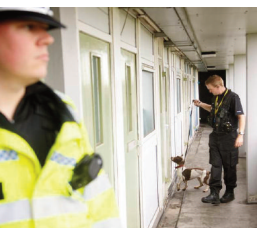
had been specially chosen by God, having the same authority as the Apostle Paul of the Bible. I was told that this leader was infallible and that he spoke words from God himself!

Nothing could have been further from the truth! This organization was regulated by hundreds of rules and directives. So it was not surprising that, as I grew up, I found it increasingly difficult to adhere to so many of these regulations. One rule I struggled with was the total prohibition of any pre-recorded music, even hymns. Being a natural lover of music, as a young teenager, I bought a Walkman and a few tapes, which I listened to intently in my bedroom at night. By the age of 17, I was deemed too rebellious and was excommunicated from the group. This meant no interaction whatsoever with any of the group, including any family members. I was isolated in my own family home and silence was the method of punishment.

One Wednesday evening two 'priests' came to the house to inform me that I had until the weekend to move out of the house! With no offer of financial help, no provision of a place to live, I packed up a few belongings and on the Friday afternoon left home. I didn't know God, I had no family and I was homeless in every sense of the word. To say that these circumstances were distressing would be



an understatement. I didn't know how to cook, use a washing machine, iron clothes, or look after myself in a world I really knew nothing about. Lodging on floors of various folks, living in tiny flats, I soon became ill and disillusioned with life. I made an attempt to go back home but was told I wasn't repentant enough. So I decided to cast every restriction to the wind and live life just how I wanted to, with no accountability to anyone.



Soon I was living a life of open sin.

I soon became engaged in petty crime, which led to greater criminal activities.

Eventually I was caught and given a 12-month conditional discharge. I determined in my heart to change my behaviour and be different. In 1999, my girlfriend and I decided to visit Australia and New Zealand. After returning to London, our relationship broke down and I felt I was back to square one again. The year was 2001 and I didn't care if I lived or died. I indulged in drug and alcohol use and almost lost my life on two different occasions. At the time I didn't realize

where I would have ended up if I had died without my sins forgiven, i.e. in Hell. Eventually I decided that year to relocate to Australia! I managed to obtain a visa to live in Australia. I put it down to good luck, still refusing to give God any acknowledgement for His continued goodness in my life. On arriving in Melbourne, I obtained a job in a furniture removals business. No sooner had I started, when I realized my employer was a Christian. My worst nightmare I thought! Little did I know the gracious hand of God's providence was upon my life!

One day my boss made the comment that, speaking about someone else, that person was living in sin. 'Living in Sin'... God used that phrase to awaken me as to my need of salvation. I could see clearly that I was living in sin and had been my entire life. No earthly birthright, baptism, religious rule – keeping could change the solemn fact that I had been born in sin and needed to be 'born again'.

Under great conviction of sin, I prayed sincerely to God to show me if He was speaking to me. That day I was packing the house of a lady we would move the following day. At 10 a.m. she made me a coffee and we began to talk. In the course of the conversation

she suddenly asked me if I believed in Jesus Christ. 'Yes' I told her, as I never doubted that Jesus existed. She went on to tell me how she became a Christian! She had been raised in a strict religious home in France and decided to leave when she was 21. As a result she had been ostracized by her family and had moved to Australia to escape it all. She had lived a sinful life before giving birth to a premature baby. In the hospital she cried out to God (prayed) in her time of need. A Christian lady in that hospital spoke to her and told her that she could trust in Jesus Christ for salvation – She did!

At that moment, I knew there was a God and that in His kindness He was speaking to me! About 3 weeks later, my boss invited me to a gospel meeting where an Englishman was preaching. I went and that night it was as though he and I were the only two people in that packed hall. He read about a man in the Bible called Cornelius who, although he believed in God, feared God, worshipped and prayed to God, still needed to be saved! The preacher said that night, "Isn't it time you came to Christ?" I knew it was time! I knew I had lived a life of self-will and sin. I left the hall, got into my van and drove away. It was about 8:15 p.m. on the 7th July 2002 on a cold winter's night when I pulled my van to the side of the road. I was a broken 25-year-old man. My hands clasped the steering wheel and tears poured down my cheeks.

My prayer that night was a cry of faith that would change the rest of my life and decide the destination of my eternity – I prayed,

'LORD SAVE ME!'

I placed my faith in the living Lord Jesus Christ! I trusted the one who, on the cross, had borne the punishment I deserved as a sinner. The only individual to have overcome death, hell, Satan and the grave! The Bible states that: 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen', 1 Corinthians 15. 3-5. Finally, I had peace with God. Not only did I feel it within, but the Bible gave me the assurance I needed.

'For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'

Romans 10:13

Dear reader, as a fellow human being I implore you to analyse what/who your faith is in! Is it in a theory? Is it in a person who leaves you at the grave? Or is it in Jesus Christ who has the power to forgive you of every sin and grant you the gift of God, which is eternal life!

'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'

Romans 5. 1



the
ultimate

Selfie

in
pursuit
of our
identity

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Mk. 8. 36

Anna was only 18 years old the day she died. She was planning to take the ultimate selfie. The young Romanian teenager had climbed up on top of a train to snap a daring self-portrait to post on social media. Tragically, she touched a live wire that sent 27,000 volts of electricity through her body. In her hunt for the ultimate self-image, she lost everything. Anna's story is tragic, but she's not alone.

The number of selfies on social media continues to grow. Some are willing to risk so much in their hunt for a 'self-image' that will go viral. In 2012, Time Magazine named the term 'selfie' as one of the top 10 buzzwords of the year. Why are we willing to risk everything for a picture? Selfies are about presenting ourselves the way we want people to see us. We want to be loved, desired, and significant. We are struggling to be accepted for who we are, and yet we are not fulfilled by the number of 'friends' that 'like' us as a result of seeing the latest version of us.

by Andrew
Robertson,
Canada

The Bible tells us that we have come from one Creator – God. He made us a ‘living soul’ – a living ‘self’ with infinite value. Our ‘self’ will exist forever. We are made ‘in His own image’ with desires that can only be satisfied in Him. We are more than flesh and bones. Our ‘self-awareness’ sets us apart from the animals.

But tragedy struck and we lost our identity. The serpent promised Eve, as recorded in Genesis chapter 3 in the Bible, that she would ‘become like God knowing good and evil’. That was if she would turn away from her Creator and make a name for herself. Taking the forbidden fruit was an attempt to make her own identity apart from God. And as a result, we have all come from a long line of sinful rebellion against the One who created us.

We are marked by disobedience. This is the true picture of the human heart. We’re fooling ourselves if we think we can live without God. We can try to ignore Him, but He is not going away. He is our ultimate Judge and we must face Him on Judgement Day.

We will be held accountable for our personal rebellion against Him. A guilty verdict in that courtroom is what the Bible calls ‘losing your soul’. To be separated from God forever in final judgement is to suffer a total loss of identity. You may search for acceptance all your life, but if you lose your own soul, you have lost everything. It is only in the cross of Jesus Christ that we face who we really are. We are exposed in our sin, and at the same time, we are loved deeply by God. You cannot strike a pose that will please Him. He tells you to come as you really are. He knows every thought, word and dark secret you have tried to hide. And Jesus Christ, God’s Son, took all that darkness on Himself and suffered the judgement for it.

Here is the ultimate selfie. Turn from your sin. Forsake your attempts to ‘dress up’ with your good works or religion. Come to Jesus Christ as you really are. Guilty as charged. Trust Him alone as your personal Saviour and Lord. He will receive you and wash you clean of the sin you’ve been desperately trying to hide.

100% sure



I'll take my chance



by Stephen Harper, Northern Ireland

If you've seen the movie, *The Deer Hunter*, you will remember the harrowing scene in which Mike and his two POW comrades gamble with their lives in a high-stakes game of Russian Roulette with three live bullets, spectacularly outwitting and overpowering their Vietcong captors to free themselves. Such are the extremes to which otherwise cautious, sensible people are sometimes pressed to survive. You probably cannot imagine yourself taking such staggering risks, but in similar circumstances and against such odds, any of us might be driven to say, 'I'll take my chance'.

It is really alarming that millions of people gamble, not with their lives, but with their eternal souls – with absolutely nothing to gain, but everything to lose! Recently, when asked about being ready to meet God, one man replied, 'I'll take my chance', as if the consequences were no more important than a football result,

or that the 'odds' are somehow favourable, or that we simply can't know. None of which is true.

We can know because the Bible plainly tells us – and the consequences of not being ready could not be more serious, nor the odds of a favourable chance outcome more slim! Though many have discarded the Bible as an irrelevant, discredited book, that simply doesn't match the facts – people who actually read it with an honest heart and mind find that it consistently proves itself to be both authentic and reliable – the Word of God.

Think about this:

1. The 'chance' of you falling short of God's standard is – 100%

If you are honest, you'll admit that you don't reach your own standards, nor those of others. We continually disappoint one another with our selfish attitudes and actions – which God calls sin. Though standards vary from

person to person, and change over time, God's standard is perfection, and never changes. We become angry when people we think are guilty go free, but don't like to be accountable for our own failures. That is not justice. By contrast, God is absolutely just – all are judged impartially and have already been found wanting –

'For there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God', Rom. 3. 22-23.

2. The 'chance' of you meeting God is – 100%

Benjamin Franklin said the only certainties in life are 'death and taxes'. You may manage to avoid some taxes, but not death! Sooner or later we will all die – some while still young, others when older – but all 'will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again,' 2. Sam. 14. 14. Whether you want to think about it or not, death isn't going to go away – some day, sooner than you wish, friends and family will gather for your final farewell. They may laugh and drink in your honour, but the Bible says death is a serious thing: 'it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment', Heb. 9. 27. Revelation chapter 20 verse 12 says that 'all the dead will stand before God.

3. The 'chance' of you evading God's justice is – 0%

Perhaps you think that you can dodge God's judgement, or that He will bend the rules for you. The Bible says that the appointed Judge – the Lord Jesus Christ – is righteous, Acts 17. 31, and that we can be sure no one will escape because of His great power which even raised Him from the dead.

4. You can be 100% sure of being forgiven if you trust Christ

The Gospel is Good News because you don't need to leave your future to chance. The One who in future will be the righteous Judge presently has power to save: 'through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things', Acts 13. 38-39. In love to us the Lord Jesus Christ died to take the punishment our sins deserve, so that God may freely and completely forgive us without compromising His own standard. His free gift of salvation – eternal life – is received by trusting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Don't gamble with your soul's eternal destiny.

Trust Jesus Christ and be 100% sure.

THE ACCOUNTANT OF AUSCHWITZ



Paul McCauley, Belfast

I was interested to read about the conviction of the former SS sergeant, Oskar Groening, known as the accountant of Auschwitz. He was convicted on 300,000 counts of accessory to murder and sentenced to four years in prison. As I thought about him, his trial and his sentence, there were a few things I thought we could learn:

1. This man was accessory to 300,000 murders, yet he got four years in prison, does that seem righteous to you? Me neither! But then what sentence

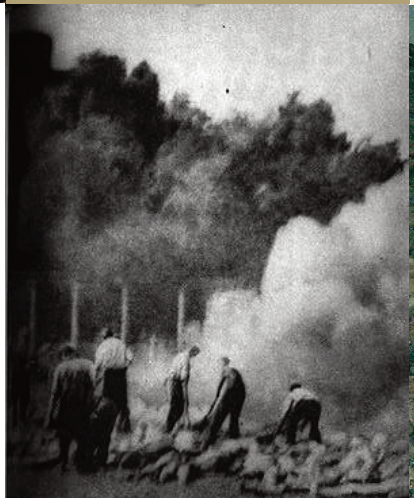
could be given that would be appropriate? The man is 94 and has pretty much escaped justice in this life. What this shows us is that justice is not and cannot be





God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, Acts 17:31

accomplished on earth. What a comfort it is then to remember that justice will be done. God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, Acts 17:31. The impossibility of real justice in this world points to a world to come. We can be glad that there is justice coming for the murderers and dictators of this world, but before we get too comfortable let's remember that justice is coming for all of us. God won't draw the line where we want Him to draw it. He will judge in absolute righteousness, which means we all are condemned.



2. Just because a crime was committed a long time ago doesn't mean the criminal should get off the hook. Groening's offences were carried out over 70 years ago, but we recognize that it is still appropriate that he face prosecution. The reason I mention this is because when I speak to people about the need of salvation

it is necessary to show them that they are guilty before God. So I tell them about God's law and ask them have they ever broken it, say for instance by telling a lie? Quite often the person will say something like, Well, yes, I suppose I did tell a few lies when I was younger, but I don't do it anymore. But of course, even if it's true that you haven't told a lie in a

long time, it doesn't mean you should get off the hook for the lies you have told. Groening could have said, I haven't committed a crime in 70 years. But I don't think any of us would accept that as a legitimate defence against the demands of justice. We are responsible to God for our sins



from the moment we became responsible for our actions. Time is no defence.

3. Groening could have rightly said that there were plenty of people worse than him. He could have pointed to the people who actually planned and carried out the gruesome murders, surely he wasn't as bad as them! That is true, but absolutely irrelevant.

A Judge's job is not to see how the defendant measures up against other criminals; it is to see how the defendant measures up against the law. If the law has been violated then the person is guilty. This is obvious, and yet often forgotten when it comes to our accountability to God. So many think that the fact that they aren't as bad as many others means they won't be held accountable for the sins they have committed. Remember, God doesn't measure you by society's standard; He assesses you in light of His law.

So, we have broken God's law, and judgement is coming. What hope is there? Well, the answer is none! Unless...there is someone who is able and willing to step in and pay the penalty for us, and that is why the Gospel is such good news, it tells us there is such a person. That is the reason God's Son went to Calvary's cross.

The Lord Jesus willingly bore the punishment our sin deserves and God's justice demands. He rose from the dead to show the price had been paid. We now have a choice, we can take what we deserve, or we can plead guilty and gratefully accept that the Lord Jesus took what we deserve. What will you do?

QUICK QUOTE

“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”
— William Carey

What think ye of Christ?

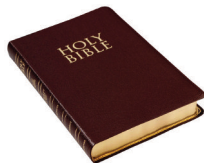
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We hope you have enjoyed reading this pamphlet and that you will decide to read the Bible for yourself. We are not asking that you join a church, or become ‘religious’ or turn over a new leaf, but that you find the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Friend. He can forgive your sins and assure you of peace in your life and a place in heaven.

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