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Faith Alone by Mike C.

Reading: Romans 1:16-32

What is Faith: Faith is defined by google as 'complete trust or confidence in someone or something. It is a strong belief in the doctrines of religion based on spiritual conviction rather than proof.' Based on this world view everyone has faith because they believe in something outside themselves. Many would say they have no faith at all. Those who do not believe in God have faith that there is no God; that is what they are hoping for and trusting in. Atheism is a belief in the same way 'OFF' is a TV channel. 'OFF' is the channel of rejection of the truth. It's the choice of turning things off and choosing to watch a blank screen. You can throw out your TV but that doesn't stop the signal from being broadcast. You may not want to receive the signal but your neighbour does. It is man who switches off not God. Just because a man does not look for or ignores the evidence does not mean it isn't there. '*Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.*' The evidence for our creator God is everywhere as is the evidence of the evil one. Agnosticism is not a safer place either. Saying 'I nearly believed' will not cut it on the day of judgement. The world hates being accountable to someone. We wrestle with accountability and that is sin. "...what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse." (v19) The evidence is all around us. Christian faith is part of the evidence. My spiritual conviction is the proof and it is evident in all our brothers and sisters in Christ today. Faith is not the same as belief. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." (Hebrews 11:1-3) Creation may be the starting point but faith and trust grow when I see God's handiwork in my own life. I see his grace and I experience his gifts. God came and rescued me.

Without Faith in Christ Alone: In spite of the chaos around us, God is in control of all things and he brings clear visible order to this world. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, ...who suppress the truth by their wickedness, For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things" (Rom 1:18&21-25) There is an instinct to live religiously for some thing or some cause. Man has to worship something. As man turns to images of himself made of wood and stone there is a downward spiral to creeping things. We are all supposed to have faith in our sea-dwelling slug-grandfathers (to the power of 10) and the big-bang. So what does anything matter? Have you ever seen an orangutan in court for killing a monkey? As animals we cannot be held accountable. So as society turns away from God society turns towards a sexual revolution and all its dishonourable passions. (v26-27). The wickedness in the world around us is God's wrathful judgement. It is his abandonment of mankind. If you want life without God you can have it but this is what it looks like. Society is very much in a time of sexual slavery that started in the 60's. (v28) We are out of our minds when 4 year olds are going for transition treatment; when a young

man identifies as a wolf and is congratulated for it. If I do not find my identity in God then I am left with bewildering choices. Parents, guardians don't let your children find their own path. Guide them on the narrow path lit by the light of God's word. They will be ruined in the hallways of our schools if we don't give them the armour they need. It is better to be ignored by our kids than to ignore our kids. We must always be prepared to be the father in the parable of the prodigal son. The Lord died for us 'while we were yet sinners'. Piper says, "What we hunger for we worship". We live in a society that hungers for sex and sexual identity. We are drowning in rainbows. (note the irony of that symbol) Faith in oneself does not mean we're worthy of it. The one who is worthy is Jesus Christ. Praise God my identity is now in him through faith.

Faith Alone: "But I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." (v16) We do not apologise for the truth of God's word. We contend for the true faith in the same way our forefathers did 500 years and one week ago. It will cost us the same as it did the reformers. We Christians are not a good fit in this world. It grieves the Spirit in us when Christ is maligned. So we can expect verbal, judicial and physical threats when we challenge the world around us. Christianity comes with persecution. (Mark 10:29) Joy remains. As persecutions increase the best is yet to come. This is not your best life now. You can't 'fake-passport' your way through the pearly gates. Salvation is a joy to hold onto with confidence in the truth of our God today. Our faith is in Christ alone. We cannot be saved by works or payment. "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory..." (Mark 8:3-38) We can pay nothing to redeem our souls. True faith changes a man so that he is willing to die for his faith. (see Tyndale who translated the Bible into English and was martyred Oct 1536) Tyndale died with the hope that 'the eyes of the king would be opened'. His prayer was answered in Henry VIII. We have a hope-filled faith.

Christ died for the faithless that they may have faith in God. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that saves us: faith that Jesus paid it all. Christ rose triumphant over death. At the cross one criminal rebuked the other. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:39-43) This man was saved through faith alone. There was no time for works.

in this world of chaos, take the hand of Christ and walk with confidence and faith in him. We stand confident in him and pray, "Lord open the eyes of the nation."

From the breaking of the dawn/ To the setting of the sun
I will stand on the promise of your word/ Words of power strong to save
That will never pass away/ I will stand on the promise of your word.
Guilt to innocence restored,/ You remember sin no more,
So I'll stand on the promise of your word.