

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

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Scripture: John 3:36

Sermon: *Doesn't Everybody Believe?*

The comedian Roger Dangerfield said he came from a very confused family. He said in the war between the north and the south, his granddaddy fought for the west. He said until he was sixteen years of age he did not know that you could listen to AM radio in the afternoon. He was so confused, he carried around a little sign that said "BAIK." People would ask him what does that mean? He would answer that means "boy am I confused." Someone said confused does not start with a K and he would say that just says how confused I am. Do you know it is nice to make jokes about being confused because all of us are at times, but is absolutely tragic to be confused about how to build a relationship with God. Unfortunately we live in a culture where many people think that how you build a relationship is just kind of left up to everybody to figure out for themselves. You do it your way and I do it mine and there is really not any authoritative way to tell just how we are to do it. I think that is the reason that I have come back to the passage of scripture that I wanted to focus our attention on this morning. It does tell us how to build a relationship with God and what is necessary to be able to do that. It is in the book of John chapter 3:36. "Whoever [anybody] believes in the Son has eternal life, but who ever rejects the Son will not see life but the wrath of God remains on him." When I was a younger minister, I lived for three years in Germany and pastored a English language

church. During that time military personal received a three year assignment and they would bring their families and they would want a church similar to what they had at home. All over Europe where there were military personnel, there were English language churches. One day I met a young, air man and he asked me what I was doing in Germany. I told him and he had this very puzzled look on his face. He said let me understand. You are here preaching to Americans and I said that is true. He said I don't understand. I would understand if you told me you were here preaching to Germans, but certainly not Americans. Then he gave me a phrase I have never forgotten. He said "don't all Americans believe." Well if you were to take the truth of the polls of American culture, most Americans do believe in God. The latest polls claim 95-97% say yes, I believe in God. The other three are just not quite sure. When you look at all our public ceremonies, we build that upon our belief in God. When you go to court, you will stand and say you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, so help you God. When you give a pledge of allegiance to the flag, you will say this is one nation under God. When our national figures take their oath of office, they put their hand on a Bible and they say they will uphold the constitution of the United States, so help me God. On all of our coins, we have the little four letters engraved, "in God we trust." I said, if you said that most Americans believe in God, that is exactly true. There is a strange little passage of scripture in the Bible, it says even the devil believes in God. I said it says he even trembles so I suppose that if we used your logic we would not want to send a mission team to hell because all the devils already believe in God. The reason the young airman was having trouble is because most of us have a confusion about what the word in the Bible "believe" really means. Most of us the word believe simply means to accept that something is intellectually so. If I ask someone in this room, am I the pastor of this congregation, most of the people

in this congregation would say yes. That is a known fact. It can be proved scientifically, I can take you back to the place where we write the checks and every month I receive a check from this church. I can prove it to you legally, I can bring forth five hundred witnesses, all who would say, he is not much of a pastor but he is the pastor we have. Most of you think that believe is something that you believe intellectually. There is a fact and accepted as so. So I could give you a true and false test this morning. Do you believe in God? Yes. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Yes. Do you believe the Bible is the word of God? Yes. You mean the church is the church of God. Yes. Do you believe there is a heaven? Yes. Do you believe there is a hell? Yes. So most people in this room would then say I believe. I have come to the conclusion that one of the great tragedies of American culture is that many individuals think that because they can pass a true and false test, that is the basis upon which to build a relationship to God. There are many individuals who are really away from God but say they believe in God and think that is all that is necessary. It is very important for you to understand that in the Bible, it is of course true, that you have to accept some intellectual facts to come to believe but believe in the Bible, listen carefully. Belief in the Bible is far more than intellectual. Belief in the Bible is also moral. It is coming to the spot that when I say, I believe in God, I am willing then to adopt a life style that would reflect who He is. I am willing to give myself to Him and say I want to live as You want me to live. It is more than cognitive, it is commitment. I give myself to God and I say I want to live like you want me to live. The Bible never spends a lot of its energy saying I want you to intellectually come to believe in God. What is always in the Bible is a challenge to you morally, spiritually to say will you now live as that God would want you to live. The challenge in the Bible is far more than to your mind, it is to your heart, and it is to your will. You can believe in your head

but never believe in your will and never give your life to Him to live as He wants you to and there fore never have a relationship with Him. The word in the Bible "believe" is really in combination of two old English words. It is the word by live. What you really believe is what you live by. You tell me how you live and I will tell you what you believe. In the Bible there is absolutely no difference between believing in your head and not living it with your heart. The Bible is all one commitment. I give my life to God, I surrender myself to Him. That is the reason it is very important that you come to the spot where you understand who God is. You can go around the world today and say do you believe in God and again you are going to find that 97% of the people in the world are going to believe in God, but what kind of God do they believe in? Some people believe in more than one God, so does that make them better than some people who just believe in one? Some people say that God is nothing more than the deep powers that are with in you so they go out to the hill side and they go hmmmmm. They try to get in touch with the power that is in with in them. Is that belief in God enough. Thomas Hardy said "God is the dark, dreamless thing that turns the handles of this idle show." Is it enough to believe in that kind of God? Back where I am from, people will sometimes talk of God as the old monster. Is God this kind of God or that kind of God? If I am going to come to believe, to surrender my life to Him, what kind of God do I need to believe in? That is the reason that always through the Bible, there is God telling us who He is and what kind of God He is. That is the reason that when ever you turn to this passage of scripture if you are going to find a relationship with God you must come to believe in Jesus Christ. You say "who," why is that true. Listen carefully again. The

reason that is true is because if you want to know what God is like, you look at Jesus Christ. When I want a picture that I can see of the God who nobody has ever seen I look at Jesus Christ. The Bible says that when I look at Jesus Christ, God is like Him and Jesus is like God. My wife trusted me with this bill for this illustration. You can not see it but I had a man to check it, it is real. How do you know this is not counterfeit? You can take this bill and go about ninety miles to the Bureau of Engraving and there is the original. I can take this bill and put it there and I can say to you, this is not counterfeit, this is real. Jesus came and He said "God, that you have never seen is like me and the other thing is, I am like Him." When I give my life to Jesus Christ and I believe in Him, what I am saying is I believe in a God who is like Jesus morally and spiritually. If I am ever going to build a relationship with a God who is, then I must come to the point where I give myself to Jesus Christ. I come to believe in Him and as I come to believe in Him, then I come to put my faith in the God who is and I come to give my relationship to Him. Now it is something I must do more than accept from what somebody else says. It is something I must do for myself. It says who so ever believes. It is not enough that your mother and daddy brought you to church and christened you when you were a little baby. As wonderful as that may be in your life, that has to come a time in your life where you come to give your own personal faith in Christ. Maybe you were baptized as a child and you say that is wonderful and fine but I need to come to the point where I give myself to Him. It is not enough to be raised in a Christian home where people talk about God, it is important for you to give your heart and your life to Him for yourself. I was talking one day to a young person and I said have you ever given your life to Christ. My grandfather was a Christian, my

daddy is a Christian and my mother is a Christian. I said wonderful. There is only one thing wrong. You have never come to put your own faith and trust in Him. He said I don't understand that. I saw him walking down the street one day with his girlfriend. I could not resist and I stopped and I said congratulations on your marriage. He just got pale all over. He said I am not married. I said oh yes you are. Your granddaddy was married, your mother is married, your daddy is married. I said you come from a long line of married people. He said but I haven't said anything to her. He said, oh now I understand. You see, it is not enough from which you have come. It is to the point where you come to the point, where you say I want to give my life, my moral decisions to give my life to Jesus Christ who represents the God who is. What difference does it make? Listen to the passage of scripture again. It says who so ever believes in the Son has eternal life. It is as deep as life itself. The only way you will ever experience the true quality of life, is if you come to give your heart and your life to Christ. Sin is more than breaking the law. Sin is missing out on life. What happens is you are going to come to the spot where you recognize that you are existing, but you are not really living. You are going to ask yourself, surely there has to be more to this than all of what I am going through. Because you never experience life. Let me show you how it works. He says if you give yourself to Him, you will receive eternal life. Now I was born in the middle part of Louisiana. I understand that when I was born that I would live a certain length of time. My life will jump death and then I will live throughout eternity. I can put a point right here, point right here, and then it just goes on. In that sense, I possess ever lasting life. I am not going to the grave and cease to be, it started here, it jumps the grave and it is going to go forever. Notice this passage of scripture said. What you are going to receive is eternal life. Eternal life it never started and it never stops. Who has eternal life? Only God. What happens when I morally give

myself into Jesus Christ who is the God that is . The Bible says I receive God kind of life. That God actually reaches in and He says here is my life, I will put it inside of you. Many people say you are living here and thinking about heaven over there. No, in Christ you have already received part of heaven where back here. How do I know that I am going to heaven, because I already have part of heaven in me now. There is a little phrase in the Bible that helps us to understand it and it talks about the spirit of God who is given to us when we become Christians. It is the earnest of our inheritance. If you have ever bought a house, you know that legal term. You sign the contract and you said I put a thousand dollars down, the thousand dollars is my earnest money. What I saying to you is that I will give the rest of it when I sign the final contract. In the Bible it says God puts the spirit of God inside of us, that is the earnest money. It is the promise to us that one day we are going to get the rest of it. The believer can look inside of your life and you can say I have now received a part of heaven, a part of glory already, and one say I know I am going to receive the rest of it. What God offers to you, is that He offers to you eternal God kind of life. People have said through the years that when people first heard about the gospel, what they heard was I need to come to Christ to take care of the guilt in my life. That is important. Later on people said they came to Christ out of fear, they were afraid they might die and go to hell and that is a point. In our culture, what people began to recognize is this. I need to give my heart and life to Christ because only through Him can I really live. If you were to have a heart attack today and die, they would take you to the hospital . Do you know what they are going to put on your certificate? DOA. Dead on arrival. Do you know what I want? I want life before I die. I want to live and live triumphantly and live joyously and live in Christ and that is what Christ comes to offer you. It is true the word evil is the word live spelled backwards. If you want to

miss out on life, then don't give yourself to Him. We have tried through the years to help people understand it. Sometimes the best you can is just impossible. This passage of scripture says if you don't get Him, you won't even see life. You won't even comprehend what we are talking about. If you have never seen it, I might be talking Greek or Hebrew. A little girl was born blind. Her mother was so kind to try to help her to see even though she couldn't see. Finally she learned of a doctor who could help her child and had surgery. The day came when they took all of the bandages off and the little girl's eyes began to open and she recognized she could see. After awhile she went out side and saw the blue sky, white clouds and green trees and beautiful flowers. She turned to her mother and said why didn't you tell me. How beautiful things were. Her mother said, dear I tried. I can only tell you there is more than you ever dreamed before. I know you can sit there and you say, oh yes. I can tell you it is far greater than you have ever imagined. I don't ask you to come and say oh goodness, I am going to loose something. You are going to gain the very essence of life itself. He that believes on the Son has eternal life. Notice the last part, notice the consequences if you do not. Consequences, if you do not is the wrath of God abides on you. Let me tell you what that does not mean. It does not mean that God is a vengeful, angry old God in heaven, that every time you do something wrong He zaps you on the head. I was talking to a group the other day and somebody made the statement that was a gross exaggeration. Somebody stood back and said I better stand over here, I don't want lightening to hit me while I am standing too close to you. Let me tell you. God in heaven is not an angry old man sitting up there with balls of fire, getting ready to throw it down every time you do something

wrong. If that is true, none of us would be here this morning. When it says the wrath of God, it means that God has so built a world, that if you do not take this, you receive this. If you do not accept life, the option is that you experience death. If you do not accept peace, then what you accept is turmoil. If you do accept joy, then you are going to experience sadness. If you do not come to where you give yourself to Him and take what He gives you, then you are going to have to take the opposite of that. That is the kind of world which God has made. In our congregation, we have several judges. If you broke the law and you went in front of one of these judges in our church, the judge is not mad at you. The judge does not stand up and say you dirty rat you. The judge simply looks and says, this is how we have ordered our society. If you don't do it this way, then you have to do it this way. If you don't do it this way, these are the consequences. God has built the world where there are consequences. You can go home and question whether there are consequences or not. You can think you can get around the consequences or not but the Bible says God is not mocked. What ever a person reaps that is what he is going to get. Actions have consequences and if you say no, then the consequences are going to come. The Bible says is what is open to you, you have to take the back side of blessings and that is called God's wrath. There is another way is which it is used in the Bible. The other way it is used in the Bible is, sometimes God just steps back and He says if that is what you want, I will have to let you take it. When my children were at home and I saw them doing some things that I did not think were the best for them, always positively first and then if I had to be negative, I would be. I would say to them this is what I think you ought to do. When my children were older I had to turn especially to my sons and I said you are bigger than me. I can't whip you any more.

I can't take anything away from you anymore. I don't know what else to do to tell you. This is all I can do. I will just step back and you do it. My hope is that out of your own experience, you will learn why I said you ought not to do it. When ever I stood back and let my children do what they wanted to do and learn from experience, that is the best illustration I know to tell you of God's wrath. A moment ago they were singing that in the middle of a ship wreck there was God who was there to put His arm's around them and say I love you and I care for you. Do you understand I can't tell you any worse thing then God would say I stepped back and left you on your own. What is going to happen to you if you don't give your life to Christ is you are going to find yourself going through life guessing, experimenting, and wondering. Then out of your own experience you are going to say O God I don't want you to leave me alone any more. I want to come back to your guidance and to your direction. If I gave you a little sheet of paper this morning and gave you a true and false test, I would imagine 99% of the people in this room could make an A. Do you believe in God? I believe. The question is have you come and given yourself to Him to live like He wants you to live? Now let me hand you a sheet of paper and ask you how many believe now. Don't hide behind the facts in your head and loose your own soul. Come to say I want to give my life to Him. I want to receive your gifts. I don't want to just go out here by myself and try to figure life out. I want to be under your direction and under your help. Lord, I want to give myself to Jesus Christ who represents who God really is. I hope today if you have never truly believed, that you will give your life to Him.