

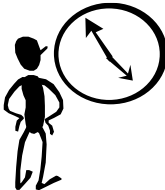
## THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

### Inside this issue:

<i>Genuine Faith</i>	1
<i>Unconditional Love?</i>	3
<i>To the Person Who Says They Want God But They Don't Want the Church</i>	5
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline:</i> <b>Redemption</b>	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



### Time of Assembly



#### **Sunday:**

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m.  
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.

Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

## Genuine Faith

By Jefferson David Tant

The topic of “faith” is often discussed and often misunderstood. Skeptics accuse Christians of having “blind faith,” or taking a “leap of faith,” meaning that there is no basis for what we believe. Thus our faith in God’s existence is no different than what I have encountered in South Africa, i.e. the practice of ancestor worship. It is believed that if one does not properly respect one’s ancestors, that they will inflict harm on you.

Even modern dictionaries lend credence to the matter of blind faith. Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary claims faith “is a firm belief in something for which there is no proof” (1998). The American Heritage Dictionary similarly states, “belief that does not rest on logical or material evidence” (2000, p. 636). Such definitions are totally absurd. I have faith that when I flip the light switch, the bulb will be illuminated. That faith is based on years of evidence than it really does work. Now, some may argue that this is not faith, but knowledge. To a point, that is true. But sometimes the light doesn’t come on. The bulb may have burned out; power lines may be down; the lamp might be unplugged, or the switch itself may have malfunctioned. But I do have faith that is based on solid evidence.

I believe the sun is 93 million miles from earth. I haven’t been there, nor conducted experiments to ascertain this for myself. But I have faith in the evidence science has presented. I have faith that I have a heart. I have never seen it, but the evidence that I have one is quite conclusive. Otherwise, I would not be writing these lines.

Atheists are rather dismissive of Christians, claiming that our faith is based on emotions and some sort of generic warm fuzzy feeling. I am not sure how they establish their non-belief. Do they have knowledge that there is no god?

Knowledge is based on facts, and I have never seen the facts that prove their claim.

The noted atheist, Richard Dawkins states, “Christianity, just as much as Islam, teaches children that unquestioned faith is a virtue. You don’t have to make the case for what you believe” (The God Delusion, p.306). That is so far removed from logic and reason that it is difficult that an intelligent man could state that. One might say he is “delusional.”

The evidence for a creator is beyond logical dispute. Oh, I know many deny God’s existence, but their faith is more like that “warm, fuzzy feeling.” Suppose I was in some African jungle and dropped my watch. Some native might find it and wonder what it was, as he had never seen one before. Would he imagine that this device made itself and just appeared? Who would think that? He might have no idea what its purpose was, but I think all would agree that he would understand that someone made it.

How much more complicated are the workings of our universe, yea, even the human body. And all this just made itself? Who can believe it? Well, there are some who can believe it, and such people have been around for a long time. Nearly 2,000 years ago, a learned scholar wrote these words about unbelievers in his day: “...that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Paul, [Romans 1:19-22](#)).

In ancient Lystra, Paul declared, “*In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness*” ([Acts 14:16-17](#)). Note the statement that God “*did not leave Himself without witness.*”

Yes, God gives us free will. We can deny his existence if we wish, but that’s what we call “wishful thinking.” If I have cancer, I can wish it away all I want. But my “wishful thinking” will not alter reality. That ignores the evidence.

Now, back to the title. Just what is “genuine faith?” Genuine faith is faith that is based on evidence. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” ([Hebrews 11:1, KJV](#)). Consider some of the words. “Substance” is from the Greek hypostasis (“a setting under, support). “Evidence” is from *elegchos* (“proof, conviction:--evidence, reproof”).

Among other things, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is one of the most provable events of history. The evidence is overwhelming. “... *the firm foundation of God stands ...*” ([II Timothy 2:19](#)).

I believe I’ll accept the Bible’s definition of faith rather than Webster’s or Dawkin’s.

## Unconditional Love?

By Terry Benton

That God's love is "unconditional" means one thing to one person and a different thing to someone else. The Bible does not use the expression "unconditional love" but does imply it. God "so loved" the world ([John 3:16](#)). That would mean that love is what moved Him to give His Son for the sinful world. Paul said that he loved us "*while we were yet sinners*" ([Romans 5:8](#)). Thus, it was not a situation where God would love us **if** .... God loved us when we were at our worst. Thus, in that regard, it was unconditional love. But, what does that mean? Some seem to think that because God loves us all unconditionally, that therefore He **accepts** us unconditionally. Is this what the Bible really teaches?

### FALSE CONCEPTS OF GOD'S LOVE

One clearly false concept is that God only loves us **if** we perfectly obey Him. But, that is not the case because the Bible says He loved us at our worst, "*while we were yet sinners*" ([Romans 5:8](#)). The prodigal son's father loved him unconditionally but certainly was not pleased with his son's choices. To love is not to accept any and all behavior. A parent can "so love" a child but not be pleased with the lifestyle of that child. Still, love is what causes the parent to keep hoping for a turnaround and return of the lost child. Love longs for a turning point in the thinking of the child, and love is unconditional. But, love does not accept the child in rebellious behavior. The prodigal son's father never stopped loving his son, but there was broken fellowship and relationship. The father was not glad about the son's choices and behavior and did not pretend that relationship remained the same as ever. Perfect obedience was not the reason he loved his son. He loved his son while he was yet a sinner in hope of his son's coming to himself and returning in humility. Love is that way. God is not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness ([Psalms 5:4-6](#)). A person determined to keep practicing sin is certainly not acceptable to the Lord ([Proverbs 15:8-9](#)). Love means God longs for a sinner who is ruining his life and his potential, longing for the sinner to wake up and turn back to God. God's love causes Him to also hate what the sinner represents and how that sinner influences others to ruin their lives as well ([Romans 1:20ff](#)).

A similar false concept is that "God only loves us **because** we deserve His love." God's love is totally unconditional. The character of God is **love**. Relationship with God is in fact conditional. Love does not equate to relationship and acceptance. As an illustration, we might say that George loves everyone. Does everyone love George? And does George automatically let everyone in his house? Can we not love our enemies without trusting them with our house and our children? Love does not equate with relationship and acceptance.

## THINGS GOD'S LOVE WILL NOT DO

Love will not automatically accept you “as you are” if that means “as you have been.” Love does not mean I accept my child as a murderer or adulterer or thief. Love means I have “good will” for someone and will help them get right with God. If one is “continuing in sin,” love means that I am sad for them and long for their salvation from sin and ruin.

Love does not automatically forgive you. Forgiveness is conditioned on being “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3,7; Galatians 3:26-27). Love longs for our forgiveness and will provide a just way that it can happen if we want it. There are conditions for coming into Christ where forgiveness is enjoyed. God's love longs to forgive, but will not automatically accept you “as you are” if that means you are going to decide to continue as you are.

Love will not force your love and service to Him. It will not force you to act against your will but yearns to get you to change your will in His favor. Therefore, love will not, by itself, prevent you from going to torment or hell. God loved even the rich man, but the rich man still went to torment (Luke 16:19f). It was not that God did not love him. It was that the rich man did not love God and therefore did not love his fellow man.

## THINGS GOD'S LOVE WILL DO

God's love will provide a conditional way for you to be saved. (John 3:16; Mark 16:15-16). These conditions do not merit salvation on your end. They are things that you **must** do (Acts 2:37-41), and yet they are not works of merit whereby God **owes** us anything (Ephesians 2:8-9). Belief and baptism in Jesus' name are not meritorious works, nor are they works of perfect law-keeping. They are both actions of the mind, will, and appeal to God for His mercy. God loves us and will forgive us if we believe, repent, and are baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of sins. God's love provides the remission of sins and the conditions.

These conditions are within your power to do. There is no excuse for not meeting these conditions.

God's love will try to attract your better possibilities and potential and will provide the greatest incentives for you to repent (Rom. 2:4-8). Heaven and Hell are incentives, but God's amazing love and fellowship is primary incentive.

God's love is so great that He will do what is painful to Himself in order to be merciful and just in an effort to win your love and fellowship. God IS Love. (1 John 3).

## HOW DO WE DEFINE HIS LOVE?

We cannot define it as automatic acceptance. It does not mean that none will be lost. What does it mean? It means that there is “good will,” mercy, and compassion already resident within His character. It is there driving Jesus to the cross for your possi-

ble salvation. It is your greatest opportunity in life to have reconciliation with God now so that He can bring you home to glory.

Don't blow your opportunity to experience and enjoy His greatness of Being. There are conditions for being made acceptable (Romans 5:1f). We see how 3,000 Jews came from lost and condemned to being acceptable, having remission of sins (Acts 2:36-41) all because of the love of God. You have the same opportunity because of His love. What will your response be?

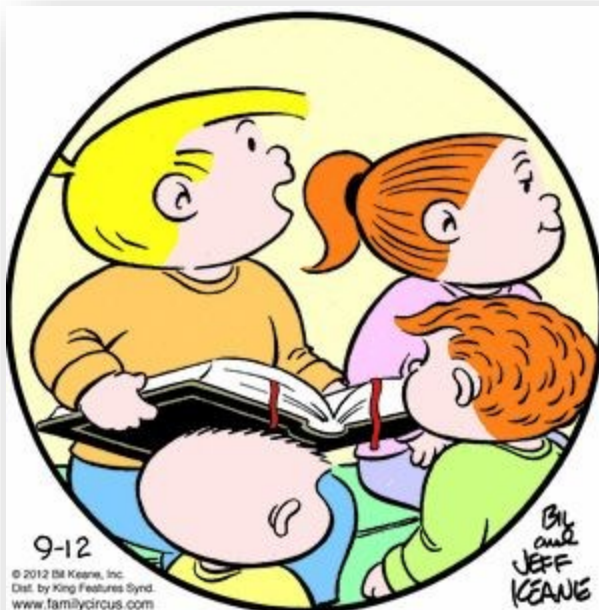
## To the Person Who Says They Want God But They Don't Want the Church

By Brad Harrub

I'm thankful that you want God. As you probably know, there are many people out there who do not want God. However, I'm a little confused by your comment. The same God you say you "want" sent His Son to die for a church you don't want to be a part of? According to the Bible, Jesus is the head of the church (see Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:23). Paul indicated that the church is His bride. So when you say you want God but not the church you are saying you do not want to be a part of His bride--the church that Jesus died for (Ephesians 5:25).

I recognize you think the church is full of hypocrites and has all kinds of problems. Please realize that the church is made up of sinners (like you), who all need the blood of Jesus. Imperfect? Yes. Hypocrites? Yes, there may be some of those present as well. But don't allow imperfect people who desperately need Jesus to keep you out of His body! For you see, you are a special part of His body (i.e., like the thumb or an ear). You are needed to make the body whole.

You have talents and gifts that His body needs. So let me encourage you...if you really love God, then be a part of His bride! Join us! We would love to introduce you to our church family and help you put your talents to work--for Him!



9-12

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**"Mommy, did you and Daddy get  
this Bible before or after we  
were begat?"**