

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Faith Equals Salvation

John Morris

Four times, the Bible declares, *“The just shall live by faith.”* Paul famously wrote to the Ephesians, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith”* (**Ephesians 2:8**). To the Romans, he stated, *“we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand”* (**Romans 5:2**). Faith, then, is the door into the halls of redemption. Where there is faith, there is salvation.

Right?

Right. Provided it is the right kind of faith. According to the Bible, not all faith is saving faith.

Not All Faith is Saving Faith?

Not according to Jesus. Jesus said to Jews who had faith (“believed”) in Him, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples”* (**John 8:31**). To be a true disciple is, of course, to be saved (**John 15:2, 8**). But faith, by itself, was not sufficient to make these individuals true disciples. Jesus said they would have to add to their faith obedience.

The apostle whom Jesus loved would later echo this same sentiment: *“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments”* (**1 John 2:3**). And again: *“But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him. By this we know that we are in Him”* (**1 John 2:5**). *“By this,”* says John. Both times. By what? Obedience. We know that we *“know Him”* and are *“in Him”* if we obey Him.

In John’s account of the gospel, he tells us that many among the Jewish leaders *“believed in”* Jesus (**John 12:42**). However, *“they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”* (**John 12:43**), and because of this, did not confess their faith in Jesus. What did this mean for them? Jesus answers: *“Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven”* (**Matthew 10:32**). These men refused to make a *“confession unto salvation”* (**Romans 10:10**); consequently, they stood outside the saving grace of Jesus—even though they *“believed in Him.”*

Finally, Jesus’ brother James provides still more evidence of this truth. He asks: *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims*

to have faith but has no deeds? Can faith save him?” (**James 2:14**). He answers: *“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead... You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone”* (**James 2:17, 24**).

It is possible to have faith—to believe—but for that faith not to save. Not all faith is saving faith.

Saving Faith Includes Obedience

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (**John 3:36**, NASB; see also ESV). Notice how Jesus does not contrast belief with unbelief but contrasts belief with disobedience. Why would He do that? Because where there is

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disobedience, there is unbelief (see also **Hebrews 3:18-19**). The two go hand in hand. You don’t have one without the other. And that being true, the converse must also be true: Where there is faith (i.e., saving faith), there is obedience.

Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (**James 2:21-23**, NIV).

James says Abraham’s belief was completed by his obedience.

Necessarily, then, faith is incomplete until there is obedience. Is incomplete faith sufficient to save? James says no (**James 2:14, 17, 20, 26**).

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So, faith is God's prerequisite for salvation, yes. But the faith that brings about salvation is a completed faith—a faith which has been fulfilled/perfected by obedience. Faith that is not accompanied by obedience still gets to wear the name "faith" or "belief" (**John 12:42**), but it is dead ("inoperative and ineffective") and will not save.

Faith, Salvation, & Baptism

This reality helps bring together statements about salvation in Scripture—particularly those about belief and baptism—which appear, at first, to be at odds with each other:

- Belief saves (**Acts 16:31**), and yet baptism does, too (**1 Peter 3:21**).
- Belief brings about remission of sins (**Acts 10:43**), and yet baptism does, too (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**).
- Belief is the precursor to receiving the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 1:13**), and yet baptism is, too (**Acts 2:38**; cf. **Matthew 3:16**).

Are the scriptures at odds with themselves? Certainly not! The answer is simply this: In **Acts 16:31**, **Acts 10:43**, and **Ephesians 1:13**, the references to belief/faith include baptism. Baptism is part of the initial process of believing (putting one's trust) in Jesus. By obeying the command to be baptized, one's initial faith is completed, thus making it saving faith. This is why Paul said, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of as you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (**Galatians 3:26-27**).¹

¹ The "For" at the beginning of **Galatians 3:27** is a translation of the Greek word "gar." According to The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (BDAG), "gar" can serve as:

- (1) a "marker of cause or reason (for)"
- (2) a "marker of clarification (for, you see)"

Applying either definition to **Galatians 3:27** reveals that Paul is, in fact, saying that baptism played a role in the Galatians becoming sons of God through faith—that baptism did not follow their birth through faith into God's family but was actually part of it. And this agrees with what Jesus said: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit (comp. **Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5**), he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

On the First Day of the Week

Richard Garbi

I have often heard a brother introducing the Lord's Supper say something like "and now we come to the portion of our service that is the reason we gather here every Sunday." I also have spoken to neighbors who attend at places that do not partake of the Lord's Supper every week. Are they both correct? Does it even matter?

In John the fourth chapter, Jesus is conversing with a woman of Samaria, and in verse 20 of that chapter, she makes a statement. "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say

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that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship" (**John 4:20**, ESV). This statement has a very similar sentiment to our questions. Are both Jews and Samaritans correct? Does it even matter?

Jesus responds in **verses 21-24**, telling her that they are not both correct, saying that the Samaritans "worship what you do not know," but the Jews "worship what we know." He concludes in **John 4:24**, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." God desires that we worship him in Spirit and in Truth. This means both cannot be correct, and it does matter.

So, how do we uncover the truth of this matter? Jesus tells us in **John 17:17** that God's word is truth. So, let us see what God's word has to say on this matter.

Three of the four gospels record Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper (see **Matthew 26:26-29**, **Mark 14:22-25**, **Luke**

22:14-22). In each of these accounts, Jesus gives the disciples instructions on the manner in which they were to partake and the symbolism inherent in both the fruit of the vine and the bread. How do we know that Jesus intended us to partake of this at all, let alone on a periodic basis? From these three passages, I think we can glean evidence that He intended for His disciples throughout the remainder of time to continually partake of the bread and fruit of the vine until He returns in judgment. The fact that Jesus makes it clear that this is not an ordinary meal but symbolizes something greater is evidence of this. The bread and the fruit of the vine are symbols of His life (His body, see **Matthew 26:26**) and death (**Matthew 26:28**). These symbols would not have real meaning until He had died. This indicates He was teaching this to His disciples so that they would continue after He was no longer on this earth. Further evidence is given of this in a statement from Jesus recorded in the book of Luke. Here, Jesus says, “*Do this in remembrance of me*” (**Luke 22:19**). Do we remember things in the present? Jesus is telling His disciples to remember Him, which they can only do when He is gone.

So, Jesus does command that we partake of the Lord’s supper. But how often are we to remember Jesus by partaking of the Lord’s Supper?

To answer this question, let us first examine the practices of the early church found in the book of Acts. In **Acts 20**, Paul is making his way to Jerusalem and is stopping at congregations on the way. In **Acts 20:6**, Paul makes a stop at Troas for seven days. In **Acts 20:7**, Luke records, “*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.*” (ESV) The language that Luke uses is quite clear. Why did the brethren gather together on the first day of the week? To break bread. This usage of the phrase “break bread” in the way that it is used and the context in which it is used undoubtedly means partaking of the Lord’s Supper.

This is further supported by the language Paul uses in **1 Corinthians 10:16-17**,

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Further, in **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**, Paul is both instructing and correcting the brethren at Corinth for their practices concerning the Lord’s Supper. In verse twenty, Paul makes a statement, “*When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that*

you eat” (**1 Corinthians 11:20**). This phrase “*when you come together*” appears a total of five times in **1 Corinthians 11** (twice in **verse 17**, **verses 20, 33, 34**). When the Corinthian brethren assembled, they partook of the Lord’s Supper. In conjunction with **Acts 20:7**, it is clear that the early church met on the first day of the week to eat the Lord’s Supper. Where did they receive this instruction? The apostles (**1 Corinthians 11:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:15**).

We know that Jesus intends us to remember his life and death through the Lord’s Supper, and we have evidence that the early Church partook of the Lord’s Supper when they assembled on the first day of the week. If we are seeking to worship God in Spirit and truth, would any other interval for partaking of the Lord’s Supper be scripturally defensible?

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Glory to God!

The **Vandalia Church of Christ, Vandalia, IA**, gave glory to God when **Erica Fiorentin** and **Haylee LaCoursiere** were clothed with Christ in baptism on January 16.

The church on **Smart Road, Greenwood, MO**, rejoiced when **Allie Mae Stephens** was baptized for the remission of her sins on January 24.

The **Pleasant Hill Church of Christ, Pleasant Hill, IA**, praised God when **Alivia Pritchard** was buried with Christ on January 26.

Blessed Are the Dead

Bob Marlin Pollom, 96, of Tecumseh, KS, passed away on Saturday, December 23, 2023. Bob was born on October 20, 1927, in Topeka, the son of Edgar T. & Mildred E. (Stansbury) Pollom. Bob attended Topeka schools and graduated from Topeka High School in 1945. He then studied engineering at Kansas State University and graduated in 1949. Bob married Virginia L. Worthington on June 4, 1949, enjoying 65 years of marriage before she passed on April 21, 2015. Bob was a member of the **Church of Christ in Stull, KS**. Throughout his life, Bob enjoyed attending his grandkids’ activities, attending/hosting family gatherings, crossword puzzles,



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gardening, golfing, playing cards, studying The Bible, traveling, walking with friends, and so much more.

Betty Lou Roper, 80, of Lordsburg, NM, went to be with the Lord on January 30, 2024. Betty's journey began on December 24, 1943, in Roswell, NM, as the cherished daughter of Raymond and Minnie Turner. On October 26, 1959, she found eternal love and companionship when she married James (Fred) Roper. Together, they embarked on a new chapter in Lordsburg in 1972, where they lovingly raised their four children. Betty dedicated many years of service as a School Bus Driver for the Lordsburg Municipal Schools. Even after retirement, she continued to share her warmth and care as a substitute driver. Betty will be fondly remembered by her family, extended family, including numerous nieces and nephews, and her cherished **church family in Pima, AZ**. Her kindness, compassion, and unwavering faith will forever be in their hearts.

Special Meetings

2024 Meetings

March 2.....Ladies' Day, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO
March 16-17.....Section Church of Christ (Osage City, KS)
April 20-21.....Summersville, MO
June 8-9.....Vandalia, IA
June 17-20.....Shaver Lake, CA
July 1-5.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 20-26.....Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO
August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA
September 29.....Braymer, MO

The church in **Summersville, MO** is excited to announce a weekend meeting for April 20-21. The congregation invited

several young men to deliver lessons over the course of the weekend. To find out more information, including the schedule for the weekend, please use your phone or tablet camera to scan the QR code.



The season for church meetings quickly approaches. You can find a list of upcoming meetings including links to congregation website pages and meeting flyers at The Gospel Message website. The QR code will take you directly to the meeting page. If you want your meeting flyer included on the website, send it to your editor via email at the contact information below.



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If you would like to announce baptisms, new members, deaths, or special meetings in **The Gospel Message**, please contact **your editor:**

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If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this paper, please either contact **the author** of the article or **your editor**.

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