

JESUS SAID I HAD NOT BEEN SAVED

When Jesus said that the good news was to be preached to all creation in all the world, He told me how to respond to be saved by the Gospel: **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."** I had believed but had not been baptized to be saved. Believing the Gospel without obeying the Gospel does not save, and Jesus will punish with **"blazing fire" and "everlasting destruction"** all who do not **"obey the Gospel"** as well as believe it (2 Thessalonians 1:7—9.)

PETER SAID I HAD NOT BEEN SAVED

When Peter preached the good news the first time after Jesus had said to preach the Gospel in all the world, he closed his sermon by saying, **"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins"** (Acts 2:38.) His hearers had already been **"cut to the heart"** because they had accepted Jesus as their **"Lord and Christ"** (verses 36, 37,) but they had not repented and been baptized **"for the forgiveness"** of their sins. Because they had not received the forgiveness of their sins, they were still lost, so Peter urged them and warned them to **"save yourselves"** (verse 40,) and 3,000 accepted his message and **"were baptized" and "added"** that day (verse 41.) According to Peter, accepting Christ as Lord does not save until I am baptized **"for the forgiveness"** of my sins. Without baptism for forgiveness I had no forgiveness.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE!

Peter wrote in I Peter 3:21: **"this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also."** As the final step **"into"** Christ **"for the forgiveness of sins"** Peter said that baptism **"saves"** us. But many preachers preach that baptism saves us "not." What a difference! Saul was commanded in Acts 22:16: **"Get up and be baptized and wash away your sins,"** while many preachers today teach that at baptism sins are "not" washed away. What a difference! Paul taught the Colossians (2:12) that in their burial with Christ in baptism they must be **"raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead."** Without faith in God's power to raise us from a burial in baptism to a new life of forgiveness, God cannot raise us to newness of life (Romans 6:3, 4.) But if I believed that I have already had my new life before baptism, then it is impossible for me to be saved by faith that I will be raised forgiven, because I cannot be raised to forgiveness by faith in God's promise to forgive me if I believe I am already forgiven before being raised! What a difference!

WOULD YOU EXAMINE YOURSELF?

1. Is there any doubt from these Bible verses that you are in the faith? _____
2. Is it possible to feel saved and yet be lost? _____
3. Could you be one that Jesus said would be misled? _____
4. Could you have sincerely believed a changed gospel? _____
5. Were you taught to be saved by believing instead of obeying the Gospel? _____
6. Were you baptized because you thought you were already saved? _____
7. Have you ever been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins? _____
8. Did you feel you had a new life before being raised to a new life? _____
9. Were you taught that baptism saves us "not"? _____
10. Were you baptized to wash away your sins? _____
11. Are you risking your eternal soul on an unsafe conversion? _____
12. Would it be sensible to make your calling and election sure? _____

WOULD YOU TEST YOURSELF?

2 Corinthians 13:5 says **"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?"** (New International Version, also in following references.)

EXAMINING IS COMMANDED

The above words **"examine"** and **"test"** are imperative mood words, which means that they are commands which must be obeyed. I Thessalonians 5:21 also commands, **"Test everything,"** and I Corinthians 11:28 shows that **"a man ought to examine himself before he eats the bread and drinks the cup."** I John 4:1 told early Christians to **"test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world."** Examining ourselves and what we believe is commanded by God.

DON'T ASSUME TOO MUCH

The most important thing on earth is a person's relationship to God. Therefore, one should be more careful about his soul than about any other thing. But somehow religious people can be very careless about what they are taught and very gullible as to what they believe. Acts 17:11 says that when Jews in Berea heard Paul's preaching, they **"examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."** They did not assume that because a preacher preached something that it automatically agreed with the Bible. They checked it to see for sure, and we must check our Bible to be sure.

WHY SO CAREFUL IN OTHER THINGS?

When Jesus visited two sisters, Mary and Martha, He told Martha that she was **"worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed"** (Luke 10:41.) Martha was too concerned about serving food to Jesus, while Mary was totally engrossed in serving Jesus with her life. Why is it that people will be very careful about the tires on their car, about their cholesterol, or about their children's teeth, but have never given a moment's thought to a spiritual check-up? To risk my soul is far worse than to risk these things.

EXAMINE YOURSELF, NOT OTHERS

Paul's command to the Corinthians was to get them to examine themselves instead of him. Somehow we have no trouble criticizing others and seeing where they should be better and do better, when Jesus said, **"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"** (Matthew 7:3.) This is how many people "pay no attention" to examining themselves. 2 Corinthians 10:12 and 18 say that the Corinthians were commending themselves and measuring themselves with themselves, but that not who commends himself is approved, **"but the one whom the Lord commends."** I must examine myself before God for His approval, instead of for self approval or for the approval of others. I must examine myself, not others.

ARE YOU IN THE FAITH?

Paul doubts that many of the Corinthians are **"in the faith."** He fears in verse 8 that they cannot pass the test of **"the truth,"** meaning the truth of God's Word (John 17:17.) This shows that people today can believe and feel that they are **"in the faith,"** when in reality they are not. But they do not know this because they are unwilling to take the truth test of God's Word. They have an assumed relationship with God not based upon the facts of the Bible. They assume that they are in the faith, but a self-test will tell them that they are not. Would you make the test to be sure?

WHAT IS IT TO BE "IN THE FAITH"?

Ephesians 4:5 says that there is "**one faith**," but I Timothy 4:1-5 predicts that men would "**abandon the faith**" and follow different teachings. This shows that "**the faith**" is the faith message or the Gospel message that produces our faith. In Galatians 1:23 "**the faith**" is what Paul preached when he preached the Gospel. In I Timothy 4:6 the "**good teaching**" which Timothy followed is called the "**truths of the faith**." I Timothy 5:8 says one can "**deny the faith**." Therefore, I must be in the teaching of the faith, or I am not in the faith. Being "**in the faith**" is being within the faith's message.

"BUT I FEEL SAVED!"

No one would argue that he has no cancer because he feels free of cancer. It would be foolish to depend upon how we feel as to high cholesterol. But many sincere people believe that they are in the faith because of their feelings. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "**The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?**" Proverbs 14:12 **warns/There is a way (or road) that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**" Everyone has been on a wrong road while sincerely feeling that it was the right road, but sincere feelings did not make it the right road. Feeling right can be wrong.

LOST PEOPLE CAN FEEL SAVED

Chief sinner Saul of Tarsus said that he was fully convinced by his conscience to believe assuredly that he should oppose Christians (Acts 23:1 and 26:9.) While murdering Christians like Stephen in Acts 7, Saul was zealously trusting the traditions of his fathers which made him feel saved (Acts 22:3, Galatians 1:14.) He often later uses his own conversion to beg his fellow Jews to see how they, too, were zealous, convinced, sincere, and yet sincerely lost. Jesus told the Jews that they thought that they had eternal life, but did not (John 5:39.) They conscientiously felt that by killing Christians they were offering a service to God (John 16:2.) These examples are in the Bible to warn us not to trust our eternal soul upon our deceitful feelings. Lost people can feel saved today.

HOW CAN I KNOW?

Only from the Bible's inspired writers can I know "**the certainty**" of my soul's eternal salvation (Luke 1:4.) The words of inspired prophets have been made "**more certain**" by being verified by the eye witness testimony of Jesus' inspired apostles (2 Peter 1:19.) Only by certain Bible proof can I make my "**calling and election sure**" (2 Peter 1:10.) When I hear and do the words of Jesus, I am building on a solid rock foundation, but if not, I am building on sinking sand, and my life will fall "**with a great crash**" (Matthew 7:24—27.) Would you question everything but the Bible so as to be safe and secure that you are in the faith? Only by the Bible's certainty can I know I am saved.

MANY WILL BE MISLED

In Matthew 7:13—14 Jesus warned His religious countrymen that the road to eternal destruction is broad and has a wide gate through which many are lost. "**But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**" The reason is given in Matthew 7:15—23 that false teachers would cause many to say-on the last day, "**'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and perform many miracles?' Then will I tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'**" This is in my Bible so that I can be warned. I may think I am saved by following the ways of men, but yet be lost on the last day. Jesus said that most people would be lost while thinking they are saved.

A CHANGED GOSPEL DAMNS

Paul's shocking warning in Galatians 1:6—8 applies today: The Galatians had been taught "**a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned. As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!**" Only the pure and true original Gospel can save us from our sins. This is why a changed gospel condemns, because it makes one think he is saved, when in reality he will be "**eternally condemned.**" A different gospel damns instead of saves.

ONLY PURE GOSPEL TRUTH SAVES

Jesus prayed for His apostles and for all of us who "**believe on Him through their message**" (John 17:20) that we may be sanctified "**by the truth, your word is truth**" (John 17:17) "**that they may be truly sanctified**" (John 17:19.) Only pure truth makes sinners clean and holy, and an adulterated gospel cannot. I Peter 1:22, 23 shows that Christians had been purified "**by obeying the truth**" by being "**born again**" by the Word of God, but this implies that man's errors cannot purify, since anything different from the truth is not truth and does not purify. Jesus insists that "**no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit**" (John 3:5.) Therefore, I was sanctified by God's word of truth when converted, or I was not. I was purified by obeying the truth and born again of water and the Spirit, or I was not, and did not enter the kingdom of God, the church (Matthew 16:18, 19.) Only God's pure Gospel truth can save.

A SERIOUS GOSPEL CHANGE

I Corinthians 15:1—4 defines the Gospel which saves as the (1) death, (2) burial, and (3) resurrection of Christ "**according to the Scriptures.**" Romans 6:17 calls these three parts of the Gospel "**the form (pattern) of teaching**" which Christians had obeyed to be "**set free from sin**" (verse 18.) Verses 1—7 explain how Christ's Gospel is a pattern or form for us to obey so as to be "**freed from sin**" by being "**united with Him.**" As Christ died for our sins, we (1) "**die to sin and no longer live in it.**" As Jesus was buried, we (2) are "**buried with Him through baptism,**" and as He was raised by God's glory, we (3) also are raised from the grave of baptism to "live a new life." Like a concrete "**form**" is built to cause the sidewalk to be like the pattern, so baptism is the pattern by which we become "**united with Him in the likeness of His death.**" Only in obeying the Gospel pattern am I united with Christ.

OBEYING, NOT JUST BELIEVING, THE GOSPEL

When I joined a popular denomination, I was taught to "**accept Christ as my personal Savior and to receive Jesus into my heart**" so that I would be saved. When I did this, I really felt saved, even though I had only believed the good news and had not obeyed it. By accepting a changed gospel I had not actually obeyed the Gospel, and the following verses will show the difference: Romans 6:17, 18 shows that obeying the Gospel is when one is set free from sin, but I was taught that just believing the Gospel does. I Peter 1:22, 23 shows that obeying the truth purifies the soul, but I believed that just believing the truth does. John 3:5 says that being born of water is necessary to put one in the kingdom, but I had not been baptized. Romans 6:3, 4 says three times that one is baptized "**into**" Christ and "**into**" His death, but I felt I was in Christ without being baptized "**into**" Him. I felt saved by a different gospel but was lost.