

EVANGELISM

Lesson #3

The Relationship Between Saving Faith and Works

Almost everyone outside the church and many within local churches are confused about the relationship between saving faith and works. When preaching the gospel, it is certain you will encounter people who think salvation is by works. They sincerely believe they are Christians because they call themselves Christians, or because their parents were Christians, or because they are good, moral, or have never murdered anyone or robbed a bank, or because their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. As we covered in the previous lesson, there are also many regular church-goers on the broad way to destruction who have fallen prey to human works added to the gospel. They affirm that salvation is by grace, but trust in their works e.g., going forward at an altar call, praying the sinner's prayer, asking Jesus in their heart, or making a decision for Christ.

Still others believe that conversion, regeneration, and being born again by grace through faith in Jesus Christ has no necessary effect on the way they live their lives. They believe salvation is a get out of hell free card, but that it doesn't need to change your life. They believe you can keep living for the world, the flesh, and the devil as long as you mentally assent to the facts of the gospel. Just believe Jesus is the Savior and that is enough, they say, to secure your salvation. They argue that you don't need to love the Lord, His Word, His people, or His church, or even desire to honor Jesus as Lord of your life. They teach that a mere profession of faith in Jesus Christ is enough to ensure someone is on their way to eternal glory.

The Bible teaches that salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. The new birth, regeneration, is an act of God not a work of men. Men, by their own efforts or merits, cannot save themselves from the wrath of God to come. Yet the Scriptures also tell us we must examine ourselves to see if we be in the faith (II Cor. 13:5). How we live is a primary indicator of the true condition of our soul (Jn. 8:34; I Jn. 3:10). True saving faith changes us into new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). The transformation that salvation accomplishes in a person's life is referred to as "regeneration," "conversion," "spiritual rebirth," "being born again," being "transferred from darkness to light," etc.

The Bible teaches that saving repentance and faith in Jesus Christ will "bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance." *Visible evidence of saving grace can be seen in a truly converted person's life.* Yet many professing Christians, though affirming salvation is by grace, are trusting in their good works to save them. They are spiritually dead, deceived into thinking they are saved when they are not, blind to the fact they are on the broad road to destruction (Mt. 7:13-14). Those who profess Christ but do not possess Christ, are some of the most difficult people to evangelize for they are convinced they know the Lord.

To complicate things even more, the Scriptures also teach that at times believers can fall into sustained periods of sin. During their time of rebellion, a believer may seem to have no saving grace in their life, but in fact may know the Lord. Finally, there are those who profess to know Jesus Christ, who do good works in Jesus' name, but who are cast into hell because Jesus didn't know them (Mt. 7:23). *Since heaven, hell, and the eternal destiny of souls are at stake, the relationship between faith and works is a critical doctrine to understand.*

I. DEFINITION OF “SAVING FAITH”

- A. *The New Bible Dictionary* says, “Christ accomplished man’s salvation by dying an atoning death on Calvary’s cross. Faith is the attitude whereby a man abandons all reliance in his own efforts to obtain salvation, be they deeds of piety, of ethical goodness or anything else. It is the attitude of complete trust in Christ, of reliance on Him alone for all that salvation means. When the Philippian jailer asked, ‘Men, what must I do to be saved?’, Paul and Silas answered without hesitation, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved’ (Acts 16:30f.). It is ‘whoever believes in Him’ that does not perish, but has everlasting life (Jn. 3:16). Faith is the one way by which men receive salvation.”¹
- B. John MacArthur has said, “Faith, like grace, is not static. Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender, and a supernatural eagerness to obey. The biblical concept of saving faith includes all those elements. None of them can be classified exclusively as a human work, any more than believing itself is solely a human effort.”²
- C. According to Gerhard Kittel’s, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, faith denotes: “reliance, trust, belief, faithfulness, loyalty, the object of faith being the Scriptures, turning away from sin to God, hoping, and obeying.”³
- D. Louis Berkhof says, “When the Bible speaks of faith, it generally refers to faith as an activity of man, though born of the work of the Holy Spirit. Saving faith may be defined as a certain conviction, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as to the truth of the gospel, and a hearty reliance (trust) on the promises of God in Christ.”⁴
- E. Summary Characteristics of Saving Faith:
1. Doesn’t trust in or rely on any human works or merit of any kind.
 2. Volitionally trusts in, believes, relies upon the person and work of Christ.
 3. Is the means by which the finished work of Christ is received or appropriated by the sinner.
 4. Is a gift of God’s grace to the sinner.
 5. Is not static but actively changes a person’s life.
 6. Includes but is more than just agreeing to the facts of the gospel or saying you believe in Jesus.
 7. Includes repentance, surrender, and a desire to obey.
 8. Includes reliance, trust, belief, faithfulness, loyalty, to the Word of God, the gospel, and Jesus Christ, a turning away from sin, to hope in and obey Jesus Christ.
 9. Is an activity, conviction, reliance, trust in Jesus Christ, produced in the sinner by the Holy Spirit concerning the truth of the gospel and the promises of God.

¹ *The New Bible Dictionary*, Logos Bible software under “faith.”

² John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, pg. 31.

³ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Abridged in One Volume*, Logos Bible Software under “faith.”

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 503.

II. DEFINITION OF “WORKS”

- A. In this lesson the term **works** will be defined as, “Those acceptable acts of obedience to God, which are according to the Scriptures, accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit by grace, and which are produced in the life of every believer as the result of salvation, repentance, regeneration, a God-given desire to glorify God by pursuing holiness.”
- B. The subject of the relationship between faith and works is a huge topic. Trying to find an orderly way to approach it is difficult. In this study we will:
 - **First**, show from the Scriptures that there is a direct relationship between saving faith and works.
 - **Second**, we will then try to answer from God’s Word some of the more common misconceptions and questions people have about faith and works.

III. SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND WORKS:

Salvation by grace through faith alone		Salvation by faith <i>that works</i>	
Rom. 4:3, 9, 22	3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God , and it was credited to him as righteousness.” . . 9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, “ Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness. ” . . 22 Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness.	Rom. 1:5, 16:26	5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake,. . .26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;
Eph. 2:8-9	8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.	Eph. 2:10	10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
Rom. 3:24, 28	24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; . . .28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.	Rom. 6:1-2	1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?
Faith is sometimes used as a synonym for obedience			
Jn. 3:36	36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”		

Salvation by grace through faith alone	Salvation by faith <i>that works</i>
I Thess. 1:2-3	2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

The Scriptures above are a small sampling of texts that affirm salvation is by grace alone apart from works. Once a sinner is saved by grace, it leads to a transformed life, so that the repentant and saved sinner does good works by grace, out of love to God and a desire to give God glory.

IV. ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH AND WORKS

A. Doesn't Paul teach we are justified by faith in Rom. 3:24-4:25 and James teach we are justified by works in James 2:14-26?

Rom. 3:21-26	James 2:14-26
21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.	14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

- In Romans:** Paul is speaking to believers and unbelievers. He is teaching *how to get saved or be born again, which is through faith in the gospel*. Paul is refuting the false notion common among the Jews that salvation is by the works of the Law. Paul emphasizes that faith in Christ alone, apart from works, is the only the way a person receives the righteousness of God. Paul uses Abraham as an example in Rom. 4 because Abraham received the righteousness of God by faith (Gen. 15:4) before being

circumcised and before the Law of Moses was given (Rom. 4:9-15). It was impossible, in other words, for Abraham to be justified by works for the Law of Moses wasn't yet given when he received the righteousness of God by faith (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23). Paul uses the father of the nation of Israel as the premier example of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from circumcision and the works of the law.

2. **In James:** James is writing to believers who have already received "the righteousness of God on the basis of faith" (Rom. 3:21-24; Phil. 3:9), who are justified by grace through faith. James is not explaining *how a person is saved*, like Paul in Rom. 3, but *what saving faith looks like in action*. He wants his readers to know *how saving faith manifests itself in the life of a believer*. Abraham didn't merely give lip service to having faith in God, he left his country, he believed God, he trusted God to provide him an heir, even in his old age, and when he received that son of promise, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son whom he loved, because he had faith that God would raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:19). Thus, Abraham's faith was proved genuine because it produced a life of obedience to God. Rahab also feared and trusted in the God of Israel. Her faith wasn't merely verbal, for she risked her life to hide the Israelite spies in her home. Her faith was acted out in her life, proving it was genuine. Thus, Abraham and Rahab were "justified by works," in that they displayed the fruit of having genuine saving faith, by their willingness to obey the Lord (Rom. 1:5; 6:16; 15:18-19; 16:28; Heb. 5:9; James 2:14-26).
3. *The New Bible Dictionary* discusses the seemingly contradictory teachings about faith between Paul in Romans and James in his epistle saying:

Of the other writers in the NT we must notice James, for he has often been held to be in opposition to Paul in this matter. Where Paul insists that a man is justified by faith and not by works James maintains 'that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone' (Jas. 2:24). There is no more than a verbal contradiction, however. The kind of 'faith' that James is opposing is not that warm personal trust in a living Savior of which Paul speaks. It is a faith which James himself describes: 'You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder' (Jas. 2:19). He has in mind an intellectual assent to certain truths, an assent which is not backed up by a life lived in accordance with those truths (Jas. 2:15f.). So far is James from opposing faith in the full sense that he everywhere presupposes it. Right at the beginning of his Epistle he speaks naturally of 'the testing of your faith' (Jas. 1:3), and he exhorts his readers, 'show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory' (Jas. 2:1). He criticizes a wrong faith but assumes that everyone will recognize the need for a right faith. Moreover, by 'works' James does not mean what Paul means by that term. Paul thinks of obedience to the commands of the law regarded as a system whereby a man may merit salvation. For James the law is 'the law of liberty' (Jas. 2:12). His 'works' look

uncommonly like ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ of which Paul speaks. They are warm deeds of love springing from a right attitude to God. They are the fruits of faith. What James objects to is the claim that faith is there when there is no fruit to attest it.⁵

Summary: In Romans 3, the Apostle Paul addresses *how an unbeliever is saved by grace through faith*. In James 2, James addresses *what true saving faith looks like in the life of a believer*. There is no contradiction.

B. **What about those who fall away from the faith after professing to know Christ?**

There are many who profess to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, who may even get involved in the normal activities of the church, but later *openly reject Christ* and walk away from the faith i.e., “go apostate.” Apostasy carries with it the strictest warnings in Scripture. The apostate is a person who has understood the gospel intellectually, but has never repented, believed, and been born again by grace. They are religious pretenders who hang around the church for a time, but eventually depart, denying the faith, and return to the vomit of their previous sins and godless lifestyle (II Pet. 2:20-22). Because they have sinned against full revelation, experienced fellowship with the saints, enjoyed the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, and departed, they can become irrevocably damned to hell for rejecting the strongest form of gospel witness (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:23-27).

1. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines apostasy as, “A deliberate repudiation and abandonment of the faith that one has professed (Heb. 3:12). Apostasy differs in degree from heresy. The heretic denies some aspect of the Christian faith, but retains the name Christian.”⁶
2. *The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* defines apostasy as, “Defection from the faith, an act of unpardonable rebellion against God and His truth. The sin of apostasy results in the abandonment of Christian doctrine and conduct. . . , apostates place themselves under the curse and wrath of God as a covenant breaker, having entered into a state of final and irrevocable condemnation. Those who apostatize are thus numbered among the reprobate.”⁷
3. Thomas Watson describes apostasy: “The apostate (says Tertullian) seems to put God and Satan in the balance, and having weighed both their services, prefers the devil’s service, and proclaims him to be the best master: and, in this sense may be said to put Christ to open shame” (Heb. 6:6). He will never suffer for the truth, but be as a soldier that leaves his colors, and runs over to the enemy’s side; he will fight on the devil’s side for pay.”⁸

⁵ *The New Bible Dictionary*, Logos Bible Software under “faith.”

⁶ L. G. Whitlock, Jr. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, pg. 70.

⁷ Mark W. Karlberg, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, pg. 32.

⁸ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 2.

4. Matt. 24:10-12 – “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”
5. I Tim. 4:1-2 – “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.”
6. Heb. 6:4-6 – “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”
7. Heb. 10:26-27 – “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.
8. II Pet. 2:20-22 – “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. 22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”
9. I John 2:19 – “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

Summary: The apostate is the person who hears the gospel and sound doctrine, experiences the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in the lives of true believers in the church, participates in corporate worship and church life, and having received full revelation and the experiences of true believers saved by grace, abandons the faith for paganism, atheism, agnosticism, or some other false religion. They depart from corporate worship, a key sign that they have gone apostate (Heb. 10:24-27; I Jn. 2:19).

Many professing Christians today are apostate, though they may say they are Christians. Their lives reveal their hatred for God, His Word, the local church, and a life lived in holiness for the glory of God. Their “Christianity” is nothing more than a thin veneer of verbal profession. As Titus describes them in Titus 1:16, “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.”

- C. **What about those who say they are Christians but don't walk with the Lord?** Many erroneously believe they are Christians because:
1. Because they call themselves a Christian.
 2. Because their parents are Christians.
 3. Because they prayed and asked Jesus into their heart.
 4. Because they signed a card saying they wanted to become a Christian.
 5. Because they made a profession of faith in the past.
 6. Because they walked an aisle or went forward at an altar call.
 7. Because their parents, pastor, or a friend assured them that they were saved.
 8. Because they made a decision for Christ.
 9. Because they were baptized in the church.
 10. Because they are regular church attenders.
 11. Because they read their Bible.
 12. Because they pray.
 13. Because they have been generally good e.g., haven't murdered anyone.
 14. Because they feel guilty about their sin.
 15. Because their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds.
 16. Because they like hard-hitting, fiery preaching.
 17. The problem with the so-called "assurances" listed above is that none of them are sure indicators that a person is actually born again by grace.
 18. Look up the Scriptures below and notice what true saving faith produces.
 - a. Mt. 3:10 -- "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."
 - b. Mt. 7:24-27 -- "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not

fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

- c. Mt. 12:33 – “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.”
- d. Jn. 3:36 – “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
- e. Jn. 10:27-- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
- f. I Cor. 6:9-10 – “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”
- g. Gal. 5:19-21 – “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- h. Titus 2:11-12 – “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.”
- i. Heb. 5:9 – “And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”
- j. I Jn. 3:7-10 – “Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

Summary: True saving faith produces a life of obedience to God.

- D. **Do true believers ever fall into sustained periods of sin i.e., backslide or become “carnal Christians?”** The answer to this question is, “yes” and “no.” Believers can fall into sustained periods of sin. But having been born again of the Holy Spirit, they are saints, holy ones, justified, redeemed, forgiven, saved to walk in newness of life, and God perfects them until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6). Thus, the title “carnal Christians” is an oxymoron, developed by religious unbelievers to widen the net of who is saved beyond what the Word of God can bear. Many want to include rebels and apostates and those who clearly do not love the Lord into the church. How are we to think biblically about such people?
1. Believers may fall into prolonged periods of sin, but it is abnormal, the rare exception for a true believer.
 2. Those who are truly saved, but live in sin, will be increasingly more miserable in their rebellion.
 3. When a true believer lives in unconfessed sin, he loses the primary assurance of his salvation.
 4. God is a perfect Father to the true believer and if one of His children strays into sin, they will receive discipline from the Lord and from their local church, if it is a faithful local church. If they do not receive discipline from God, they do not belong to Him (Heb. 12:4-11).
 - a. David committed grievous sins and went for a long time, about 9 months, with unconfessed sin in his heart, but when he was confronted, he repented and confessed his sin to God (II Sam. 11:1-12:15; Psa. 32:3-5; Psa. 51).
 - b. Paul, speaking of a man living in ongoing immorality said in I Cor. 5:5 – “I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
 - c. Gal. 6:1 – “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”
 - d. I Thess. 5:14 -- We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.
 - e. Jude 20-23 -- But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

- f. The Scriptures teach true saving faith produces works, as James teaches us in James 2:14-26. Yet unbelievers can produce “good works” in the flesh that look identical to the works true believers produce in the Spirit. In like manner, true believers can produce deeds of the flesh that make them look like unbelievers.

In short, we can only go by what a person says and *does*. If person’s life is lived in rebellion against God, though they may profess to love God, it reveals their hatred for the Lord, that they are not born again by grace (I Jn. 3:10). You will know them by their fruit (Mt. 7:16, 20). The Bible makes it very clear that those who are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, *demonstrate their love for the Lord by obeying His Word, out of love* (Ex. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1, 22; 30:16; Josh. 22:5; Neh. 1:5; Dan. 9:4; Jn. 14:15, 21; 15:10; I Jn. 5:2-3; II Jn. 6).

True believers can be entangled in sin, even for sustained periods of time, though rare, and later repent, confess, and follow the Lord again. John, in I John, addresses head on the issue of who is truly saved and who is not. On the next page you will see a chart that surveys what John teaches us about true saving faith and works.

E. Considering Faith, Works, and Evangelism

1. You are sharing the gospel with someone, and you begin by preaching the law of God to them. They are convicted of their sin by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:8) and the Word of God (Heb. 4:12) and become angry and defensive. They quote Mt. 7:1 out of context to you, “Judge not, lest you be judged.” Or ask, “Why are you so angry and judgmental?” Or say, “My God is a God of love,” by which they mean that “their god” would never judge them for their sinful lifestyle. They have been raised in the church and affirm that salvation is by grace apart from any works or human merit. They ask, “Why are you judging me by works? Salvation is by grace.” How would you respond biblically to someone like this?
2. Let’s say you are sharing the gospel with someone and preach the law of God to them in order to expose their sin and their need for a savior, but they reply, “I am saved by grace, not works, therefore I don’t need to obey the Lord in order to prove I am a Christian. I don’t need to read my Bible, pray, attend corporate worship, give, serve, or live a holy life.” What is a biblical response to such a person?
3. What if you witness to a person who vehemently claims to be a Christian, but only sporadically attends church, doesn’t read their Bible, doesn’t serve in church, doesn’t give to the Lord, doesn’t tell people about Jesus Christ, and only prays in emergencies. What conclusions might you initially have about the true condition of their soul according to what the Bible teaches? Why are there so many professing Christians in the world who live lives of ongoing rebellion against God? Why is the disobedient professing Christian a challenge to the evangelist?

John tells you how you can know and be assured of your salvation. He writes in I Jn. 5:13, “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.*” What are the “*These things*” that John is talking about? Look up the verses below and see if you have assurance of salvation.

Gives you assurance you are <i>not</i> saved		Gives you assurance you are saved	
1:6	You say you have fellowship and yet walk in darkness	1:7	You walk in the light
1:8	You say you have no sin and are self-deceived	1:9	You consistently confess your sins
1:10	You say you have no sin, making Jesus a liar	2:3	You regularly keep His commands
2:4	You do not obey God’s commands	2:5	You keep His Word
2:9, 11	You hate your brother	2:10	You love other believers
2:15	You love the world	2:17	You do the will of the Father
2:19	You depart from the saints	2:19	You do not go apostate
2:22-23	You deny Jesus is the Christ	2:23	You confess Jesus Christ
3:8	You practice sin	3:7	You practice Righteousness
3:10	You do not practice righteousness	3:9	You don’t practice sin
3:15	You hate your brother	3:16	You sacrifice for others
3:17	You are stingy, selfish, and greedy	3:18-19	You love in deed and truth
		3:21	Your conscience is clean
		3:24	You keep His commandments
4:5	You speak like the world	4:6	You listen to the apostles
4:8	You do not love other believers	4:7	You love the brethren
4:20	You do not love other believers	4:13-19	You confess Jesus Christ
5:10	You do not believe in the Son of God	5:12	You have Jesus Christ
5:12	You do not have the Son	5:12	You have eternal life

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”

I John 5:13

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

(John 10:27)

Homework

- Listen to Steve Lawson, Psalm 2, [“An Urgent Plea to the Unconverted”](#)
- Listen to Listen to Jack Hughes’ sermon, Luke 9:23-27 [“Murder Self and Live for God” Part 3](#)
- Listen to Jack Hughes’ sermon, Mt. 28:16-20, [“Practicing the Discipline of Evangelism”](#)
- Listen to Jack Hughes’ sermon, Lk. 10:21-24, [“Drop the Bomb!”](#)

Extra Credit

- Listen to John MacArthur’s sermon series “Hard to Believe.”
 - [“The Starting Principle of Discipleship”](#)
 - [“The Necessary Components of Saving Faith”](#)
 - [“The Gospel: Self-Love or Self-Hate?”](#)
 - [“The Gospel in Perspective”](#)
 - [“Who’s Ashamed of Whom?”](#)