

Belief Without Salvation

The Bible tells us in many places that belief provides salvation. Here are a few of them:

1. Mark 16:16 “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*”
2. John 1:12 “*But as many as received Him, them gave the power to become the Sons of God even to them that believe on His name.*”
3. John 3:15 “*That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*”
4. John 3:16 “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*”
5. John 3:36 “*He that believeth in the Son shall have everlasting life...*”
6. John 6:47 “*Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*”
7. Romans 10:9 “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*”

In Ephesians 2: 8, 9 we find another and perhaps the most salient and singularly comprehensive of all explanations of how salvation is provided. It tells us, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*” According to Greek linguists, the “and not of yourselves” as written in the Greek clearly refers to grace only and not to faith. Therefore, salvation is a gift of God’s grace, which can be received only through faith.

Relating this to the seven other Scriptural references above, we see that faith and belief in the biblical sense are so closely related to God’s intended meaning that they are interchangeable. In fact, they come from the same Greek word “pisteuo,” which means both to have faith and to believe. Therefore, our salvation is seen to rest on the reality and genuineness of what within us we call our faith or belief. What each of us has which represents our faith or belief is valid from a salvation perspective *only*, if our definition is in strict conformance with God’s definition. This is not negotiable. It is not a matter of your opinion being as good as mine. God’s opinion is the only relevant one, and can only be found by a Spirit-led search of His Word. What I write here is only of consequence to

the degree that it stimulates a need in you to do this, and that it helps you find what God wants you to know, to practice, and to be, if you are to have certainty that you are one of His. You can hope, feel, dream, rationalize, and believe anything you want, but nothing counts except God's definition and your genuine application and adherence to it.

Jesus, and later the apostles, warn us many, many times, as recorded in Scripture, to beware of lies, deceit and false professors of the faith who will, if possible, lead you away from God's truth and into damnation. Remember Satan is the greatest of all deceivers. All false religions are the expressions of his great innovative power to deceive. Every variety of these religions has as its head at least one of the fallen angels or evil spirits. These are the principalities and powers as spoken of in Scripture. They have the power to perform miracles, to a limited but sufficient degree, to impress and keep under control those who succumbed to their particular lie.

But I believe that Satan's greatest achievement, the one for which he is most proud and pursues with the greatest vigor and delight, is the misleading of the would-be genuine Christian believers from a true and saving faith. He does this in a number of ways, but primarily by means of perverting Christian doctrine through his insertion of slight doctrinal deviations and falsehoods into the visible church. Examine church history and you will find that denial, avoidance, discouragement, or prohibition of the study of the Bible has been a major element in his strategy to prevent those seeking the Way from obtaining salvation. Without biblical literacy, one becomes easy prey for his army of deceivers and false teachers. Those who prevent salvation are everywhere; their spiritual poison and half-truths are being spewed on radio, TV, in books and magazines, and from many pulpits. Their versatility is boundless and has but one goal, to cause one to believe that he or she has a saving faith when, in fact, it is a false faith. The "white washed" persona and demeanor of those who lead souls away from the truth, and their clever, learned, pious, and articulate delivery of Satan's deceit, are very persuasive to the biblically ignorant or naive, as it well must be to be effective for Satan's cause. They are personable, intelligent, eminently believable and sometimes even humble in appearance. They are extremely clever and disarming when they quote Scripture, which they know, but don't really believe. This is where they score most, that is, in the subtleties of those

slight twists in the context of the Word. This, by stealth, leads the victims into false understanding and tragic consequences. The outbreak of new “easier to understand” and “dynamically equivalent” but cleverly modified versions of the Bible only add confusion and serve as additional entry points for even more deception. The only defense there is against this onslaught is prayer and Scripture. Pray that the Holy Spirit will be your guide to the genuine truth found only in Scripture. Through Paul in Acts 17:11 the Holy Spirit tells us to receive the Word with readiness of mind, but to search the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. In other words, don’t take anyone’s word for it but find out for yourself. This isn’t easy, but your eternal destiny depends on it.

There is one more aspect of Satan’s strategy, which is outstandingly effective in these latter days of the “lukewarm” Laodicea church. It is blatantly evident that DIVERSION is its name. Jesus points this out in Revelation 3:17 where He describes exactly who we are today as a society and as a “Church.” He says, *“Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked.”* There is a great deal that could be said about this particular observation about our times which Jesus shares with us, but in terms of the issue at hand, the following will suffice. Although true in this country as compared to the rest of the world, it is doubtful that anyone reading this considers himself or herself rich. But actually, we are all “rich” in the availability of diversions which have been especially provided by Satan’s agents to tempt us and keep us, to the fullest extent possible, diverted from Jesus and His Word. Twenty-four hours a day, amusement and entertainment face us wherever we are. Who can resist attractive, all persuasive diversions? Only those who have decided that eternal salvation, and a life of gratitude and obedience to Him who saves, can overcome such a snare. Through the power of the Holy Spirit residing within “just say no,” and instead choose minimal involvement in what the world offers.

Now back to this issue of belief as it relates to salvation. First, we must note that in accordance with Romans 15:4, all things found in Scripture are for our learning. It is nice to find simple Scriptural verses we like and apply them to our lives. But it is vital that

they be understood and applied in the context of the entire Word. Otherwise, we risk misapplying them. Picking and choosing what we like in Scripture and discarding or ignoring what we don't like, or what seems unfair, difficult, or unpleasant – is not a choice for one who is redeemed or is seeking redemption. If achieving salvation is your goal, then taking any or all of the seven verses listed on the first page – and adopting them as your main basis for believing that you're saved without knowing the full extent of what they signify and what is inferred in them, is an extremely dangerous path to follow. With that in mind, what else is relevant to achieving the salvation, which Scripture tells us, is there to aide us in understanding and biblically applying the message given in the eight references noted at the beginning of this paper? Here are a few such verses to ponder and learn from:

1. Matthew 22:14 is where Jesus tells us *“many are called, but few are chosen.”*
2. Philippians 2:12 *“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”*
3. 2Corinthians 13:5 *“examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves.”*
4. James 2:26 *“For us the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*
5. John 14:23 *“Jesus said unto them, ‘If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.’”*
6. 1Corinthians 15:1-2 *“...I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you which also ye are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain.”*
7. Hebrews 3:6 *“but Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house we are if, we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”*
8. 1Corinthians 1:23 This tells us we are saved, *“if ye continue in faith grounded and settled and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel”*
9. 2 Peter 1:10 *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure-”*
10. Luke 13:5 *“I tell you, ‘Nay’, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

11. 2 Peter 3:9 This verse tells us that the Lord is “...*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

*All emphasis is mine

Now what do we do with this? Here are eleven references relating salvation where the word “belief” is not even mentioned, except for one reference to non-belief. Of the eight references cited on the first page, only Ephesians 2:8-9 mentions faith. The remaining seven speak only of belief as the way to salvation. There is nothing in the Holy Bible, as it was given to the writers in the original languages, which is not God-breathed and inerrant. The eight statements are, therefore, true but so also are the eleven referenced above. Therefore, the eleven in no way contradict the eight, so the latter must be there to add clarity and to amplify what God means by “belief.” Let us see how to apply this by taking each of the eleven verses individually.

Matthew 22:14 “*Many are called but few are chosen*” That should be disturbing to all of us because we know that Jesus died so as to take away all the sins of the world. However, this verse tells us that while many are called, not all are called. Some are so hardened of heart that God, in His foreknowledge, finds it pointless to make this specific call.

Romans 1:24-32 speaks of a variety of incorrigible sinners and irreconcilable believers of Satan’s lie. It says, “*God gave them up unto their sins.*” Of course, because of God’s mercy, the door was and is always open to repentance, but it may be concluded that a large percentage of these “given up unto their sins” were among those not called. Then we have the many who are called but are not chosen. Why? It is because they do not come to a saving faith. They are numbered among the many professors of the faith who heard the call but who never become possessors of the faith, even though they believe they are saved. Perhaps some are among what has been estimated to be 90% of those who simply repeat the sinner’s prayer of belief in church, or answer the “altar call” at some service or revival meeting, but are never again heard from in terms of showing any trace of a changed life or other evidence of a saving faith. There are also those who have

heard and accept the theme of the seven verses listed on the first page, but who have never sufficiently probed their depth of meaning to determine just what a saving belief really is. This verse simply attests to the fact, as Scripture reveals in many places that saved souls are only a remnant number of the total population, even of those “called.” The army of false teachers, half-truth purveyors and other agents of the great deceiver make certain of this.

Philippians 2:12 “...*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*” This verse is a bit controversial. It doesn’t mean that we can obtain salvation through any work of our own. I believe it means to look deep into ourselves, our belief, our conduct, and most of all our motives for what we think, speak and do, and to carefully examine them to see if they are spiritually genuine. We are to do this with “fear and trembling” because what we might find may not be what we expected or wanted to find. Of course, if we are ignorant of the true nature of what we are looking for, the knowledge of which comes only from knowledge of His Word, we may not even be able to correctly assess what we do find. So how can we know if we really believe?

2Corinthians 13:5 “*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves.*” This is essentially the same message as in Philippians 2:12, except that it now urges us to prove to ourselves that we have saving faith or belief. This obviously implies some relevant knowledge of Scripture, along with a willingness and ability to apply it, because without such knowledge and action, where else and how else can there be any genuine proof of anything, especially the effectiveness and quality of one’s belief?

James 2:26 “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*” Here we are introduced to another element essential in determining the means of salvation. If we are to take, for example, the John 3:16 verse of the seven “believe verses” and apply James 2:26, we must conclude that somehow “works” is buried in, or implied in, the word “believe.” Otherwise, James 2:26 is only pointless rhetoric, which of course, it is not. Works, if they are in accordance with God’s will – done for His sake, out of love for Him, and totally without desire for any personal credit or reward – are

evidence of a saving belief. Works of any kind that have any less purity of thought or purpose are not works of a living faith. Those who consider themselves true believers must always look carefully into the motives which govern their actions to see if they are that pure. James' message is that works don't save, but righteous works are an integral part of our salvation "package" and express evidence thereof.

John 14:23 *Jesus said unto them, if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make abode with him.*" WOW!! Here is another ingredient that must be added to the broth that we must drink to be saved. Therefore, love is not a separate ingredient but an integral part of belief. Why must this be so? Because Scripture tells us, at least seven times as indicated on page 1 that we are saved through belief. To have heard it but once from God's inerrant Word would have been enough to know this. But now Jesus says that if you love Him and keep His Word, He and the Father will love you and live in you in the Spirit. We know from many scriptural verses that at the moment of salvation, the Father and Son, through the Holy Spirit, come to permanently dwell in the saved soul; and that without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, there is no salvation. Notice also the phrase, "...and will keep my Words" in this verse. What is His Word? It is the Holy Bible, every word of it. What does "keep my Words" mean? It means not just having a Bible on you table or simply carrying it around Bill Clinton-style. It means obeying; and "keeping," means to trust and obey. How can you possibly do this unless you read it, study it, and then live by it? So here we have another facet of the precious gem of belief revealed to us. By the way, this verse is specifically an elaboration of Mark 16:16 which states, "*He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.*" Baptism here does not relate to sprinkling or dunking into water, because this is not a requirement for salvation. This baptism refers to the moving in, the indwelling, of the Holy Spirit which accompanies a saving belief (Acts 2).

1Corinthians15:1, 2 "*...I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you which also ye are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain.*" Here again is another facet of understanding of that precious jewel we call belief. The Gospel! Believing in Jesus means believing the Gospel with absolute

and uncompromising certainty, and with every fiber of our being. What is the Gospel? It is the “good message.” It is the fact that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day, all according to the Scripture (1Corinthians 15:3). This is the entire foundation on which Christianity is based. It represents and makes possible the entire purpose of God’s creation. Absent this truth, there is nothing worth believing from a spiritual perspective. Absent this truth, all belief is in vain and the Bible is nothing but a weird history book. However, the Gospel is truth, and belief in it is a requirement for salvation.

But what is the “believed in vain” part all about? The clue here is the preceding phrase, “if you keep in memory what I preached unto you.” This is very important because it speaks precisely to the tragic failure by many who will take the belief verses on page 1 as the major basis for assuming they are saved, without ever pursuing Scripture to really understand the full meaning of a saving belief. Here, Paul speaks to the Corinthians’ need to first understand fully what they believe and then to hold firmly to their belief in truth. Otherwise, if that initial acceptance gives way to unbelief, they have believed in vain. This is a tremendous problem in today’s lukewarm church.

Heb 3:6 “...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” This tells us that we are of His house that is, saved if we hold fast to the end. This is similar to the “keep in memory” phrase we found in 1Corinthians 15:1,2, and is again a conditional statement often repeated in Scripture, such as in Hebrews 2:1, 3:14, 4:16, 7:25, 10:34-38, 12:1-4 and 12:14. It is also emphasized by Jesus in John 8:31, as well as in the context of “overcoming” as stated in Revelation 2:7, 11,17,25-26 and Revelation 3:5, 11-12, 21. All of these should be telling us loudly and clearly that a saving belief is intimately and conditionally involved with continuance, perseverance and overcoming. This verse makes it clear that being part of God’s household (being saved) depends on having a living, persevering faith. Further development of this issue may be found in the verses which follow, that is, in Hebrews 3:7 and 4:13. From the perspective that the “belief verses” on page 1 can stand alone, this should provide serious cause for concern

regarding how many more “conditional clauses” there are in our Savior’s contract with those He would save.

1 Corinthians 1:23 tells us we are saved. “...*If ye continue in faith grounded and settled and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel....*” This verse is a reinforcement and punctuation of Hebrews 3:6 and several other Scriptural verses that carry the same message. A genuine believer is one who is born-again and, as such, necessarily carries the human responsibility to be and to continue to be, grounded in the faith. That is, the believer is to remain unmoved in his or her dedication to the Gospel. If one is a believer, it is the Gospel in which he or she believes.

2Peter 1:10 “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.*” Here Peter is speaking to brethren, to those who are already saved. Therefore, the validity of their belief is already established. While not specifically related to our subject, it is sage advice to those who seek confirmation and perfection in their spiritual journey. This wisdom is developed in the preceding verses 4 through 9 where Peter describes the believer’s attributes and virtues that demonstrate the sureness of one’s calling. We are not to take our faith and salvation for granted. We must continue to the end and to evidence it by working persistently to perfect our spiritual qualities toward the likeness of Jesus.

Luke 13:5 “*I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Finally, we come to what may be the most avoided and disturbing word in the whole lexicon of Christian verbiage. REPENT! That was John the Baptist’s message as the herald for the coming of Jesus the Messiah. Of itself, as defined in common language, it is by no means scary or offensive. It simply means to change one’s mind or turn around a belief. But it is far far, more than that in the biblical sense. It means to turn away from evil ways and to turn towards Christ, and through Him, turn to God the Father. But to do that, one must fully realize that he or she is a hopeless sinner, incapable of self redemption and, therefore, in dire need of not only a savior, but of the one and only Savior, Christ Jesus. Repentance is a decision to turn from sin, to seek salvation through the total unequivocal

acceptance of Christ as Savior as well as Lord, and to thereby strive to be obedient to His teachings. Repentance is a change of lords, for there are only two: the lordship of Christ or the lordship of Satan. There are no other choices, no matter how vigorously one might protest that fact. All beliefs other than Bible-based Christianity are under Satan's lordship. Repentance is a free decision of the will on the part of the sinner, and sinner is a category in which we all exist. The decision to repent is made possible by the enabling power of grace given to anyone who hears, turns from sin, and believes the Gospel. In light of this, to believe that a saving belief is merely some dubious form of trust in Jesus as Savior is clearly inadequate. Jesus demands repentance. To define a saving faith in any way that does not require a radical break with sin is a tragic distortion of the biblical meaning of redemption. For there to be a saving faith, there must be repentance. This is confirmed in Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3-5, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19 and Acts 11:21. One would be well advised to study these verses to confirm the biblical meaning and importance of repentance as it relates to salvation.

2 Peter 3:9 tells us that the Lord is “...*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” Notice that here, as well as above in Luke 13:5, one's choice is simply to repent or perish. From this we must conclude that repentance is no less a requirement for salvation than is belief, faith, trust, obedience or love. In fact, in the biblical sense, repentance may be said to incorporate each of these. Otherwise, how can a genuine repentance, the turning completely toward Jesus, be lacking any of these attributes? The word “perish” here is the alternative to repentance. It is, of course, also what happens to one who is not saved. Perish does not mean ceasing to exist. It means spending all of eternity in Ghenna, the lake of fire, which is in the outer darkness (Revelation 20:13-14).

To summarize what this paper's title indicates and has attempted to convince, there can be belief without salvation. In fact, it is most likely that belief without salvation is far more prevalent than a saving faith. Belief, which results in salvation, is a belief that has a definition that includes many more specific conditions than most people who claim a saving belief ever realize. There is no salvation unless one believes the Gospel that is

that Jesus died for our sins was buried and was raised from the dead exactly as Scripture says it happened. There is no salvation unless one's belief includes the fact that we are all hopelessly sinful and cannot be cleansed of sin in any other way but through Jesus. Jesus said on the cross "tetelisti," which means not only "it is finished" but also means "paid in full." Good works and a seemingly immaculate life can do nothing towards salvation beyond that which Jesus has already done. These good works and spotless life can only enhance one's position in the eternal order. For those saved, it means greater blessings in Heaven. For those unsaved, it reduces the severity of Hell to some degree. Repentance must be of the heart as well as of the mind. Repentance, and all that it implies, must begin in the mind and move down toward the heart. But because "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), it cannot take root there but only in the new heart which is given to everyone the moment he or she truly receives that saving faith. Absent the new heart, what may seem to be repentance can never settle in and will soon dissolve, leaving an even more strident heart.

Obedience to God's Word as He told us in John 14:23 is also an essential manifestation and evidence of salvation. It makes no sense for us to believe that we have obtained salvation as long as we choose to continue in sin, contrary to His commandments to "sin no more." Of course, with that hopelessly deceitful heart remaining in competition with the new heart, we will continue to sin, but to an ever lesser degree as we continue to gain strength from the new heart and from the Holy Spirit who dwells therein. John 14:23 speaks of keeping His Word. Do you know His Word? How well do you know it? How well you keep it necessarily depends on how well you know it. How well you know it depends on how well you sincerely study it directly from the source, the Holy Bible. Remember, false teachers abound everywhere and are eager to mislead.

Salvation of one's immortal soul is infinitely more important than anything else to be accomplished during this physical life. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that it is a gift from God, given by His grace through our faith. But nowhere does Scripture say that salvation is free. Of course, there is nothing we can do to earn it, much less pay for it, but most certainly there is much we must do as our part in the process. What we are obligated to

do is found in the word “belief,” which is the same as faith. This word is loaded with far more meaning than most people realize. To be secure in our salvation, we must know all we can about what that “load” consists of. I beg you not to presume or assume, but to know that your salvation is secure. Only through genuine study of His Word, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will you ever really know what a genuine saving belief is, and whether or not you have it.

There is no doubt that almost as many who read this will take issue with at least some of what is written. If I have stretched meanings or misinterpreted God’s Word, I sincerely welcome correction. If what is written is slightly more strict than a reasonable interpretation, it is deliberate because it is far more beneficial to err in that direction than to err the other way, especially when one’s eternal future depends on it. I pray that if you err, it will be in that same direction by giving our Lord 200% of what you believe He expects of you, and then pray that that is enough.