



What Does The Gospel Require?

DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Q&A NUMBER: 31

www.GodSaidSo.com/QA31

The gospel of Jesus Christ contains the wonderful news about salvation through Christ, a new and better covenant, and the opportunity to be part of Jesus' kingdom. The message of the gospel works by calling people to God, converting people from their sins, and saving people from their sins. But, even though there is so much potential in the gospel to do so many extraordinary things, what exactly does the gospel require of you? Does it even require anything? Let's investigate how the Bible answers this question.

Die With Christ

Does the gospel automatically save everyone? Certainly, God's salvation-bringing-grace has appeared (or, been made available) to everyone (Titus 2:11). However, Jesus was very clear in demonstrating that everyone would not be saved. In fact, in Matthew 7:13-14, He says that the majority of people will live their lives in a way that will result in everlasting punishment, while only a few will live in a way so as to be eternally saved. So, by implication, there must be something required of us in order to be saved and access the blessings of God's grace and the gospel.

The message of the gospel tells you that Jesus Christ willingly gave His life on the cross for you – so that you could be saved from the eternal consequence of your sins. However, He did *not* do so in order for you to continue living in your sins! Instead, the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ gave His life for you so that you would give your life to Him! Thus, the Scriptures discuss the importance of those who follow Christ to have been crucified with Christ.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."
2. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

3. 2 Timothy 2:11 says, "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him."
4. Colossians 3:3 says, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
5. Colossians 3:5 says, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
6. Romans 6:2 says, "...How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"
7. Romans 6:8 says, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

Now, as you reflect on these passages, you should be impressed with the frequent usage of this language in the writings of the apostle Paul (as he was writing to those who were Christians). Clearly, God expects individuals to give their lives entirely to Him. But, this is not unique to Paul's writings. Jesus Christ, Himself, taught that those who desire to be His disciples must be entirely devoted to living for Him (see Luke 9:23-26; Luke 14:25-33).

But, how do we die with Christ and live for Him? The answer to this is found through obeying the gospel's plan of salvation (what God says you must do in order to be saved from your sins and have everlasting life in Heaven). Before we consider what it is (specifically) God has commanded of you in order to be saved, please realize that God has required you to obey Him. As we consider these passages, please recognize the fact that God requires more of you than just mentally accepting Jesus as Christ and Savior.

In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus taught that there would be many people on the Day of Judgment who would profess to be followers of His. They will say that they believed in Him and that they had even done many wonderful works in His name. However, Jesus will sentence them to eternal punishment in Hell because they had not been obedient to the will of God. Also, in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, Paul states that those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ will be punished with everlasting destruction and experience the wrath of the Almighty God. Furthermore, Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus Christ became "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

These passages are just a sample of how the gospel commands you to be obedient to its message. Yes, it does matter what you believe and practice in the name of religion – and even in the name of "Christianity." You must be contending earnestly for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27; Jude 1:3). This involves holding fast to the pattern of sound words contained throughout the entire New Testament (2 Timothy 1:13). For, as 2 John 1:9-11 says, if you do not abide in the doctrine of Christ (all of the teaching of the New Testament), you do not have God!

Now, having established that the gospel requires you to give your life entirely to God and be obedient to His teaching throughout the New Testament, you need to consider what God requires you to do in order to be saved.

The Gospel's Plan Of Salvation

Although mankind answers the question, “What must I do to be saved?” in many different ways, let’s consider what God says (as He will be the one you will be judged by on the Last Day)! What does the gospel require of you in order to be saved?

(1) Hear His word. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Hearing God’s message and instructions, necessarily, comes before an individual can believe and obey them (Acts 18:8)! You need to hear the basic truths that we have been establishing – about what God has done for you so that you can be saved from your sins and about your responsibilities for salvation.

(2) Believe. Faith/belief in God and Christ is essential for salvation. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). The Bible consistently points to the essential nature of faith (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10; etc.). For instance, Jesus said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). However, the Bible also teaches that faith without works of obedience will not save us (James 2:14-26)!

(3) Repent of your sins. Jesus said, “unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). God now “commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30-31). Repentance involves a change in mindset regarding past sin (to view past sin with abhorrence and to determine to live differently in the future). Repentance is commanded often in the Scriptures (i.e. Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19). You simply cannot die with Christ unless you put the old man of sin to death through repentance and turning to Jesus Christ for a new way of living (see Romans 6:3-4).

(4) Confess Christ. Romans 10:9-10 says, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” The confession that is commanded in this passage is *not* a confession of your sins; but, the confession of the Lord Jesus with your mouth. A good example of this confession is found in Acts 8:37 when the man of Ethiopia (just prior to being baptized) said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

(5) Be immersed in water (baptized). Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but, he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). Paul wrote that you are “baptized into Christ” (Galatians 3:27) – that is, baptism brings you into union with Jesus Christ. Peter wrote that baptism “now saves us” – just as water saved Noah and his family (1 Peter 3:20-21). Clearly, the Bible teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation. Baptism is the point at which an individual becomes a Christian and is forgiven of his/her sins. It is at this point that the sinner is washed, justified, and sanctified through the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Acts 18:8; Acts 22:16)! It is also important to understand that the Bible teaches the action involved in being baptized is immersion in water (not sprinkling or pouring – and not Holy Spirit baptism). In fact, baptism is described as being a “burial” in Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12. Therefore, that old man of sin we put to death is buried with Christ in baptism and we are raised to walk in newness of life!

(6) Remain faithful. When you hear God’s word, believe, repent of your sins, confess Christ, and are immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins, you become a Christian – and are added to Christ’s church (Acts 2:41, 47)! However, this does not mean that you are “once saved, always saved”! Instead, the Bible teaches that you must be faithful to the Lord unto death in order to receive the crown of life (the eternal reward in Heaven, Revelation 2:10). This will involve doing all of the things God has commanded you to do as a Christian (i.e. teach the gospel to others, do good to all as you have opportunity, be transformed in your character, live a holy life, etc.). You must faithfully obey God throughout your earthly life, because it is possible for you to sin so as to be lost (see Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 10:26-39).

This plan has often been perverted!

The gospel’s plan of salvation (as we’ve just discussed) is not difficult – and can be obeyed by anyone who is willing! However, most (so-called) “Christian” churches, pastors, preachers, etc. have perverted this plan of salvation. Instead of teaching this God-given plan of salvation, most churches teach a (so-called) “plan of salvation” that involves “faith only,” the “Sinner’s Prayer,” infant “baptism,” etc. Furthermore, most have said that baptism is not necessary for salvation – or that baptism can be accomplished through sprinkling or pouring, instead of being accomplished exclusively by immersion. In addition, many have claimed that once you are saved, you cannot sin so as to fall away from the grace of God and lose your salvation. Do not listen to any of these false gospels – as they will lead to your eternal condemnation (remember Galatians 1:6-9 and 2 Peter 2:1-3)!

Conclusion

The gospel of Jesus Christ is full of blessings that have been made available to the entire world. However, few will do what the gospel requires for salvation. Please carefully consider the wonderful opportunity you have to be saved from your sins – and determine to give your life entirely to be obedient to God by obeying the gospel’s message!

Discovering God’s Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: QA31

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