

Getting The Gospel Right

Welcome. I'm going to share a short YouTube video on the gospel with you, and comment on it, because most of it is not true. Here's the beginning of that video:

VIDEO:

Question: Is salvation a confusing topic for you? Are you 100% sure you are on your way to heaven? Let's take care of that right now.

The idea that we go to heaven for eternity is common, but it is not taught in the Bible. Seriously. You will not find eternal life **in heaven** promised anywhere in the Bible. Jesus taught that the meek shall inherit the earth:

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5, also Psalms 37:11)

The earth we'll inherit will be a new, re-created earth, as described in Revelation 21:1–4, where God will come and dwell with us:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

So, when will that happen? What will we do until that happens?

After we die, we remain in the grave until our resurrection.

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)

Upon death our “thoughts perish”: we have no consciousness. While “asleep” in the grave we “know nothing” until resurrected:

“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” (Psalm 146:4)

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5)

If we die in God's grace, we'll be resurrected in what's called the "first resurrection" —at Jesus' return. The apostle Paul described the resurrection of those who "sleep in Jesus," in their graves:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

Those in the first resurrection will rise from their graves to meet Jesus "in the air" —not in heaven. They will be resurrected with immortal, spirit bodies. Here's Paul:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:50-54)

So, what will they do then? They'll be with Jesus as He rules the Kingdom of God – here on earth – for the next thousand years:

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:6)

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into

pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Isaiah 2:4)

This is the kingdom Jesus prayed for:

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10)

Jesus told His disciples what they’d be doing in His Kingdom:

“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:28-30)

After the thousand years all the rest of the dead will be resurrected. That will include all who missed the first resurrection, and all who lived and died during the thousand years:

“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished . . .” (Revelation 2:5)

Jesus described that resurrection:

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28,29)

There will be a judgment (described in Revelation chapter 20) of all except for those who were in the first resurrection. Those who fail that judgment will perish in what’s called the “second death” (re: Revelation 2:11; 20:6; 20:14 and 21:8) —death after which there is no more hope of life or resurrection. It will be the end of them. The rest will receive the gift of eternal life, just like those who were in the first resurrection. All who received eternal life will then go on to inherit that new, re-created earth, where God will live with them.

John 3:16 sums it up: we either perish or else we receive the gift of eternal life.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

The video presents salvation as making it to heaven. Actually, salvation is about being saved from perishing by receiving the gift of eternal life. Going *to heaven* for eternity is never promised in the Bible.

Salvation is not about **where** you’ll spend eternity. You won’t even *have* an eternity – anywhere - unless you receive the gift of eternal life. Otherwise you’ll perish: dead forever.

Maybe this has been confusing. Maybe you’re thinking “Didn’t Elijah go to heaven?” Well no, actually: Jesus said so:

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” (Jesus, in John 3:13)

“Heaven” in the Bible does not always refer to the place where we like to think God lives. Heaven – depending on context – can refer to any one of several places above the surface of the earth. For example, the “fowls of heaven” - vultures and eagles in the air or sky - are referred to in Revelation 19. The prophet Elijah was evidently transported in the air to another place on earth. Years after his chariot ride Elijah sent the next king, Jehoram, a letter warning him there were consequences coming for his evil ways:

“And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father’s house, which were better than thyself: Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods” (2 Chronicles 21:12-14).

Okay, let’s continue with the video:

VIDEO:

Let’s discuss the truth of salvation, crystal clear, so you know for sure where you’re going when you die [pictures of heaven and hell]. Salvation is the idea of being saved, obviously. We all want to be saved from hell after we die.

Eternal life in a flaming hell is another of the many false doctrines common to churchianity today. Unless we receive the gift of eternal life we’ll perish: our existence will end in death, specifically that “second death” after judgment that I mentioned earlier. The apostle Paul wrote:

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23)

There’s nothing there about eternal life in conscious torment in hell. Hell was installed into the Bible by translators. They took three different Greek words from early texts and translated all three as “hell” even though those words have nothing to do with a place of eternal, fiery torment. The translators paved over the meanings of the original Greek words and used the word “hell” to inject their eternal torment doctrine (inherited from the Catholics) into the Bible.

The three Greek words were:

ᾅδης

(“hades” in English); appears as “hell” ten times and as “grave” once (1 Cor 15:55) in the KJV New Testament; refers to the place of the dead, the grave, similar to the Hebrew word “she’ol” in the Old Testament.

γέεννα

(“geenna” or “gehenna” in English);

Appears as “hell” 12 times in the KJV New Testament; refers to the valley just outside Jerusalem, used as a dump in Jesus’ time. Constant fire and maggots there were sure to destroy whatever was thrown in. Jesus used that dump to illustrate the permanent – not perpetual – destruction of the unsaved. The “lake of fire” in Revelation pictures the same irrevocable, complete destruction.

Here’s an example of gehenna being translated as “hell” in the KJV:

“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire” (Mark 9:47)

The third Greek word was

ταρταρωσας

a verb, an inflection or variant of ταρταρώω; (“tartaroo” in English);

used only once: to describe fallen angels being put into a figurative pit or prison, to be held in restraint.

It is interesting to note that some later translators recognized the misuse of the word “hell” and often used the original Greek words instead of “hell” . . . or at least referenced the Greek words in footnotes. Young’s Literal Translation (YLT) never uses “hell.”

There is ample evidence that the unsaved will be destroyed. For example:

“For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be” (Psalms 37:10).

“When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever” (Psalms 92:7).

“The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity” (Proverbs 10:29).

“As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation” (Proverbs 10:25).

“Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth,
That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?
Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds;
Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?” (Job 20:4-7)

Unfortunately millions of reasonable people dismiss Christianity as ridiculous when they are told a God

of mercy will endlessly torment the unsaved in some sort of fiery hell. Yes, **lies do real damage**.

VIDEO:

The problem is, we all deserve hell. We are all sinners, and if we had just one sin we still cannot enter heaven after death. That's a problem. Everyone's a sinner. Our sin is like a debt we owe, and the unpaid debt results in hell.

That is incorrect. The penalty for sin is death. The apostle Paul wrote

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23)

Sin earns death, not eternal life in hell. As we saw in John 3:16, we either receive eternal life, or, we perish. End of story.

VIDEO:

So what can be done to save us? God has a plan from the beginning. He sent His Son Jesus to come to Earth and die on the cross.

That part is correct. From the foundation of the world it was planned that Jesus – the “Lamb of God” - would be slain. This is mentioned in Revelation 13:8, just after describing world-wide worship of an end-time power, the “him” in the following verse:

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8)

VIDEO:

Why? This effectively pays for our sin.

And THAT – right there - is probably the most dangerous lie in that entire video. No, our sins were not paid for when Jesus died. A payment for our sins was made AVAILABLE when Jesus died. Huge difference. Our past sins REMAIN – neither forgiven nor blotted out nor paid for unless we come to God in repentance: confessing and forsaking sin . . . THEN our past sins will be blotted out. Here's the apostle Peter in Acts 3:19:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19, NKJV)

The apostle John made a similar statement. Our sins remain – not forgiven – unless we confess:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)

VIDEO:

Jesus took the punishment on our behalf. The sins of the world have been paid for, past, present and future.

Monstrous lie. Our sins remain – not blotted out, not forgiven, not paid for – unless we come to Him in repentance. **Then** we'll receive His promised mercy:

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him . . .” (Isaiah 55:7)

Then our our past sins will be erased. We'll have “remission of sins that are past” as Paul wrote in Romans 3:25. We'll be “purged” of our “old sins” as Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:9.

On the cross Jesus made available a ransom: He made His death and blood available to cover the death penalty we earn for sin. Now, as our advocate with the Father, He can redeem us - with His death and blood - from the death penalty we have each earned for our sins:

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14)

We can have that redemption if we'll choose to turn from sin, sin that earned us the death penalty to begin with.

If we choose not to turn from sin, we remain outside His promised mercy (Proverbs 28:13). We'll have no redemption and will surely perish for our sins. We'll pay our own death penalty. That's why Jesus warned

“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”
(Luke 13:3,5)

Jesus did not die to make it okay/safe for us to continue in sin. No; redemption - from the death penalty we've earned for past sins - is now available if we'll obey and turn from sin.

Outside of repentance, our sins remain, and we remain outside His promised mercy. We will pay for our sins ourselves. Peter makes it clear: come to repentance, or else perish:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

“Not willing that any should perish” . . . just like “perish” John 3:16: nothing there about eternal torment in hell.

Speaking of that eternal torment idea, I should digress for just a moment and mention that the eternal torment idea has roots in the false presumption that we have immortal souls that must always exist, somewhere. The immortal soul is a pagan concept – one of many that have been adopted into churchianity over the centuries. Here's the pagan philosopher Plato promoting the immortal soul idea:

*“Do we believe that there is such a thing as death? And is this anything but the separation of soul and body? And being dead is the attainment of this separation; when the soul exists in herself, and is parted from the body and the body is parted from the soul . . . beyond question the soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will truly exist in another world!” (Plato, in *Phaedo*, about 360 BC)*

The immortal soul idea is a **denial** that we can perish. It goes back to Satan’s original lie

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4)

Okay, getting back to where we left off.

Jesus did not die to make it okay/safe for us to continue in sin. No, redemption - from the death penalty we’ve earned for our sins - is now available if we’ll obey and turn from sin.

Are we actually commanded to repent, to turn from sin? Yes. Here’s the apostle Paul:

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent”
(Acts 17:30)

If we’ll follow directions, we’ll receive God’s promised mercy as we saw earlier.

VIDEO:

So, what now? Are we all guaranteed heaven because it’s been paid for by Jesus? No. The payment for sin is complete, but we need to accept it.

No, thanks to Jesus a payment for sin is now **available**. We won’t have coverage of our past sins unless and until we obey and come to Him in repentance —confessing and forsaking sin. And **while we remain in repentance**, Jesus will be our advocate with the Father, and will **continue** to cover – **present tense** - any **new sins** by His blood.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”
(1 John 2:1)

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

The video said “The payment is complete, but we need to accept it” Sorry, that is wrong. The payment is **available** and we need to follow directions, as commanded. Just “accepting” it and remaining in disobedience won’t work.

VIDEO:

The Bible describes salvation as a free gift. To accept it we are told to believe in Jesus. Trust that His death on the cross is all that is needed for salvation.

“Trust that His death on the cross is all that is needed for salvation.”

Really? Jesus said we’ll perish – unsaved - unless we come to **repentance**. And Peter said we’ll perish – unsaved - unless we come to **repentance**. Whoever made that video has made an end-run around repentance – turning from sin – and substituted “trust that His death on the cross is all that is needed for salvation” in its place.

So lets check the Bible for a moment. Let’s see what Jesus – after His resurrection - told His disciples to preach. Did Jesus tell them to preach “trust in my death on the cross for salvation?” Never. Jesus told them to preach repentance and remission of sins:

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
And that *repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:45-47)

Whoever made that video, therefore, is trying to sell you a lie. Throughout the entire video he says nothing at all about repentance. **Should you be suspicious of that? Absolutely.** That person is ignoring Jesus’ instructions about what to preach . . . and replacing it with his own “just trust” “faith alone” perversion of the gospel. That’s what going on here.

VIDEO:

If we believe in anything else for salvation, it won’t work.

As if simply “**believing in**,” just “**trusting**” would work! Even Satan “believes in” Jesus . . . Satan talked to Jesus while tempting Him. Jesus is the author of salvation to those who **obey** Him. Here it is, right here in Hebrews 5:9:

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”
(Hebrews 5:9)

What do we have to do? Come to Him in repentance, as commanded. Then we’ll enter His promised mercy and grace. Our past sins will be blotted out, as we saw in Acts 3:19, and we’ll enter “the presence of the Lord.” How? By the gift of the holy spirit, given “to them that obey him” and repent:

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” (Acts 5:32)

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38)

That is how we enter **justification**. And while abide in Jesus in repentance, following the holy spirit, we remain in justification—in His grace, not under condemnation:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1)

Does that mean we’re saved? No.

Justification and salvation are different things at different times. We must enter justification and we must—present tense - continue in justification, abiding in Jesus, being cleansed of new sins by His blood. Then we – “through Him” – “shall be saved” —in the future:

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Paul, in Romans 5:9)

We “shall be saved” - saved from ever perishing in death – when we receive the gift of eternal life at Jesus’ return. Notice that the verse does not say “having been justified.” It says “being now justified.” The difference is important. It is possible - after having entered justification - to fall away from justification, no longer abiding in Him. The verse says “being now justified.” We must continue – present tense - to abide in Him, remaining in justification. Then we, through Him, “shall be saved” at His return. If we don’t abide in Him we’ll no longer be in justification. Ultimately, we’ll be “cast forth as a branch”:

“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (Jesus, in John 15:6)

When we receive eternal life at Jesus’ return, we will have been saved—saved from ever perishing in death. Short of that we’ll surely perish, unsaved. That is the salvation a believer hopes for:

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8,9).

The word saved, however can refer to other things in other contexts. Unfortunately that “-ed” on the end of “saved” in those other contexts misleads many to think they are already saved – done deal – even before they receive the gift of eternal life. Here’s an example:

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

So we “are saved” in one passage from Paul, but in another passage Paul says we have “the hope of salvation.” Confusing? Yes. Explanation? The word “saved” in the Bible can refer to different things in different contexts. When we read “saved” we have to ask, “Saved from what?”

Past: If we have entered justification, we have been saved in this respect: we have been redeemed from the death penalty earned for past sins. Those sins were blotted out and covered by His blood when we came to Him in repentance. We have been saved from the hopelessness of having to perish as the penalty for those sins.

Present: While we abide in Him in repentance, following the holy spirit, Jesus continues to cover new sins by His blood. Through Him we are being saved – present tense – from the penalty those sins earn. And we are being saved in another sense: saved from slavery to sin, as we follow His lead and correction:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Jesus, in Revelation 3:19)

Future: We shall be saved - saved from ever perishing in death - if we continue in justification to the end and receive the gift of eternal life at Jesus’ return. Short of that, we’ll surely perish —unsaved.

When we who are in Christ are resurrected at Jesus’ return, we’ll have immortal, incorruptible spiritual bodies. Paul wrote:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown [buried] in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

Upon receipt of that immortal, spiritual body we’ll obviously have eternal life. And we will be able to inherit the kingdom of God. Continuing with Paul:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)

Upon receipt of that immortal, spiritual body, we will have been “born again” or “born of the spirit.” Here’s Jesus – like Paul - explaining that’s the only way we can see and enter into the Kingdom of God:

“Jesus answered and said unto him [Nicodemus], Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it

cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:3,5–8)

Jesus was resurrected with an immortal spirit body – born of the spirit - and was able to move invisibly, like the wind, and appear and disappear where His disciples had gathered. While we are flesh, we cannot move invisibly, like the wind. We are not yet born again. However if we have received the holy spirit we are *begotten* of God and must contend with sin. We will not sin after we have been born again, having a spiritual body. Here’s the apostle John:

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” (1 John 5:18)

Jesus was the first-fruits, the first to receive immortality with an immortal, spiritual body. Those who are His will receive the same at His coming:

“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (1 Corinthians 15:23)

Faith and believe are often assumed to be the same, but they are not. In the Greek, faith was a noun. If you have faith, you have intellectual trust that something is true. Believe was a verb, committing to your faith by acting on it. Believing goes beyond faith. True believers – like Abraham – are those who act on their and obey God. Abraham trusted God’s promises, but that trust would have been dead if he had not obeyed and left for the promised land. Abraham’s obedience was his “works” and for that he was justified and deemed to be a believer . . . “and not by faith only”:

“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (James 2:20-24)

Believing goes beyond faith or just trusting. Believers act on their faith and obey. Otherwise faith is dead.

Notice Ephesians 1:13. First we hear. Then (hopefully) we trust —we have faith. And then we must **believe**: act on our faith and obey. If we’ll do that, then we’ll receive the holy spirit:

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13)

How do we believe? We obey, we come to God in repentance, as commanded. Then we receive the holy spirit, as I showed you a minute ago. God gives His spirit “to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32) and

“repent” (Acts 2:38)

So now when we read about believing in John 3:16, believing comes alive with action and obedience . . . not just passive intellectual trust.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

This synchronizes with what we saw in Hebrews 5:9 We must obey. Jesus is

“the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9)

Notice how Peter ties believing to obedience here in 1 Peter 2:7. He doesn’t call unbelievers **faithless**: he calls them disobedient:

“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (1 Peter 2:7)

Today the gospel is usually presented as something to just have faith in. No, the gospel is something to be obeyed:

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8)

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17)

VIDEO:

But wait: you might think good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. So if you do good things, donate money and go to church, then, you might go to heaven, right? Wrong. The Bible clearly states that salvation is not of works. Salvation has nothing to do with who you are, but, who you believe in. If you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sin to save you, you are guaranteed heaven.

He stated “salvation has nothing to do with who you are, but who you believe in.”

“Nothing to do with who you are” . . . as if anything goes, and is okay with God. Notice the apostle Paul’s warnings about sin; it **does** matter who and what you are:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; also Ephesians 5:5,6)

and Galatians 5:19–21)

The video mentioned “not by works.” Therefore many today assume there’s nothing to do except have faith . . . after all, Paul says “by faith,” “not by works.” On the other hand James wrote “by works . . . and not by faith only.” The faith vs works controversy rages to this day. A few minutes from now I’ll explain the three main reasons for the confusion.

Earlier I mentioned the gift of the holy spirit, given “to them that obey him” and “repent.” The holy spirit is given to us because we have chosen to turn from sin. Through the holy spirit Jesus leads and guides us, showing us to way out of slavery to sin. Jesus says

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Jesus, in Revelation 3:19)

Did Jesus say “just trust in me”? No, we must repent and be overcomers, following the holy spirit:

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” (Revelation 21:7)

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Revelation 2:11)

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” (Revelation 3:5)

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:21)

The holy spirit never **makes** us overcome. We must – in ongoing repentance – choose to **follow** the holy spirit:

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:13,14)

Jesus is the potter, we are the clay. Outside of our repentance, He cannot work with us.

VIDEO:
Sounds too easy? That’s the beauty of a free gift.

“Sounds too easy?” he asks. Jesus didn’t say anything about it being easy. Let’s see what Jesus had to say:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way,
which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find
it.” (Matthew 7:13,14)

Eternal life is a gift. It's free. We don't have to **earn** it. We **can't** earn it. But we **do** have to follow directions. Jesus is

“ . . . the author of eternal salvation unto all them
that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9)

If we'll follow directions we'll enter His promised mercy and grace (Proverbs 28:13). Our past sins will be forgiven (1 John 1:9) and blotted out (Acts 3:19; Romans 3:25; 2 Peter 1:9). We'll receive the holy spirit (Acts 5:32, Acts 2:38). Jesus, through the holy spirit; will guide us out of slavery to sin (Revelation 3:19). Outside of repentance, none of this can happen. We'll perish, outside His mercy and grace, just as Jesus warned:

“ . . . except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
(Jesus, in Luke 13:5)

Peter makes it clear: come to repentance, or else perish:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as
some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to
us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that
all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

VIDEO:

It shows how God loves each and every one of us. Even a young child can believe in Jesus. Through that simple faith we are guaranteed eternal life in heaven.

Once again, true **believing** goes beyond faith. Believers are those who act on their faith and obey. Otherwise faith is dead. Faith is necessary, of course, because without it we could not and would never choose to obey. It is **coming to God on his terms** that matters, and pleases God. Without faith, we could not choose to do that:

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for
he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and
that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek
him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

Coming to God on his terms pleases Him; faith alone is not enough. So we see that saving grace is received **through faith** . . . not just because we **have** faith:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that
not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Ephesians
2:8)

Through or **by means of** faith we understand God is real and that we need to come to Him on His terms. If we'll obey and **do** that we'll enter His promised mercy and grace. Faith is given to us to call us. Question is, will we answer the call, and come to God?

Continuing in Ephesians 2:

“Not of works, lest any man should boast.
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus
unto good works, which God hath before ordained

that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:9,10)

This is one of several passages from Paul which so many misunderstand. “Works” refers to different things in different contexts. Ignoring the context is one of the three causes of the works vs faith controversy I mentioned earlier. “Works” in the above passage refers to “good works” or deeds. That’s the context. As we become Jesus’ “workmanship,” it becomes our nature to do good for others.

Good works do not earn justification, nor do they earn salvation. Unfortunately people take “works” out of context, then assume it refers to **anything and everything** we do, and then conclude that we don’t need to do **anything** . . . and therefore they assume only “faith alone” is necessary . . . after all, they say, Paul says “by faith” . . .

Paul wrote about another kind of “works”: works or deeds of the law. Here’s Paul in Romans 4:1–3:

“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.
For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

“Works” in **this** context was the deeds or works of the law. Paul established that context a few verses earlier:

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20)

However when people read “if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.” they overlook the fact that the “works” Paul was referring to was the works of the law. Ignoring the context, they go on to assume works of **any** sort are not needed for justification before God.

But wait: Abraham’s “works” had nothing to do with “works of the law” or with “good works” done for others. Abraham acted on his faith and obeyed God. For **that** he was deemed a believer and was justified . . . not by works of the law, not by good deeds. For example, by or through faith he understood he had a choice: to leave for the promised land or to stay home. He chose to obey:

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” (Hebrews 11:8)

Would Abraham have received the promises if he had faith, but did not obey, and stayed home? No.

“By faith” is **ambiguous**: it’s an English language problem, because “by faith” could be taken one of two ways. You could think justification is “by faith”: just because you **have** faith. Or, you could think justification comes by *means of* or *through* faith. This ambiguity is a second reason for the seeming conflict, Paul vs James, faith vs works.

Was Abraham justified “by faith,” —just because he had faith? No. He was justified by *means of*, or **through** faith. Through faith he saw he had a real choice to make: to obey, or, to stay home. He obeyed; that was His “works.” As James pointed out, for **that** he was justified . . . “and not by faith only” . . . not just because he **had** faith (James 2:24)

Now here's a "by faith" verse from Paul:

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1)

So which is it? Are we justified "by faith" —just because we **have** faith? Or are we justified through or by means of faith? If we say it's just because we have faith, we contradict James' "not by faith only." If we say it's **through** or **by means of** faith followed by obedience we are in agreement with James. And we are in agreement with Paul's "through faith" in Ephesians 2:8. "Through faith" avoids the ambiguity of "by faith." "Through" faith we see the need to obey. For obedience we enter justification - God's grace - without which we cannot see salvation.

The third reason for the faith vs works controversy is the confusion of *faith* with *believe*.

Here's another verse from Paul, containing works, believe and faith:

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5)

The works was – in context – the works or deeds of the law. "Believeth" is from the Greek πιστεύω (pisteuō) —a verb: to commit to your faith, act on it, obey like Abraham. "Faith" is from the Greek word πίστις (pistis) —a noun: intellectual confidence or trust that something is true. Abraham was not justified just because he had "faith only": he believed —he acted on his faith and obeyed. That made his faith alive and complete —"perfect" (James 2:22). Otherwise his faith would have been dead. For his living faith - believing - "it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called "the friend of God":

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?
Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?
And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:20-24)

Believing goes beyond "faith only."

So what do we conclude about faith and works?

"Works" refers to different things in different contexts. Taking Paul's "works" out of context, many go on to dismiss all works as unnecessary —disregarding the works of Abraham. Compounding the problem is the ambiguity of "by faith": **through** faith vs just because you **have** faith. "Through faith" in Ephesians 2:8 is not ambiguous. Finally it's important to understand faith, the noun, vs believe, the verb. Believing goes beyond "faith only." Ultimately there is no conflict between Paul and James . . . but there is a whole lot of misunderstanding about what Paul wrote. Peter commented on Paul's epistles, noting that many were misunderstanding Paul:

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:15,16)

VIDEO:

So, now that we understand, let's go out and share the truth.

The truth is, we are not promised eternal life **in heaven**. We're promised eternal life with God on a re-created earth in a re-created universe.

The truth is, unless we receive eternal life we'll perish: all aspects of our existence will end permanently at the second death. The wages of sin is death; there is no eternal, conscious torment in some sort of fiery hell.

The truth is, salvation is not about **where** you'll spend eternity. You won't even **have** an eternity unless you receive the gift of eternal life. Otherwise you'll perish: dead forever.

The truth is, Our sins were not paid for the moment Jesus died on the cross. A payment for our sins was made **available** the moment Jesus died in the cross.

The truth is, **believing** goes beyond just trusting or faith alone. Just trusting or faith alone is not enough. If we'll obey and come to Him in repentance (Acts 17:30), we'll enter His promised mercy and grace (Proverbs 28:13). Then our past sins will be forgiven and “blotted out” (1 John 1:9, Acts 3:19). We'll have redemption from the death penalty earned for past sins. And we'll receive the holy spirit, given “to them that obey him” and “repent” (Acts 5:32, Acts 2:38). And while we continue to abide in Jesus in repentance, He will guide us out of slavery to sin (Revelation 3:19). And while we continue to abide in Jesus in repentance, He will be our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1) and will continue to cover any new sins by His blood (1 John 1:7). We'll have “the hope of salvation”: the promised gift of eternal life, to be received at Jesus' “revelation” —His return:

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8,9).

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25).

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13)

The truth is, if we choose to no longer abide in Him and return to a life of unrepentant, willful sin there will be no sacrifice to cover our new sins. We'll return to condemnation, no longer in justification —no longer “in His goodness” or grace. We'll be cut off. And we'll forfeit that “hope of salvation”:

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” (Hebrews 10:26,27)

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” (Romans 11:22)

“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (Jesus, in John 15:6)

“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Hebrews 4:1)

So I probably sound like a broken record, going around and around about repentance. So, what's the point? Why is repentance necessary? Let's look at the big picture. What God wants is family: sons and daughters He can live with forever. Creation of those sons and daughters is in process, right now, through Jesus.

Creation of the physical universe was done through Jesus:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;” (Hebrews 1:1,2)

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9; also Col 1:16 and John 1:1–3)

On the cross, Jesus finished making His death and blood available to cover our death penalty. But Jesus' work is not finished: Jesus now lives and advocates for us with the Father (1 John 2:1). And creation of son and daughters for the Father's eternal family is now in process, through Jesus. Jesus says:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Jesus, in Revelation 3:19)

An ongoing relationship with Him

“ . . . yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness

unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews
12:11)

This is the only way we can be made ready for the gift of eternal life, as members of God’s family.
Jesus says:

“ . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man
cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

He is the potter and we are the clay. We must be workable - we must be in repentance - for this work of
creation to take place. Otherwise we will not be part of God’s plan. We’ll perish.

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