

The Gospel Romans 1:14-17

The word “***gospel***” refers to “***good news***.” The N.T. speaks of the “***good news***” about the Messiah and His kingdom and how Jesus Christ gives us salvation and eternal life. Wherever the gospel is preached and received, lives change for the better. *This is because the gospel is the power of God for salvation.* We hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it in order to be right with God. The Lord Jesus said in **Mark 16:15-16** “***Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***” The Lord charged his disciples to preach the gospel to everyone, because everyone needs to hear it. God will save those who believe and are baptized, but He will condemn those who refuse to believe it. Those who believe this charge of Jesus will not sit idly by, but will act on their faith.

While everyone agrees that faith is necessary to become a Christian, some *mistakenly* teach *that faith alone* is sufficient for salvation. The question we need to ask is, “*Is obedience to the gospel necessary?*” Let us see what Scripture says. In **Jn. 3:36** we read, “***Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.***” In **Luke 6:46** Jesus asked His followers, “***Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?***”

The Lord Jesus made obedience to His teaching a necessity. He said in **Mt. 7:21-23**, “***Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’***” A lawless person is one who *refuses to do* what the Lord says. *The disobedient*, according to the Lord Jesus Christ, *will not enter into heaven.*

Let’s see what **Hebrews 5:8-9** says about Jesus, “***Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.***”

Scripture links obedience to salvation just as they do faith. Paul in **Romans 1:5** says that he “***received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.***” I need you to understand this scriptural point, ***the faith that saves is an active, living, obedient faith.***

In **Romans 2:6-8** Paul says this about God, that ***“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.”*** According to Paul we are all obeying something; and if we refuse to obey the truth and we live in unrighteousness, we can’t expect to gain eternal life.

That obedience to the gospel is necessary to our salvation and is clearly seen in **2 Thess. 1:7-10**, ***“since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.”***

What then does God expect of us in our obedience to the gospel? First, He demands that we believe in Him as God’s Son and Lord. In **Jn. 8:24** Jesus says, ***“I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”*** And **Hebrews 11:6** says, ***“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”***

Second, we see that the Lord expects those who come to Him repent on their sins. In **Acts 17:30-31**, Paul in his sermon on Mars Hill, preached, ***“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”*** Paul taught that a failure to repent is a matter of salvation. The apostle Peter in **2 Peter 3:9** agrees with Paul and said, ***“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”***

According to Scripture, if you wish to be saved, you must repent. This is what the Lord was talking about when He said in **Luke 9:23-24**, ***“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”*** Unless we deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow the Lord, (and all of that is repentance), we will lose our life and our soul.

Third, if you wish to be saved you must obey the Lord by being baptized. Biblical seen, faith and baptism are intertwined. The N.T. never speaks of a Christian saved by faith alone; it always speaks of a Christian as a baptized believer. Our faith is expressed through being baptized, but we are not free from sin until we are baptized. **Where is that written in the Bible you ask?** That is a very important question, and the answer is found in several passages.

Many say that Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, but I question that statement. All Jesus told Saul to do was to enter the city and ***“it will be told you what you must do”*** (**Acts 9:6**). Three days later after Saul fasted and prayed, Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in ***Acts 22:16, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”*** Now this was Paul’s account of what happened at his conversion. Saul, now called Paul, still needed to have his sins washed away; he was still in sin, and had a dirty soul, until he was baptized. Baptism was how he called on the name of the Lord.

In **Col. 2:12-13** Paul explains what happens in baptism. He says, ***“having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”*** According to the apostle Paul, baptism is when we are buried and raised together with Christ; baptism unites us with Christ. Before baptism we were spiritually dead in our sins; during baptism God makes us alive together with Christ and forgives our sins.

Someone might say, **Monti are you saying we earn our salvation in baptism?** The answer is **“no.”** Paul says that we are ***“raised up with Him through faith in the powerful working of God...”*** The command is to ***“be baptized”***; is a passive command. We submit to baptism, and someone else baptizes us. They are working on us physically. And in the same way, God is working on us spiritually in baptism. God is the active One and we are passive in baptism. We want Him to act upon us, to raise us up together with Christ, to make us spiritually alive, and to forgive our sins. Our part is to humbly submit in faith to a command of Christ and passively give ourselves up to the working of others, most specifically, God.

God is indeed active in baptism! He saves us, He forgives us, He adds us to the church, He makes us His children, He washes away our sins in the blood of Christ, He causes us to be born again, and He unites us with Christ in His death and resurrection. When one says, that we don’t have to be baptized to be saved, he is actually interfering with what God does to us.

Titus 3:5-7 says, *“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

God saves us and He does it through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Every ancient voice (2nd – 4th century) that talked about these matters spoke of the washing of regeneration as a reference to baptism. We are saved and justified by His grace through the washing that causes us to be born again, both Paul and Peter agree that this washing is baptism.

Peter in **1 Peter 3:21** says, *“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”* In baptism we call upon the name of the Lord and we appeal to God for a good conscience. Baptism is when God saves us and frees us from guilt and shame.

Not only does the gospel message bring eternal life; it puts us into the grace of God. Once we are baptized, we are united with Christ and in Christ. **Ephesians 1:3** puts it this way, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”* Since we put on Christ in baptism, and every spiritual blessing is in Christ, then we are in His grace. This also means God hears our prayers, God counts us as His children and therefore we are also heirs with Christ.

God saved us to transform us from sinners to saints, from lawless to people who take God’s word seriously. He gave us His word to teach us and to protect us. **Romans 12:2** says, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* When we live out the will of God, we show to all that God’s will is good and bless everyone. God’s will is indeed perfect, and we must never stray from it.

Paul knew that the Christians of Rome would face struggles and persecution at the hands of the Emperor. He wrote to encourage them, letting them know that God was with them. In **Romans 8:35-39** he said, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our*

Lord.” God won’t stop loving you, but you can lose God’s blessing if you turn from Him.

Remember the church at Laodicea who became lukewarm and foul. They thought they were rich and didn’t need anything. They didn’t realize they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. The problem was that they were blind to how God saw them. What about you? Does He see you as His faithful and obedient child, or does He see you as one who thinks you don’t need Him in your life?

I asked you a moment ago, “**How does God see you?**” I hope you aren’t like the Christians at Laodicea. I hope you are right with God! I would not want Jesus spewing you out on the day of Judgment. In **Rev. 3:19-20** Jesus said, “***Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.***” Even though they thought all was okay with them, they were neither cold nor hot for Jesus, they were apparently indifferent to Him. I hope this is not you as well – **but it is not too late**, Jesus called them and He is calling you as well. “***He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.***” He is knocking, won’t you let Him in? In **Acts 2:38** the Spirit of God says, “***Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***” What more do you want? Respond and save yourselves from a crooked and wicked generation.