

WHAT MUST I BELIEVE

PART 2

A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

“ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Romans 5:10 NKJV



Review of Study 6

A clear understanding of the gospel of salvation is important. Some people/groups over-emphasize 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, using it exclusively for the salvation gospel. Such over-emphasis creates a teaching that is not balanced by other Scripture. Salvation is based solely upon Christ's death on the cross. It is misleading to teach saving faith also requires belief in the burial and resurrection. The discussion of Christ's resurrection in I Corinthians 15 was intended to prove Paul's message was true, not a requirement for salvation. Thus, people could know their faith was not in vain. Using one passage, to the exclusion of many others, has caused confusion between what is good to believe with *what must be believed to be saved*. There are many wonderful truths in the Bible, but God does not require belief in them in order to be saved.

Introduction

When Adam and Eve sinned, their relationship with God was immediately changed. Like them, our relationship with God has been broken due to sin. A restored relationship with God (called reconciliation) requires the removal of the "thing" that broke our relationship in the first place (sin). When God forgives sin, it is removed entirely—all past, present, and future sins. When a person is forgiven, he or she is immediately reconciled with God. The restored relationship is referred to in various terms: salvation, saved, new birth, born again, new creation, redeemed. The various terms have a slightly different meaning, but have the same general idea.

The Bible often mentions that salvation is based upon believing in Him, having faith in Christ, or similar terms. However, we may get confused and wonder if faith in His blood/death is sufficient, or if we have to believe more. Because we wonder if we must believe more, we sometimes seek one statement of exactly what to believe to be saved. We must be careful in such a quest or any efforts to determine who is saved and who is not; salvation is God's domain, and He alone can search the heart to see if a person's faith is real.

Discussion: The thief on the cross knew little about Christ, was not presented with a standard statement of belief, but still became saved (Luke 23:39-43). He admitted being justly condemned (knew he was a sinner) and wanted the Lord to remember him (acknowledged his need to be saved). Discuss Christ's response; what did Jesus see in this man's heart?

BIBLE TRUTH

What Saves Us?

God's grace is what saves us (Eph. 2:8-9); it is God's free favor and kindness. God demonstrates His grace by forgiving our sins and justifying us when we believe in Christ. Justification is a judicial and gracious act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous, free from the penalty of sin, and fully reconciled to God. Forgiveness takes place when we first believe; simultaneously, God declares us justified. Because the believer is forgiven and justified, he or she is reconciled to God and made one with Christ. Many more things occur the moment we believe, but there are too many to mention. Sin destroyed our relationship with God, forgiveness and justification restore it. The biblical law teaches we are all sinners; it finds us out and condemns us to Hell. God's grace seeks us out and saves us for a life in Heaven.

The Law found me out, grace sought me out.

The DBR Teaching

Some people/groups teach that saving faith requires not only faith in Christ's death, but also faith in the burial and resurrection on the third day (DBR teaching). This teaching comes from 1 Corinthians 15 (KJV) and is shown in Appendix B with further discussion. Some salient points from Appendix B are briefly mentioned here.

1. The DBR teaching supposes belief in the resurrection is a requirement for salvation, yet Christ's apostles and the Corinthians were saved before they believed in the resurrection (Jn. 20:9 and 1 Cor. 15:11).
2. The DBR teaching is often stated in a way that requires belief in the resurrection on the third day. Most

people believe He died on Good Friday and rose on Sunday; but that is only two days. To solve this problem, some DBR believers claim Christ was crucified on Thursday. The question is: Are those who believe in the Friday crucifixion saved?

3. Some DBR proponents (not all) use this phrase: "Believe in the death, burial, and resurrection on the third day." This phrase is not found in the Bible. The phrase is derived by picking and choosing certain words, a crude cut and paste approach to God's truth.

4. In Study 6, the phrase "Christ died for our sins" was noted as the basis of saving faith. In context, this phrase is a complete thought. However, the context is lost in the DBR teaching. Since the DBR proponents do not see the independent phrases in these verses, they really are compelled to follow the KJV punctuation, which indicates the list of witnesses (verses 5 and 6) is part of the salvation gospel. They know that cannot be true, so they do a cut and paste job.

Discussion: If a person believes salvation requires faith in Christ's death for his or her sins, studying a catechism, and being confirmed by a church, would she or he be saved? (Thoughts: Yes, salvation is based upon faith in Christ's death. If the person does not have personal faith, but relies upon the catechism and confirmation, then the person is not saved.)

Biblical Survey

This discussion can only go so far, then the deciding factor must be considered: "What does the Bible say"? A survey of the Bible was conducted to see what is required for a saving faith, that is, the faith that God accepts for the forgiveness of sins. The survey was designed to determine what verses support: 1) saving faith is based upon belief in Christ's death, or 2) saving faith is based

upon belief in the death, burial, and resurrection. The DBR proponents generally use the KJV and believe the Scripture specifically applicable for our Age of Grace are the books of Romans through Philemon, perhaps Hebrews. Thus, the KJV and those books were used for the survey. Remember, the words "cross, blood, and death" are similar terms referring to Christ's sacrificial death for the sinner.

The biblical survey, Appendix A, indicates many verses teach that salvation is based upon faith in Christ's death/blood/cross. Only three or four verses initially seem to support the DBR belief. Upon simple analysis, however, only **one or two passages** (1 Cor. 15:3-4, perhaps Rom. 10:9) seem to indicate the DBR belief has merit. When these one or two verses are studied in context, it appears neither one supports the DBR belief. In the end, at least **56 verses** give a clear message on what we are to believe to be saved, and one or two verses give a mixed testimony. Clearly, belief in the burial and resurrection are not requirements for salvation; instead, they prove Paul's gospel was true.

Romans 4:25 from the KJV is used to support the notion salvation requires faith in the resurrection. It reads, "...**who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised for our justification.**" This seems a very strong argument that our justification (an essential part of our salvation) is based upon the resurrection. The New KJV replaces *for* with *because of*, and this translation is a better one. Clearly, the Bible teaches we are justified by His blood/death, "...**being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath...**" (Rom. 5:9, KJV). The divine act of justification was based upon His death; Christ rose again *because of* our justification (because it was already accomplished, He could then be resurrected). The blood of Christ is the basis upon which God can justify the sinner. Divine justification was established based upon the finished work of Christ on the Cross; after justification was completed, Christ was resurrected. Thus, the death of Christ procures our justification; His resurrection is proof it was accomplished.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Studying and Presenting Scripture

The Bible must be studied by comparing spiritual truths with spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:13), and this is accomplished by comparing scripture with scripture to derive a true understanding of what God is saying. Whenever a passage is unclear, we should compare that passage with other scripture in order to derive the correct meaning. A multitude of verses does wonders to clarify a passage, giving a true understanding of God's intent. On the other hand, if we use one passage exclusively, we can easily get off balance. We get off balance, not because there is anything wrong with the passage, but because we are led astray in our own minds by one line of thinking. A clear understanding of salvation becomes obvious when the one or two passages (which may be unclear) are compared to the other 56. The comparison shows saving faith is based upon belief in Christ's death. The Bible is not ambiguous on the matter of salvation.

Over-emphasis of one or two verses, above all other scripture, leads to serious problems. By comparing scripture with scripture, the completeness of God's Word and the richness of His counsel become clear.

The exclusive use of any one phrase can become a *formula* for salvation. The word *formula* means that if someone can quote the phrase that strongly implies he or she is saved. It is not as much about personal faith as rote adherence to some teaching (repeating the expected words, often more automatically than from the heart). Any single phrase can end up being cold and lacking a personal quality, because the formula replaces a heartfelt faith with facts (or rote terminology). Faith and knowing facts are not the same; as noted before, even Satan knows the facts. Formulas and rote phrases are not God's desire for salvation's message.

Using a wide variety of passages exposes a person to the full counsel of God. This full exposure to the Word is important, since one passage cannot possibly present all the truth we need. Various passages offer different insights and understandings of the Word, and each person needs this exposure. Some people will respond, understand, or be touched by one verse more so than another. Since we are all different, it is the full panoply of verses in the Word, as designed by God that will best reach all people.

Your Thoughts: Do you think belief in the resurrection on the third day is part of the salvation gospel? Is it necessary to believe in the list of people who saw Christ after He arose?

Based upon Scripture, it is clear God would not disqualify a person from being saved over minor things (the third day and the list of witnesses), even though true and biblical. It is obvious those items were intended to show Paul's preaching was true; and since it was true, the Corinthians' faith was not in vain. It must be noted, while the burial and resurrection are not required beliefs for salvation, they are very important to accept after being saved to prevent doctrinal error. The thrust of this lesson is not what is important to believe, but what constitutes saving faith.

Adding to the Word

It seems almost every religion and group ends up adding or taking away from God's Word in one way or another. Sometimes just a change in emphasis can change the meaning of Scripture, as Satan did in the Garden of Eden. We humans find all sorts of ways of altering Scripture: adding sacraments, taking the Scripture out of context, using Scripture meant for other ages, and on and on. Just remember that God is looking for faith in Christ, and He saves us by His grace. What he will not accept for salvation are good works, religious acts, or self-efforts (Titus 3:5).

Christ automatically comes into the heart of the believer; you do not have to ask Him. You open your heart's door

by faith, not speaking. You do not have to pray the sinner's prayer; you just have to believe in Him. You do not have to get rid of your sin before you are saved (that is impossible), but you must acknowledge you are a sinner and need to be saved. If you ask Jesus into your heart, pray the sinner's prayer, or go "forward" in church, just remember those things give you assurance of being saved. However, before you prayed, before you asked, before you went, before you did anything, God saw the faith in your heart, and that is what saved you. The term *means of grace* (used by some churches) is deceptive: baptism, communion, and so forth, do not save a person; only faith in Christ does.

God Knows

Many cherished and wonderful verses did not enter into the survey shown in Appendix A. These verses teach faith/belief in Christ is required, but they are not specific as to exactly what that faith in Christ must be. Examples of such verses are: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," "...justified by faith," "For by grace are ye saved through faith..." The fact these verses do not enter into the survey indicates something very important. It indicates attempts on our part to state specifically what a saving faith is, can in itself be a misleading exercise. For a human to proclaim precisely what a person must believe is intruding into God's prerogative. Salvation is God's domain, not ours. He alone can determine if a person is saved; no one should be dogmatic on exact wording for saving faith, pretending they know who is and isn't saved.

The survey of the Bible indicated many verses proclaimed faith in Christ was necessary, but did not go into specific details. Again, any obsession with exact wording may be intruding into God's realm. It seems that God does not look for exact wording, but looks upon the heart. He alone knows each person on the inside, seeing the person's spirit (heart) where faith is centered. In the most terrible of conditions—for example, prison camps during the world wars—a small scrap of scripture has led to the salvation of many. How is that possible? It is possible because God is at work in a person's heart. God

illuminates them (helps them see the truth), and the Holy Spirit ministers to a person's heart (spirit). Thus, a searching heart will find the Lord, because the Lord is right there drawing them to Him. It does not take much scripture to lead someone to saving faith when the Holy Spirit is speaking to a receptive heart. Saying or believing a phrase is not what is important, but having a

heart-felt faith in Christ is. We Christians are compelled to stick to the very basics, not to add or take away from the Scripture, and to remember God's works as He wills. Basic faith is simple and unencumbered; it is not based upon exact wording, knowing facts, or having correct doctrine.

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

God demonstrates His grace by forgiving our sins and justifying us (justification) when we place our faith in Christ. Justification is a judicial act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous, free from the penalty of sin, and fully reconciled to God. A survey of the Pauline Epistles revealed there are about **56 verses** that teach salvation is based upon faith in Christ's death/blood/cross. Only **one or two passages** seem to indicate the DBR teaching has merit. However, when taken in context and analyzed further, these passages do not support the DBR belief for salvation. To avoid mistakes and to gain understanding, the Bible must be studied by comparing scripture (1 Cor. 2:13), to derive a true understanding of what God is saying. It is the full panoply of verses in the Word, which will best reach all people. God alone can determine if a person is saved; this is His domain.

Gospel

Here are several verses giving a good overview of what God says about salvation. Salvation is based upon forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation, all made possible by the cross/blood/death of Jesus Christ.

1. **"...we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..."** (Rom. 5:10).
2. **"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')"** (Gal. 3:13).

3. **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"** (Eph. 1:7).

4. **"...He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross..."** (Eph. 2:16).

5. **"...in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"** (Col. 1:14).

6. **"And you...He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death..."** (Col. 2:2-22).

Encouragement

God has given each believer the mission of teaching reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19-20). You do not lack a purpose in life; this is it. You will not confuse people with man-made teachings if you stick to biblical words and thoughts by teaching reconciliation is made possible by believing in Christ's death as the sinner's substitute. Once reconciled, we have restored hope and can look forward to a future with Him. We not only have a future in Heaven, but we can rejoice each day in His constant care and love for us. As you proclaim God's Word to those in your life, it is the power of the Word and the Spirit that convicts and convinces a person of his or her need for a Savior. God has equipped you to do this; you already have the words and skills (nothing special, just sincere words from your heart). With an honest desire and prayer, you will do well.

Appendix A
The Review of Scripture Showing the Basis of Saving Faith
King James Version

Verses which indicate salvation is based upon faith in the death/blood/cross, no more.

Romans

- 3:24, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Note: redemption is tied to the cross in Heb 9:15.)
- 3:25, “... propitiation through faith in his blood ...”
- 5:8, “... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
- 5:9, “...being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath ...”
- 5:10, “...we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.” (Note: “his life” refers to His resurrected life delivering us from sin’s dominion, this is after reconciliation.)
- 5:19, “...by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Note: “obedience” refers to His death.)
- 6:3, “...were baptized into his death...”
- 6:4, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like Christ was raised up from the dead ... so we should walk in newness of life.” (Note: the “raised up and walking in newness of life” refer to the results of our salvation)
- 6:6, “... our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed”
- 6:7, “...for he that is dead is free from sin”
- 6:8, “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we should also live with him.”
- 8:32, “He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, ...”

I Corinthians

- 1:18, “For the preaching of the cross is to them ... us which are saved it is the power of God.”
- 1:23, “we preach Christ crucified”
- 2:1, “...not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified...”
- 10:16, “...cup of blessing ...communion of the blood of Christ? The bread... communion of the body of Christ?” (Note: we commemorate his death.)
- 11:24-27, “... bread and cup ... do show the Lord’s death till he come”
- 11:29, “... eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”
- 15:14, “And if Christ be not risen, then ... and your faith is also vain.” (Note: the crux of the salvation message is faith in the Cross; the resurrection verifies that such faith is not worthless.)

II Corinthians

- 5:21, “...made him to be sin for us...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (Note: He was made sin on the Cross.)

Galatians

- 1:4, “...who gave himself for our sins ...” (Note: ‘gave’ was his death.)
- 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ ... live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
- 2:21, “... if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”
- 3:13, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us... Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.”
- 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus, ...”

Ephesians

- 1:7, “...we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”
- 2:13, “... made nigh by the blood of Christ”
- 2:16, “...he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross...”

Philippians

- 2:8, “...became obedient unto death, event the death of the cross...”
- 2:9-11, “...wherefore God also hath highly exalted him ...every tongue confess” (Note: it is the death that leads to the exaltation)

Colossians

- 1:14, “...we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”
- 1:20, “... having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself”
- 1:21-22, “...now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death ...”

- 2:14, “Blotting out ... nailing it to his cross”
- 2:20, “... if ye be dead with Christ ...”

I Thessalonians

- 5:10, “who died for us ... we should live together with him.”

II Thessalonians -- None

I Timothy

- 2:5-6, “...Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all ...”

II Timothy -- None

Titus

- 2:14, “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity”

Philemon – None

Hebrews

- 2:10, “...to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings”
- 2:14, “... through death he might destroy him that had the power of death...”
- 5:9, “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation” (Note: “perfect” is the result of suffering, see 2:10.)
- 7:27, “...sins ... for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”
- 9:12, “... by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”
- 9:14, “... blood of Christ ... offered himself without spot to God”
- 9:15, “... by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions ...”
- 9:16, “For where the testament is, there must also ... be the death of the testator.”
- 9:26, “... put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”
- 9:28, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ...”
- 10:10, “... we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ...”
- 10:20, “by a new and living way ... his flesh” (Note: ‘flesh’ refers to the Cross)
- 12:2, “... the author and finisher of our faith ... endured the cross ...”
- 13:12, “... sanctify the people with his own blood ...”
- 13:20-21, “... the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect ...”

Verses seeming supporting the DBR belief for salvation. (Note: the phrase, "Not a DRB verse" means this verse does not teach that belief in the cross, burial, and resurrection are required for salvation.)

- Romans 4:25, “... delivered for our offenses, and was raised for our justification” (Note: The “delivered for our offenses” was on the Cross; and He was raised *because* we were justified. Being raised is not a faith requirement for salvation, but a statement related to what was done for us. **Not a DBR verse.**)
- Romans 10:9, “... confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe...God raised him...saved." This verse confirms belief in the Cross and the resurrection results in salvation, but is unclear if belief in the Cross is sufficient. **Unclear if a DBR verse.**
- I Thessalonians 4:14, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so ... will God bring with him.” (Note: A saved person will become a believer in the death and resurrection, so that the resurrection is used as a compelling argument to likewise trust that Christ will bring the spirit and soul of the dead with Him at the Rapture. This passage is designed to provide comfort and hope. It is not a statement of required faith for salvation.) **Not a DBR verse.**
- I Corinthians 15:2-8, “... yea are saved, ... Christ died for our sins ..., was buried, and rose again ... and that he was seen ...” (Note: this verse is covered in Study 6) **Not a DBR verse.**

Note: We remember His death for us when we partake in the Lord's Supper, "**For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes**" (1 Cor. 11:26). Notice, we do not proclaim the burial and resurrection, because His death is what saves sinners and that is of primary importance.

Appendix B Discussion of DBR Passage

The I Corinthians 15 passage in question is shown below, with additional thoughts for those desiring to go deeper. The phrase used by DBR proponents as the required belief for saving faith is, "believe in the death, burial, and resurrection on the third day."

Verse 1: **"MOREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;"**

Verse 2: **"By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."**

Verse 3: **"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;"**

Verse 4: **"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"**

Verse 5: **"And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:"**

Verse 6: **"After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren all at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."**

Several (of many) reasons why the DBR teaching leads to misunderstanding.

1. The resurrection cannot be a requirement for salvation because Christ's apostles and the Corinthians were saved before they believed in the resurrection, Jn. 19:9 and 1 Cor. 15:11.
2. The exclusive use of the DBR phrase can end up creating confusion over the word *burial*, especially for young people. Christ was not buried (by today's understanding); He was put in a tomb. Can belief in the *burial* be a required belief for salvation?
3. If the DBR teaching were true, then a person has to believe Christ rose on the third day. Most people believe He died on Good Friday and rose on Sunday; but that is only two days. To solve this problem, some DBR believers claim Christ was crucified on Thursday. Are those who believe in the Friday crucifixion saved?
4. The phrase often used by the proponents of the DBR belief, "believe in the death, burial, and resurrection on the third day," is not found in the Bible. This phrase is derived by picking and choosing words, here and there; but not using the entire wording of Scripture (as shown below in red). A pick and choose (or if you prefer, cut and paste) theology is always dangerous. **"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **died** for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was **buried**, and that he **rose again the third day** according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:"** (1 Cor. 15:3-5).
5. In Study 6, the phrase, "Christ died for our sins," is noted as the basis of saving faith. In the context of I Corinthians, this phrase is a complete thought. The context is lost in the DBR teaching. Paul mentions how a person can be saved, but then discusses how the Corinthians could know what he preached was true. If what he preached was not true, then their faith was worthless. *The burial, resurrection on the third day, and list of witnesses of His resurrection are not requirements for saving faith, but proof Paul's message was true.* Verses four to six are teaching Paul's message was true, so the Corinthians could know their faith was not in vain. The DBR proponents do not see the independent phrases in these verses, so they are compelled to follow the KJV punctuation, which indicates the list of witnesses (verses 5 and 6) is part of the salvation gospel.