

Saving Faith

Scores of books and articles have been written and thousands of sermons preached on faith, saving faith, belief and trust, yet many Christians are not sure of their Salvation. There are multitudes of “believers” who do not have the assurance of eternal life, the peace that passes understanding or the joy that is unspeakable.

Here are just a few of the many questions we hear over and over again:

What is faith?
Faith in what?
What is belief?
What is saving faith?
Isn't there more to it than just belief?
What do I have to believe to have eternal life?
How do I know that what I believe is enough?
What about those who do not keep on believing?

In this article we will examine how the peace and assurance that comes from understanding the finished work of Christ is related to belief. There are so many different opinions from honest preachers of the gospel that it is no wonder the average Christian is confused about his standing before God. Here are just two excerpts from the plethora of explanations of how a person is “saved;” one on how to be “born again” or “saved,” and the other on when one is “saved” and “gets” eternal life.

“Thus repentance is *first*, and absolutely necessary, if we are to be born again. It involves simple recognition of what we are before God - sinners who fall short of His glory; *second*, it involves genuine sorrow for sin; *third*, it means our willingness to turn from sin.” Billy Graham, *How to be Born Again*

“When does a person get eternal life? According to texts like John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; and 11:25-27, a person gains everlasting life the exact moment they first believe the saving message. There is no time requirement as to how long one must believe in Jesus.” Bob Wilkin, Editor *Journal of the Grace Evangelical society*

It is not our intent to judge these authors but it is our intent to judge doctrine. Clearly both quotes say that one *gains* “salvation” by what one does. In both quotes “saved” and “born again” are words whose meaning is assumed to be that of eternal or everlasting life, and therein lies the root of the uncertainty of eternal life among so many Christians. For them the questions remain, for example, exactly what am I supposed to believe? Isn't there more that must be believed? Have I done all I need to do? Must I be baptized? Don't I have to perform good works? What if I continue to sin? Must I make Christ the Lord of my life? After all “if He is not Lord of all He is not Lord at all,” Etc..

We do not know either Billy Graham or Mr. Wilkin but believe their response would be that the reason one believes is because of the work of the Holy Spirit, that no one can believe unless it has been given by the Spirit. However, this in no way solves the Biblical error, answers the questions raised above or settles the unrest in so many Christian lives.

At the outset, if we are faithful to His Word, we should note that **nothing** one does is “absolutely necessary, if we are to be born again” as stated by Mr. Graham, and **none** of the Scriptural references quoted by Mr. Wilkin say that “*a person gains everlasting life the exact moment they first believe.*” Both of these statements are Biblically false! Once we put the possibility to be “born again” or to gain “everlasting life” in the hands of the sinner we have departed from God’s word and established the base for the uncertainty that is prevalent in the lives of so many Christians today . **Everlasting life is not gained, it is given!**

John 10:28 *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

Many times it is said that though it is given it must be received in order to be effectual. In saying this we infer that the completion of Christ’s giving is based on our receiving rather than the reverse. Look what He says. He gives eternal life to all of those who are already His sheep, given because they are His sheep not because they receive or believe. Since none of them will ever perish it is evident that eternal life was not based on their receiving or continuing but on the sovereign gift of God.

The first time we meet the Greek word $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$, *save*, is in Matthew chapter 1 verse 21.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The primary meaning of this Greek word is to deliver or to rescue. He came to deliver or rescue His people. The “*his people*” are His elect, whether Jew or Gentile, those whom He has chosen, and it is clear that they are already His people and He has come to rescue them. He did not come to deliver everybody or somebody or those who would believe or chose to be delivered, He came to deliver His people. The clear meaning of the text is that before He came, He already had His own and we know from other Scripture that they were His before the foundation of the world, Eph 1:4. He did not come to make them His people, they are His people. He came to deliver them and (indicative mood, the mood of reality) He really did deliver all of them. He is God, surely He did do what He came to do, if not, He could not give eternal life to all of His sheep.

Before we look at the verb “save” or the nouns “Saviour” and “salvation” in their Scriptural sense, we must establish an understanding of the Biblical foundation for belief. Although our belief is at times coupled with saved, it is **never** coupled with the fundamental Biblical doctrines

which are based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, such as; the new birth, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation and justification. As simply as it can be said, we are not born again because we believe but we believe because we have been born again, and this wonder of God's grace is true of redemption, reconciliation, propitiation and justification as well:

We are not born again because we believe, we believe because we are born again!
We are not redeemed because we believe, we believe because we are redeemed!
We are not reconciled because we believe, we believe because we are reconciled!
God is not propitiated because we believe, we believe because He is propitiated!
We are not justified because we believe, we believe because we are justified!

Think about this truth, that is, the fact that we believe as a result of the finished work of Christ in His substitutionary death for us. Consider the first born son at the Passover who was under the sentence of death. He was "saved," rescued, by the finished work of his father. It was his father who provided the sacrifice and applied the blood in order to rescue his son. The son did nothing, he was under the sentence of death. The truth is, he was delivered only by what his father did for him. Now if you were to ask him if he believed surely he would say I believe because of what my father did for me. It is the same with us. We believe because we are His sheep whom He rescued. We believe because we are alive, we are not made alive by believing.

The words "he that believeth" are used 13 times and "believeth on him" 7 times in the NT in the Authorized version. One important passage which was included in the quote from Mr. Wilkin above, is:

Joh 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that ent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Here the Lord says that the one believing already has, really has (present indicative) everlasting life and has in past time, before he believed, been made to absolutely and completely pass from death to life (perfect indicative passive), that is, he has been born again (passed from death to life) before he believed. Nothing in this Scripture even suggests that one gains everlasting life by believing. The passage says that one hears and believes because he already has everlasting life and has already passed from death to life.

It can not be made to say that because he believes he has gained everlasting life and has passed from death to life. Such a meaning would not only contradict other Scripture but would ignore the perfect tense (that which is completely done in past time) that by itself makes it clear that he had been made to pass from death to life before he believed. His passing from death to life was his having been born again by the will of God and this clearly preceded his belief.

This is also the truth behind the “His people” in the verse in Matthew and the Lord repeats this same truth in John:

Joh 5:38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

John 8:47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

In John 5:38 the reason He gives for their unbelief is that His Word is not abiding in them and in John 8:47 it is that they are not of God. If His word is abiding in you and you are of God, you are a believer and one of His sheep. If this is not the case, you do not and you cannot truly believe. How can these verses be made to say that it is up to you, if you would believe then His Word would abide in you and you would be of God? In fact, they say just the opposite.

Another key passage that is fundamental to our understanding of faith or belief is John 10:26-28:

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Apparently many do not even know our Lord uttered these words, others take the truth revealed here far too causally, and some, only some, realized what He is saying. *You believe **not** because you **are not** of my sheep*, How could He say it any plainer? They do not, cannot believe because they are not His sheep. Only those who are His sheep can believe, being one of His sheep is the very basis for belief. If some do not believe it is because they are not His sheep. He has already told us in John 8:47 that they cannot hear because they are not of God. They do not become His sheep by their belief or because of anything they do. They are His sheep because He chose them and because He died in their place, they were born from above, born by His will and justified without a cause by His grace.

In the wonder of His grace, **all** His sheep hear His voice, **He said this!** The text does not say what they hear but is adamant that they hear His voice or language. Of course, they are His and they are alive, they have passed from death to life having been born again by the will of God. The passage can not be made to say that some, that is, those that believe, will hear His voice. He has already said that if they are not His sheep they cannot hear or believe and if they are His sheep they will hear and believe. Again, how could He make it any clearer, they do not become His sheep by believing, they believe because they are already His sheep, have always been His sheep and believe because they have been born from above. Just as the firstborn son at the Passover believes because his father made him alive. Surely he would not have desired sermons telling him what to believe but would rejoice in sermons proclaiming what his father had done.

The Lord has here established the truth that only His sheep believe, only His sheep can believe, and it is important that we do not force other passages of Scripture to contradict this truth. For example in this one, they believe because they were ordained to eternal life, they are not ordained to eternal life because they believe:

Ac 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Here the word *τάσσω* *ordained*, is a perfect passive participle, the perfect tense speaking of that which has been completely done in the past and the passive speaking of that which is done to us not that which is done by us. This makes perfect sense because the Scriptural doctrine of total depravity makes it clear that man in his unregenerate state cannot believe, he must be regenerated before he can believe. That is why only His sheep, once dead but now having been born from above can believe. Take a moment to consider what the Word says about the natural man who has not been born from above. In the following passages the word “desire” is used as a synonym for the word “will.” Since the natural man can not will to please God he does not desire to please God:

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:5 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.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to come to Christ.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Note: The Greek word *ελκυω*, *helkuoo* does not mean to invite, but rather to drag or impel. The same way that the draw-bar of a tractor does not invite the plow to follow.

John 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can (has the ability to) come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to hear the Word of God.

John 8:43 Why do ye not understand my speech? [even] because ye cannot (have no ability to) hear my word.

John 8:47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear [them] not, because ye are not of God.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to receive the Spirit of truth.

John 14:17 [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

The un-regenerate man minds the things of the flesh.

Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

The things of the flesh are:

Galatians 5:17 - For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The un-regenerate man is God's enemy.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to be subject to the law of God.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to please God.

Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to receive the things of the Spirit.

I Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to cease from sin.

II Peter 2:14 *Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:*

The un-regenerate man is not righteous.

Romans 3:10 - *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat [is] an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps [is] under their lips: Whose mouth [is] full of cursing and bitterness: their feet [are] swift to shed blood: destruction and misery [are] in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.*

Luther understood this:

“It is, then, fundamentally necessary and wholesome for Christians to know that God foreknows nothing contingently, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His own immutable, eternal and infallible will. This bombshell knocks 'free-will' flat, and utterly shatters it; so that those who want to assert it must either deny my bombshell, or pretend not to notice it, or find some other way of dodging it.

It is a settled truth, then that we do everything of necessity, and nothing by 'free-will' .for the power of 'free-will' is nil, and it does no good, nor can do, without grace. (Unless you intend 'efficacy' to be taken in a new sense, as implying completion, and are suggesting that 'free-will' can actually will and begin a thing, though it cannot complete it. This I do not believe; I shall say more on the point later.) It follows, therefore, that 'free-will' is obviously a term applicable only to the Divine Majesty; for only He can do, and does (as the Psalmist sings) 'whatever he wills in heaven and earth' (Ps. 135.6).

If 'free-will' is ascribed to men, it is ascribed with no more propriety than divinity itself would be-and no blasphemy could exceed that! So it befits theologians to refrain from using the term when they want to speak of human ability, and to leave it to be applied to God only. They would do well also to take the term out of men's mouths and speech, and to claim it for their God, as if it were His own holy and awful Name. If they must at all hazards assign some power to men, let them teach that it must be denoted by some other term than 'free-will' ; especially since we know from our own observation that the mass of men are sadly deceived and misled by this phrase.

Since, therefore, we have lost the meaning and the real reference of this glorious term - the free will of God alone, or, rather, have never grasped it (as was claimed by the Pelagians, who themselves mistook the phrase) why do we cling so tenaciously to an empty word, and

endanger and delude faithful people in consequence? There is no more wisdom in so doing than there is in the modern foible of kings and potentates, who retain, or lay claim to, empty titles of kingdoms and countries, and flaunt them, while all the time they are really paupers, and anything but the possessors of those kingdoms and countries. We can tolerate their antics, for they fool nobody, but just feed themselves up-unprofitably enough-on their own vainglory. But this false idea of 'free-will' is a real threat to salvation, and a delusion fraught with the most perilous consequences....If any man doth ascribe of salvation, even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learnt Jesus Christ aright.”
Martin Luther

Without question, this was one of the basic teachings of the reformers, emphasis added:

“The Reformed faith, on the other hand, refuses to compromise to that degree or to any other degree, however small, with naturalism. It teaches that regeneration is **prerequisite** for saving faith and that in regeneration the sinner is completely passive. As a corpse cannot bring itself to life, so the spiritually dead sinner cannot make the **slightest contribution** toward his second birth. The new birth is the work of God alone.” R. B. Kuiper,
Westminster Theological Journal, Vol 2

Preaching to the natural man that has not been born from above by the will of God is a useless exercise! He can not hear and he can not respond.

Since it is clear that the natural man cannot believe, it is also clear that he must be born again or born from above by God, not of man, that is not of the flesh, but by God, so that now as one of Christ's born again sheep he believes. It is important that we understand when we read in the Word of one who is a believer that the Holy Spirit is talking about one of His sheep.

Only His sheep believe! Only His sheep can believe! This is the fundamental Biblical understanding of belief, the characteristic of His sheep. Nothing in the text says anything about how they believe, or that unless they believe they will not be His sheep. Neither can we make the claim that they must believe all the time or they will cease being His sheep. When the Word speaks of those who truly believe we understand that it is speaking of His sheep.

His sheep hear His voice because they are born from above and alive not of their will but by the will of God, of incorruptible seed and thus cannot perish. It is this birth from incorruptible seed that guarantees the “eternal life” and the “cannot perish.”

Before we look further at the concept of belief, or what is normally called “saving faith,” we must look at the doctrines which are the foundation for this truth that we are His sheep because He chose us and paid our sin debt by dying in our place so that we, dead in sin, are born anew from above. We know from Romans 6 that we died with Him, were buried with Him and rose from the dead with Him.

Born again

Since the expression “born again” is so common today we will look at it first, then the others, before we consider the word “save.” In the following passages it could not be clearer that His sheep are born from above, born again, not by their will but by the Spirit of God:

John 1:13 *who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, **nor of the will of man, but of God.***

John 3:3,6-7 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see 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.*

1 Pet 1:3 & *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy **hath caused us to be born again** unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ESV*

1 Pet 1:23 *having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God,** which liveth and abideth for ever.*

These are the only Scriptures that deal directly with the subject “born again.” In the gospel of John the Greek word for again is *ανωθεν* and can mean *again, from above* or *for a long time*. In this context it more likely means *from above*. In 1 Peter the word is *αναγενναω* which in the grammar means *caused to be born again*.

Even with no knowledge of Greek it is incomprehensible that any one would teach that man has the ability to initiate his birth, natural or spiritual. Without question, the child is the passive recipient of birth. If it is possible to take the clear statements of God’s Word concerning our spiritual birth and put meanings in them that delegate the responsibility of that birth to man rather than God, then Scripture can be made to say anything one wants it to say.

Although “Ye must be born again” has become the major theme of modern evangelism it should be of great interest to the serious Bible student that the greatest evangelist, Paul, never once mentions it. In fact **not one** of the New Testament writers is led of the Holy Spirit to preach “ye must be born again,” not one. Surely the reason for this is that the Holy Spirit has already declared this to be a finished work of Christ. How far has modern preaching moved from that of the reformers, remember the reference quoted above:

“The Reformed faith, on the other hand, refuses to compromise to that degree or to any other degree, however small, with naturalism. It teaches that regeneration is **prerequisite** for saving faith and that in regeneration the sinner is completely passive. As a corpse cannot

bring itself to life, so the spiritually dead sinner cannot make the **slightest contribution** toward his second birth. The new birth is the work of God alone.” R. B. Kuiper, *Westminster Theological Journal, Vol 2*

In the text in John chapter 3 it is Christ who declared the new birth as a requirement to see the kingdom of God and He made it clear that this was a work of the Spirit not of the flesh. No other Scripture ever mentions the necessity for a new birth and it is never presented as something we should or must do. More than that, the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter declares that it has already been done for us by God, not by ourselves. In all of the other passages that speak of our spiritual birth the words for born are always, as one would expect, in the passive voice, and most of the time in the perfect tense clearly showing that it is that which has been completely done to or for us not that which we do or have any part in doing.

Clearly the Holy Spirit does not use the expression “born again” as casually as it is used today. It is because of the emotional preaching of the last several generations that so many do not have the confidence of eternal life or an understanding of what the new birth is and how it is accomplished. Christianity is not an emotional experience it is an intellectual appraisal of what God has done for us in providing Christ as our substitute to be made sin for us and to die in our place. To even suggest that one can be born again by accepting Christ is to rob the new birth of its profound meaning. Clearly to be “born again” (passive voice) is the work of God in Christ, not by or of us. In spite of this, the expression “born again” is one of the most common used today by those who claim to be Christians as well as those who do not. For example:

Are you born again?
Have you been born again?
Would you like to be born again?
What do you mean by born again?
Let me tell you how to be born again.
You can be born again if you believe,
etc.

are typical questions or comments that people of all walks of life are likely to ask or hear or be asked. Even more common is to hear some one say they are a born again Christian. The expression makes no sense, are they suggesting there are Christians who are not born again?

We are not born again by:

baptism
confessing our sins
repenting of our sins
placing our faith in Him
confessing Him publicly
making Him lord or our life

believing He has forgiven us
accepting Christ as our Saviour
accepting what He has done for us
recognizing what God has done for us
having a personal relationship with Christ
realizing we are a sinner and need a saviour

or, for that matter, anything we do, the Holy Spirit teaches us that we have been “born again,”
born spiritual by:

The will of God, John 1:13 2.
The Spirit of God, John 3:7
The resurrection with Jesus Christ, Eph 2:5; 1 Pet 1:3
Incorruptible seed, 1 Pet 1:23 5.
The Word of God, 1 Pet 1:23

nothing in, from, or of us, nothing. Of course, He is our father, He did it. Isn't it obvious that birth is initiated and accomplished by the parents. Think of it! We are His children, have always been His children, *according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:* Eph 1:4. He birthed us, chose us before the foundation of the world because He loves us and we were, and are His.

Is modern evangelism really presenting Biblical truth?

<u>Biblical</u>	<u>Modern</u>
God is sovereign	Man is sovereign
Christ's finished work	Adds man's effort to Christ's work
God determines	Man chooses
God has already presented us holy unblameable and unreprouvable	God waits for man's response to forgive his sins Man works to gain holiness
Elect are born of the Spirit	Repentance & acceptance causes birth
Declares us to be God's child	Gives us opportunity to become His child
Declares what God has done	Declares what man should or can do
Explains how God did it	Details how man can do it

Discusses word meanings

Blurs word meanings

Appeals to the intellect

Appeals to the emotion

Absolutely certain

Depends on sincerity of the individual

We rejoice that we are His children and have been born of incorruptible seed, 1 Pet 1:23, by His Word not by our belief, and if by incorruptible seed, that which has been born of such seed cannot be corrupted. No Scripture, **not one**, requires belief or faith in order to be born again. The only way to suggest this is to make the word $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$ - *saved* mean $\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha\omega$ - *born again*.

We are born again, not by our belief or our faith but by the will of God.

Redeemed

There is probably no more precious word to the Christian than the word redeemer or redemption yet the word ransom, the payment of a price, comes closer to the Scriptural meaning. By the grace of God He ransomed us, we could not pay the price to cover the debt of sin, in fact, we had nothing to do with the payment of that price.

There are three Greek words the Holy Spirit uses to present the truth of redemption:

We have been purchased in the market place - $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omicron\rho\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$

1Co 6:20 *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

1Co 7:23 *Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.*

2Pe 2:1 *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

Because He paid the price we have been ransomed, set free from sin - $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\acute{\omega}$

Mt 20:28 *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Mr 10:45 *For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Lu 1:68 *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,*

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

1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

We have been taken out of marketability, never to be sold again, redeemed - ἐξαγοράζω

Ga 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Ga 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Once again it is clear that He purchased us by paying the price for our sin. He did it all, we had nothing to do with our redemption. We did not pay the price, could not pay the price. We did not ask Him to pay the price or cooperate with Him in the payment of the price. As in the case of the new birth, no Scripture couples belief or faith with redemption. Since redemption is Christ's work and not ours, it is done and it is permanent.

He has perfected forever those who are set apart, Heb 10:14. No Scripture, **not one**, requires belief or faith in order to be redeemed. The only way to suggest this is to make the word σωζω *saved* mean λυτρόω - *ransomed and set free*.

We are redeemed, not because of our belief or our faith but because He gave His life for (in our place) us !

Reconciled

We are those who needed the reconciliation, God did not. We are reconciled to God, God is not reconciled to us. It is because of the work of Christ that we have been reconciled to God. Nothing separates us from God!

Reconcile - καταλλάσσω

Ro 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Ro 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (reconciliation).

2Co 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

2Co 5:19 *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

Reconcile completely - ἀποκατάλλασσω

Eph 2:15-16 - *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

Col 1:20- *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*

Before we are tempted to put our works alongside His works consider that passage in Col 1:22. We are, were, reconciled in the *body of His flesh through death*. He made peace through the blood of His cross, we did nothing. Because of His death in our place we are presented, think of it, *holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight*, presented by what He did, not because of anything we did, that reconciliation is based upon His work not ours.

Some always limit this because of the next verse, *if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard*. The passage does not say that if you continue you will be reconciled and presented, it says as clearly as it could be said, that if you continue it is because you are **now** reconciled. That is the reason the Greek is a first class condition, “since you continue.” Without question, continuance is based upon reconciliation, reconciliation is not based upon continuance.

Think of it, the blasphemy of it, to suggest that in reconciling us by the blood of His cross the Lord did not do a complete work, that is, it was not for **us** but only for those who would both believe and continue. To suggest that the reconciliation thus provided was dependent on our continuance not only demeans the work of Christ by suggesting that He did nothing if we do not continue but is one of the reasons so many have so little assurance. This passage can not be made to contradict our Lord’s assurance that His sheep will **never** perish.

The truth is the same, in John 10 His sheep hear His voice, believe, because they are His sheep, and He gives them eternal life and they shall never perish and in Col 1 those whom He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, us His sheep, will continue because they are now reconciled. No Scripture, **not one**, requires belief or faith in order to be reconciled. The only way to suggest this is to make the word σωζω- *saved* mean καταλλάσσω - *reconcile*.

We were reconciled to God, not because of our belief or faith but because of the death of His Son in our place!

Propitiation

Propitiation, think of it, God is completely satisfied as far as the payment for our sin is concerned. We are not the one propitiated, God is. God has nothing against us!

To appease, propitiate - ἰλασμός

1Jo 2:2 *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

1Jo 4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

To propitiate, to completely appease - ἰλάσκομαι

Heb 2:17 *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

The place of propitiation - ἰλαστήριον

Rom 3:25 *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

It was God who set Christ forth a propitiation by means of His faithfulness in His obedience unto death so that God is fully appeased as far as our sin is concerned. It is God, not us, who is completely satisfied because Christ died in our place. We did not ask Him to do this, we had no participation in this and He did not do this because we believed, He did this to declare that His righteousness is satisfied because of the faithfulness of Christ. Christ was the proper substitute. No Scripture, **not one**, requires belief or faith in order that God be propitiated. The only way to suggest this is to make the word σωζω - *saved* mean ἰλαστήριον - *the means of expiation*.

God is propitiated, appeased, completely satisfied as far as our sin is concerned, not because of our belief or faith, but because He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins!

Justification

It is God who declares us righteous because of the obedience of Christ, not because of our belief or because of anything we do. The primary word is δικαίωω - *justify, righteous*.

Rom 3:24 *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

Rom 5:19 *For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.*

Rom 5:9 *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

Tit 3:7 *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Look at Rom 3:24 The good news - we have been justified freely, without a cause, because of the work of Christ and His work alone. The passage in Rom 5:19, clearly says that we were made sinners by the disobedience of Adam. There was no belief required on our part to be made a sinner, there was no acceptance of what Adam did in order for us to be made a sinner. We were the passive receivers of Adam's sin because of his disobedience and the text says that in exactly the same way we are the passive receivers of Christ's righteousness because of His obedience. The verse could not be clearer, as far as His sheep (the many) are concerned, no belief or faith was required to be made sinners and no belief or faith is required to be made righteous.

In addition, the other passages, Rom 5:9 and Tit 3:7, make it just as clear that being saved from wrath and being made heirs follow the fact that we are now justified. Because we have been justified *we shall be saved from wrath*. No Scripture, **not one**, requires belief or faith in order to be declared righteous. The only way to suggest this is to make the word σωζω - *saved* mean δικαίωω - *justify*.

We are declared righteous, not by our belief or faith, but because of the obedience of Christ!

The only way it is possible to make our belief necessary in order to be born again, redeemed, reconciled, justified and glorified is to force one Greek word to have several different meanings all at the same time even though none of these meanings occur in any Greek dictionary. Do we have the right to handle words this way? Would anyone suggest that those who understood the language and heard or read these words in the early church would have included all of these meanings in “saved?” If it is possible to manipulate the language in this manner the Scriptures become unintelligible. If words mean one thing to one person and something else to another how shall they communicate?

Consider these words carefully as the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures beautifully summarizes what God has done for His sheep by His grace:

Rom 8:29 - For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Read this, believe this, all of those whom He foreknew, the word means to know intimately as Adam “knew” his wife. Think about this for a moment. Adam knew Eve because she was in him and from (taken out of) him, he was her source. In the same way we are told in Hebrews 2:11 that we were both in Christ and from Christ.

We are His sheep, those whom He predestinated, pre-determined, already conformed to the image of His Son. He did this! Also all of those whom He predestinated, He called, all of them. All the called, He justified, all of them! And all of those whom He justified, He also glorified! Here is grace, great grace. Where in this entire process of God redeeming His sheep do we find it depending on belief or personal faith?? Unless words mean nothing we already know that only His sheep, those whom He foreknew, predestinated, called, justified and glorified can believe. Those who do not believe are not and never were His sheep, John 10:26

Believe - Faith

We have seen that there is no synergism, that is, our belief or faith having anything to do with the work of God in our new birth, redemption, reconciliation, justification and glorification. This is the finished work of Christ and has been done for all of His sheep and is the basis for their belief. That is why it is only His sheep that believe, only the ones who can believe, and they will never perish. More than that!! We know we were His sheep before we believed! Since this is because of the work of Christ and not of us it is absolutely certain. Therein lies the peace that passes understanding.

Since the Scriptures that speak of faith in Christ are so often used in modern evangelism, we will look at the passages where the phrase “faith of Christ” or “faith of Jesus Christ” occur.

The first one:

Rom 3:21-24 *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by **faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

In many translations this genitive is translated “faith in Jesus Christ.” As tempting as it is to investigate the Greek genitive, this is not the purpose of the present study. A quote from one who has made an exhaustive investigation into the use of the genitive in the Scriptures will suffice.

“Older commentaries...see *χριστοῦ* as an objective gen., thus, “faith *in* Christ.” However, more and more scholars are embracing these texts as involving a subjective gen. (thus, either “Christ’s faith” or “Christ’s faithfulness”). Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*

Here in Romans 3 the Genitive is a subjective Genitive, in fact, must be a subjective Genitive, “Jesus Christ’s faithfulness.” In this context the Holy spirit is not talking about our faith in Christ, our belief in Christ, if that were the case it would not only be redundant with the next phrase “them that believe,” but would make the righteousness of God depend on us rather than on Christ. It is God’s righteousness that has been revealed and the passive voice declares it to be separate from anything man could do, God’s righteousness manifested in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The faithfulness of Christ is demanded in this context. Think of it, the righteousness of God has been witnessed by the law and the prophets. What was that witness? The witness of the law, the Pentateuch, was that in order for God to be righteous and still deal with His people an innocent substitute must be provided by some one other than the sinner and die for his sin. Adam and Eve did not provide a substitute sacrifice for their sin, God did. The firstborn son at the Passover did not provide a substitute sacrifice in order to live, his father (God) did.

The witness of the prophets was that the substitute would not only be provided by God but that it would be the Messiah Himself who would be the sacrifice for our sins. Thus it would be in direct opposition to this context to suggest that it is our faith in Christ

rather than the faithfulness of Christ that is witnessed by the law and the prophets as the substitute required in order for God to be righteous and still deal with His sheep. This has been fully discussed in the chapter on God's righteousness.

Christ came to do the will of the Father, Heb 10:9, and He was faithful, He obeyed, He was made sin for us who knew no sin in order that we be made the righteousness of God in Him, I Cor 5:21. Because of the disobedience of Adam the elect were made sinner so, in the same way, by the obedience of Christ the elect are made righteousness, Rom 5:19. They no more chose to be made righteous than they chose to be made a sinner. This is made clear in Col 1;

*Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, **by him** to reconcile all things unto himself; **by him**, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. **And you**, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath **he reconciled** in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*

We were reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, this is truth. It is by means of His death, not by anything from or by us that we are reconciled. Our belief does not make this truth, it is truth.

In our text in Romans 3 it is impossible to make the sentence say that God's righteousness is manifest separate from anything man could do (passive) and then say that it is manifest by man's faith in Christ. Surely we can not believe that God's righteousness is based upon something we do. The truth is that the righteousness of God is revealed in the faithfulness, the obedience of Jesus Christ and His finished work for us. Our belief does not make this truth, it is truth.

This should be clear without any reference to Greek yet many modern translators insist on "faith in Christ." The primary reason for this is their conviction that man is responsible in some degree for his redemption. The error in the translation "in" is, first of all, it is in opposition to the context and secondly it suggests we gain righteousness by something we do rather than something Christ did, a direct contradiction of scripture and a major reason for the lack of assurance in many Christian lives.

The other passages where this genitive occurs are:

Gal 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Gal 3:22 *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

Php 3:9 *And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

In the context of all of these the subjective genitive, the “faithfulness of Christ,” makes the most sense and agrees with other passages that speak of our position in Christ because of His finished work.

If we translate these passages by “faith in Christ” we exult man and diminish Christ but if we realize they are passages that present the faithfulness of Christ we exult Christ and diminish man. Remember His words in Joh 5:39, *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: **and they are they which testify of me.***

Consider this concise statement of the gospel:

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: 1 Cor 15 3-4.

What we as Christians believe comes from words, God’s Words, and must be carefully considered if we are to know truth. In this passage the phrase “for our sins” contains the word *υπερ* - which means *in behalf of*, or *in place of*. He died in our place! When you read this passage is it conceivable that our Lord Jesus Christ did not know for whom He was dying as a sacrifice for their sin? He did not die for everyone, He did not die for an unknown group, He died “for **our** sins.”

In order for the “for our sins” to be an unknown group awaiting their acceptance or belief we must destroy the word meanings and contradict many passages of Scripture.

We will mention just one;

Rom 8:29 *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Did He know? He not only knew, He foreknew! He did not die in vain. He died for us. The reason man refuse to believe this is because he does not understand grace and insists that man must do something, that he must have a part in his redemption.

How much more must be said before we realize that belief is not something drummed up in order to be “born again,” something required of us before we can be heaven bound but is, in fact and in truth, the natural response of His sheep who have been made alive because of what He has done for them.

Saved

Both “saved” and “salvation” are words that have the fundamental meaning of deliverance or rescue. Those being saved are those whom He has already redeemed. They are the only ones who can believe or who can be saved. It is obvious that the term deliverance or rescue when speaking in terms of the belief or faith of an individual makes absolutely no sense if the person is dead. The very term saved infers that the person is alive, in our case, has been born again. In looking at doctrinal terms like born again, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation and justification it is clear that these truths of grace are not based on human works or human response. The reality of these doctrines is based only on the work of Jesus Christ.

How can we make the words saved and salvation equal to one or more of these truths? We have already seen that saved does not, and cannot mean born again. In fact, it cannot mean any of the other doctrines either. Would we, for example, say in 1 Tim 4:16 that by taking heed to doctrine Timothy would “born again” (or substitute any of the other doctrinal words) himself and them that hear him? Or, in the same way, would we say in Rom 13:11 that our “born again” is nearer than when we believed?

The presuppositions one has concerning the Bible will have a profound effect upon the results of his study of the Bible. Is the Bible a collection of the writings of many different authors? Is it the purpose of Bible study to try to compare what Paul thought about a certain subject vs. what Peter or John may have thought? If this is the case then we may just as well use this collection of writings to compare thoughts of different writers and hope to come up with points worth our consideration?

On the other hand, is the Bible Scripture? That is, is it authored by God? When one reads the book of Romans is he reading what Paul thought or is he reading what God said? It is amazing to hear many declare that this is God’s Word and then say “it is difficult to grasp Paul’s thought here.” Is it Paul’s thought or God’s truth?

This is not the place to discuss the basis for the presupposition of this writer that the Bible is Scripture, it is the Word of the Sovereign God and inerrant in the original manuscripts. The one author is the Holy Spirit who used men to write His Word. Thus it is reasonable when we know He knew all, even before He inspired men to write and that this knowledge is consistent in all His Word so that He does not, would not, and could not contradict Himself

Ps 119:160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

Ps 135:6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

Isa 41:4 Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Isa 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Ac 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Phil 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

These truths must underlie our study of His Word. We can not ignore them for surely He does not. We can not come to a meaning from any passage that is in opposition to these truths. Thus the meanings we derive from our study of the Scripture dealing with belief and saving faith must be consistent with the truth of His Sovereignty and purpose.

In this study of saving faith beneath every passage we must remember that He:

knew and chose His elect before the foundation of the world;

Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

2Th 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

is working in us, His elect, both to will and to perform

Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

who works all things according to His will, not ours;

Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

who works all things together for the good of all His elect and called them for His purpose;

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose

In all of these passages speaking of His working in and for us there is the wonderful underlying truth of His sovereignty:

Ac 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

determined to show His wrath;

*Rom 9:22 What if God, willing to **shew his wrath**, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*

had vessels of wrath already fitted to destruction;

*Rom 9:22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the **vessels of wrath fitted to destruction***

had predetermined vessels of mercy;

*Rom 9:23-24 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the **vessels of mercy**, which he had **afore prepared unto glory**, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

is the one that shows mercy, it is not the one who wills nor the one who tries but God who shows mercy on whom He will;

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

who has appointed us to salvation, not wrath;

1 Thess 5:9-10 *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, **who died for us**, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*

Here “wake or sleep” does not mean dead or alive as some have suggested but faithful or unfaithful, what grace! The appointment is so certain that whether we wake, are faithful, or sleep, are unfaithful, we live together with Him because, and only because He died for us. The “for” in the Greek, is *hyper*, and means “in our place”, He died in our place. The word “wake” is *gryphano* and means to watch on guard duty, to be watchful or faithful, and the word “sleep” is *koimomai* and means to sleep on guard duty, to be indifferent or unfaithful. It is not the same word “sleep”, *koimomai*, “to sleep in the bedroom, to sleep in peace” which is used in chapter 4. This should be obvious by referring to verse 6, “therefore let us not sleep as do the others”, which can not be a command not to die but rather “to watch and be sober.” What a wonderful truth, that our security in Him is not dependent on us or on anything we may do.

who predetermined His elect to glorification;

Rom 8:29-30 *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Much more could be said concerning the grace of our Lord in our behalf, but this is enough to show that to neglect these underling facts in any consideration of belief or saving faith is to promote the uncertainty of eternal life and the lack of peace so prevalent today.

We have pointed out that the word “saved” means *rescue* or *deliver*. All Greek dictionaries indicate this meaning and we have no right to read into the word that which is not there. If we say that “saved” means “born again” we made that up, no Scripture would support such a statement. Given the right to say that any word means what we want or think it means makes Bible study a sham.

A simple example can be used to illustrate how the words saved and salvation are normally used, as well as how they are used in Scripture:

A drowning man is in the middle of the ocean, there is no hope, even an experienced swimmer could not make land. Someone on a passing ship throws him a life jacket and he is saved. He could easily say “I am (or I was) saved,” or he could speak of his great salvation. But what does he mean? It is obvious that when he uses the words “saved” or “salvation” he does not mean:

life jacket
passing ship
someone who threw
drowning

He means exactly what we would expect, he was saved, rescued, delivered from drowning.

There is a deliverer (someone), a means of deliverance (life jacket) , and a deliverance from something (drowning). We see this same pattern wherever the word saved is used in Scripture, for example:

Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Here the deliverer is Jesus, the means is His substitutionary death and the deliverance is from sins.

‘Save’ does not mean Jesus, it does not mean His death and it does not mean sins, it means ‘deliverance,’ and that deliverance is from their sins.

Another;

Tit 3:3 - For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Here also “Saved” does not mean God our Saviour and it does not mean regeneration or renewing it means “saved.” The deliverer is God, the means of deliverance is regeneration and renewing and the deliverance is from *foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*

Here again;

Eph 2:1- And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

First of all, it is clear in this passage that God ‘quickened’ us with Christ, this is the new birth by the will of God not by anything we do or did, it was “with Christ.” Thus the text deals with those who are already born again. The deliverer is God, the means of deliverance is the new birth, and the salvation, deliverance is from *our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*, all by the grace of God.

The passage adds *lest any man should boast*. Think about this also, since we, are His sheep and have been born again by the will of God we are alive. This is true of all of His sheep as we were told in John 10 and, since all His sheep believe because they are His Sheep there is no difference, no one can boast. Much of modern preaching gives one the inferred opportunity to boast. I believed and am in heaven, you did not, too bad.

And again;

Rom 10:9-10 that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Are we to ignore the truth that only His sheep can believe? We **know** that only His sheep can believe because He said so and because it makes sense since they are the ones who have been made alive, born again by the will of God. If we suggest that these in this text will become His sheep by confession and belief we make Christ a liar. If we are to maintain no contradiction in our study it is His sheep who believe in their heart.

The deliverer is the Lord Jesus, the means of deliverance is believing and confessing and the deliverance is from the effort of law keeping. The passage is clearly not even suggesting that one is born again, redeemed, etc by believing and confessing but is declaring that all of this has already been accomplished by the righteousness of God in Christ, all that has to be done is to believe it. Although the Jew is in the immediate context, the truth is applicable for all who try to make themselves righteous by their works. What a wonderful salvation, deliverance, delivered from effort to trust.

Another example from the Old Testament;

Ps 37:39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.

Here the deliverer is the Lord, the means of deliverance is His strength and the deliverance is from the time of trouble.

Here are just a few of the Scriptures that use 'saved' and in all cases there is both the means of deliverance as well as the deliverance:

Saved by Christ:

Mt 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Mt 18:11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Lu 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Ac 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Ro 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

2Ti 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

1Ti 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Tit 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Jas 4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Saved by endurance:

Mt 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Mt 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Saved because the days shortened:

Mr 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

Saved by believing:

Mr 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Lu 7:50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Lu 18:42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

Ac 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Heb 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Saved by entering in:

Joh 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Saved by calling on the name of the Lord:

Ac 2:21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Ac 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Saved by the Word:

Jas 1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Saved by spoken words:

Ac 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

1Th 2:16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Saved because we are already justified:

Ro 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Saved because we are already reconciled:

Ro 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Saved by His life:

Ro 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Saved by hope:

Ro 8:24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

Saved by confession:

Ro 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Saved by calling on His name

Ro 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Saved by provoking to emulation:

Ro 11:14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Saved by the preaching of the cross:

1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

1Co 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Saved by fire:

1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Saved by being delivered to Satan

1Co 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Saved by wife or by husband

1Co 7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Saved by one using all means:

1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Saved By seeking their profit:

1Co 10:33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.

Saved by taking heed to doctrine:

1Ti 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Saved by grace:

Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

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

Saved by the love of the truth:

2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Saved by childbearing

1Ti 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Saved by coming unto God:

Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Saved by one that converts a sinner from the error of his ways:

Jas 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Saved by baptism:

1Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Saved because already righteous

1Pe 4:18 And since the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Space does not permit a detailed discussion of each of these passages but in all of them deliverance is the result of some one or some action. If we keep in mind the fundamental truths of the sovereignty of God and what He has revealed concerning His purpose there is no thought in any of them that belief is the cause of redemption.

For most of those who profess to be Christians the word “saved” seems to mean one or more of the basic doctrines of grace; born again, redeemed, reconciled, propitiated and justified, which, as we have seen, are the result of the finished work of Christ, not because of anything we believe or do. Christ made us alive, delivered, saved us from death, from the authority of sin, etc. He did this! And because he did we believe.

It is clear that “saving faith” is not “born again faith,” or “redeeming faith,” or any of the other doctrines that declare the finished work of Christ in our behalf. We are His:

He chose us before the foundation of the world,

Eph 1:4-11 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,..... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

He died in our place,

1 Thess 5:9-10 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Remember, wake or sleep does not mean alive or dead but faithful or unfaithful

and made us alive,

1 Pe 1:3 & 23 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath caused us to be again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,... Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. ESV

and He declared us righteous,

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

2Co 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The gospel is not that God would redeem you if you asked Him to, or if you were willing to accept Him as your Saviour, but the grand “good news” is that *when we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly, that when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son* so that even though you as His child were not only dead in sins but His enemy yet He has redeemed you, reconciled you, declared you righteous in Christ and is completely satisfied as far as the payment for your sins is concerned.

You are delivered from your sins by the finished work, the obedience of Christ, this is truth. Believing it does not make it true. Because it is true you believe it. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

As long as sermons are preached and articles are written that ignore and diminish the finished work of Christ and make the gaining of eternal life or of being born again the responsibility of the individual there will always be the nagging doubt, have I really exercised “saving faith?” To place birth in the hands of the baby can only lead to confusion.

“Saving faith” then, is simply the acceptance (belief) of the truth of what God has done for us in Christ. Saving faith does not make this true, it is truth. Saving faith is trusting the work which Christ has already accomplished for us. Remember, His work for us is complete and finished.

As His sheep read and meditate on His Word there is that inner testimony of the Holy Spirit that the Word is true, and by believing we are delivered from the fear of death, the effort of law keeping, the guilt of sin, from error to truth, from unrest to rest, from no peace to peace, from works to grace, etc., which results in the confidence of eternal life, in joy that is unspeakable and peace that passes understanding as well as opening up marvelous fellowship with Him who does all things well.

ARC
Riverside Bible Church