

who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous for good deeds.** NASB

This lifelong obedience or “**perseverance**” is spoken of by Jesus and the Apostles as a mark of those who will be saved. Perseverance cannot be separated from true repentance because it proves repentance to be real.

Matthew 24:12-14 - 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But **the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.** NASB

Hebrews 3:13-15 - 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For **we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;** 15 while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." NASB

The Nature of Saving Faith

The nature of true “**saving faith**” is a major theme in the teaching of both Jesus and the Apostles. They are frequently laboring to be sure that we are aware of the nature of “**saving faith**” so that we can be sure we possess it and not some *mere profession* or apostate form of faith. This can be seen in many different allegories and *forms* of expression in the New Testament. Here are a few clear examples of these forms of the nature of true faith;

- Jesus calls us to a Master and slave relationship of lifelong perseverance and service
- Jesus calls us to be “**born again**” and to be recreated by God through faith
- Jesus calls us to bear fruit and produce the marks of true faith
- Jesus calls us to humility, brokenness and to deny self reliance
- Jesus calls us to lose our life to follow Him
- Jesus calls us to love Him supremely above all other things and worship Him

When Jesus and the Apostles teach us about the faith, they frequently use the allegory of a **master and slave**. Jesus tells us parables of how true faith is demonstrated by the faithful obedience of a good slave. Paul tells us that we are slaves of righteousness.

Matthew 20:26-28 - 26 "It is not so among you, **but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;** 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. NASB

Luke 12:37, 42-43 - 37 "**Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes;** truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them..... 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 "Blessed is that **slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.** NASB

Romans 6:17-18 - 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, **you became obedient from the heart** to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and **having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.** NASB

They teach that true “**saving faith**” is brought about by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and call us to be **born again**.

John 3:3 - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" NASB

2 Corinthians 5:17 - 17 Therefore **if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature;** the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. NASB

This regeneration is a fundamental change in the nature of man and is a work that only God can do. Because salvation is the work of God in regeneration, and the believer has been given a new nature and is indwelt with the Holy Spirit, the believer therefore desires to please God and to keep His commandments. It is the chief goal of one who worships and esteems God to live a life which imitates God and conforms to His character. This is reverberated throughout the Scripture with exhortations and commands which continually call us to become like Christ in our character and behavior.

Ephesians 5:1-2 - 5:1 Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ** also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

1 Peter 1:15-16 - 15 but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;** 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." NASB

This is also shown in the allegory of a **fruit bearing vine or tree**. This expression of true saving faith is frequently shown by Jesus and the Apostles. When this is shown, there is a contrast given between those **"true believers"** who do bear fruit and by it prove the reality of faith, and those **"mere professors"** who do not and are destroyed. In these examples of fruit bearing, Jesus and the Apostles are laboring to show the **"marks"** or **"evidence"** of true **"saving faith"** so that we can discern the difference between **"saving faith"** and **"mere profession."**

John 15:5-7 - 5 **"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit;** for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 **"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.** 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. NASB

Matthew 7:16-21 - 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, **every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.** 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. NASB

Another analogy employed by Jesus and the Apostles to show true faith is that of **self denial, humility and brokenness**. We are to mourn and weep over our sin and self-reliance, for no one has the power in and of themselves to please God. This is only accomplished by the power of the Spirit through faith, for **"without faith it is impossible to please God"** (Heb 11:6). When we come to Christ by repentance and faith, we denounce ourselves in brokenness over our sin, and we humble ourselves before God confessing our sins and our profound offenses against the God of Heaven and in faith we cast ourselves at His mercy through trusting what Christ has done for us, not in any way how we have merited God's favor. True faith relies solely on the merits of Christ, embracing our own weakness and inability to earn God's favor. Therefore the Gospel calls us to abandon self reliance and trust in Christ ALONE for justification and reconciliation to God.

Luke 9:23 - 23 And He was saying to them all, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily,** and follow Me. NASB

Matthew 18:2-4 - 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, 3 and said, **"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child,** he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

James 4:6-10 - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, **"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."** 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. **Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves** in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. NASB

In fact, the Gospel call of self-denial is so great, that Christ calls us to **lose our own life to follow Him**. In this He means to say that His Lordship and purpose and plan for our life supersedes our own purposes and plans. He means for our life to take a whole new direction and for our plans to definitively change from our own sinful, self reliant direction of self fulfillment to and life of servant-hood to Him as our Master and King. We no longer live for ourselves but instead for Christ. Our lives no longer belong to us but rather to Christ our Redeemer King who bought and paid our ransom from death and delivered us into eternal life!

Luke 9:23-25 - 23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 **"For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.** 25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and **loses or forfeits himself?** NASB

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 - 14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, **that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.** NASB

Romans 14:7-9 - 7 For **not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord;** therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. NASB

1 Corinthians 6:17-20 - 17 But **the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.** 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?** 20 For **you have been bought with a price:** therefore glorify God in your body. NASB

This price of losing our life can occasionally cost us everything. Indeed throughout history many saints have given their life at the hands of violent persecutors. The Gospel calls us to this kind of commitment of self abandonment to follow Christ, even unto death!

Matthew 10:32-33 - 32 "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, **I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.** 33 "**But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father** who is in heaven. NASB

2 Timothy 2:11-13 - 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For **if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;** 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself. NASB

Revelation 2:10-11 - 10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.** 11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'** NASB

In fact, the Gospel calls us to give up everything we have in order **to love Christ supremely above all other things and worship** Him first.

Luke 14:26-27 - 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and **does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. NASB

Luke 14:33 - 33 "So therefore, **no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.** NASB

Philippians 3:7-8 - 7 But **whatever things were gain to me,** those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, **I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,** and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, NASB

Throughout the Bible God makes it clear that He is the most valuable and supremely worthy being of all. We are continually called to hold Him in higher esteem than all other things.

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is **the great commandment in the Law?**" 37 And He said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'** 38 "**This is the great and foremost commandment.** 39 "The second is like it, **'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB

In fact, this is the nature of sin itself, it is to value ourselves and our own will above God and His will. The pride of self exaltation is the very first sin portrayed in Satan's rebellion in the angelic conflict and mankind has followed his devious temptation and because of it plunged all of creation into death and bondage to decay. Therefore the Gospel calls us to willing submission to Christ in order to reverse this great treason against God. In short, the very thing we refused to do in the garden at the fall, the Gospel calls us to do now. That is to deny our own self reliance and self will and to embrace Christ as our all sufficient resource for life and fellowship with God. What man could not do in his own strength in the garden, he can now do with the strength that God provides through the regeneration and indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4:13 -13 **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.** NASB

2 Corinthians 3:4-5 - 4 And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 **Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God** NASB

Now in the Scripture, true love for God and Christ is seen and made evident by how we behave. In other words, the Bible points out the kind of behavior that shows itself as loving God, and in contrast points out a false kind of love which is not really true love for God, because it lacks obedience. It is clear from scripture that love for God produces obedience to His commandments. This obedience is the result of regeneration in the life of the believer. This obedience is produced by a willing submission to the Lordship of Christ.

1 John 5:3 - 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

John 14:15,21 - 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." NASB

1 John 4:20-21 - 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for **the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.** 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that **the one who loves God should love his brother also.** NASB

True Conversion or Mere Professors?

In the New Testament, the writers are continually laboring to show the nature of true faith and also the nature of false faith. The believer is called to self examination again and again to test the reality of their faith. This was a theme in the teaching of Jesus when He would present His parables to teach about the nature of the Kingdom and of saving faith.

Luke 8:14-15 - 14 "And the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, **and bring no fruit to maturity.** 15 "And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and **hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.** NASB

Luke 18:22-26 - 22 And when Jesus heard this, He said to him, **"One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."** 23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad; for he was extremely rich. 24 And Jesus looked at him and said, **"How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!** 25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." NASB

Luke 12:16-21 - 16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. 17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18 "And he said, **"This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.** 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 **"So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."** NASB

Matthew 13:47-50 - 47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; 48 and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and **gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away.** 49 "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, 50 and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. NASB

This theme in the teaching of Jesus, shows that true faith produces good works consistent with that faith. In fact, those who do not submit to Christ as Lord, or reject Him by disobedience, are condemned as not possessing salvation. A man's good deeds are proof of his true repentance and a man's evil deeds prove him to be a child of the devil.

Matthew 7:21 - 21 **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven;** but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. NASB

Luke 13:24-27 - 24 "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for **many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.** 25 "Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' 26 "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; 27 and **He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.'** NASB

This was also carried on by the Apostles as they explained the Gospel and the kingdom of God.

Titus 1:16 - 6 They profess to know God, **but by their deeds they deny Him**, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed. NASB

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - 3 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 **For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money**, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; 5 **holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.** NASB

James 1:22 - 22 But **prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers** who delude themselves. NASB

2 Corinthians 13:5 - 5 **Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith**; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — **unless indeed you fail the test?** NASB

We are commanded again and again to repent and stop sinning. This is a fundamental part of Christian life, that is, that we submit to the Lordship of Christ and obey His commandments. It is clear from Scripture that those who go on in unrepentant sin will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Romans 6:12-13 - 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts**, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; **but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.** NASB

Romans 8:12-14 - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 **for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. NASB

Ephesians 5:3-5 - 3 But **do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you**, as is proper among saints; 4 and **there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting**, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. NASB

A proper understanding of salvation issues from the book of first John alone, and shines light as clear as a sunbeam on these issues. A true Christian has been *“born of God”*, because God has decided to give Him life, and that life is eternal by nature. When we have been *“born again”*, we have become new creations with an eternal destiny. You cannot turn from genuine faith, because you are kept by Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Bible never teaches that someone who is genuinely saved, can reject or disengage themselves from Christ. Someone who apostatizes must have had at one time an orthodox and essential *profession*, but not a genuine new birth. But as John explains of the apostates or antichrists;

1 John 2:18-19 - 18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. 19 **They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.** NASB

If one were *“born of God”* he could not continue to sin. The idea here is that true converts do not live in continual patterns of sin (the word for *“sins”* here means “ongoing continual practice of sin”), and that further if one is living in an ongoing continual pattern of sin he/she is only a **mere professor** and not a **true believer**.

1 John 3:6-10 - 6 **No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.** 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 **the one who practices sin is of the devil**; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 **No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** NASB

These contrasts are meant to speak to the true believer of how to discern false teaching from true teaching about the faith. When an apostate continues in his sin, he shows the reality of his eternal state and divine calling. When one continues in righteousness and truth, their works are the proof positive of saving faith.

1 John 2:29 - 29 If you know that He is righteous, you know **that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.** NASB

When an apostate breaks fellowship with Christians, and begins to live in continual patterns of sin, they show themselves to be children of the devil.

1 John 3:9-10 - 9 **No one who is born of God practices sin,** because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 **By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God,** nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB

John makes it crystal clear that the distinguishing mark of true faith is the fruit or product that comes from it. When the product of one's life is a continual pattern of sin, they manifest that the true nature of their faith is only **mere profession** and not the fruit of being **"born of God."**

1 John 4:7-9 - 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.** 8 **The one who does not love does not know God,** for God is love. NASB

Those who have been born of the divine will, (John 1:13), persevere. Not because they persist in their own spiritual fervor, but because Christ the good Shepherd knows His sheep, and He will lose none that the Father has given Him, but will raise them up at the last day (John 6:39).

1 John 5:18-19 - 18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; **but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.** NASB

It is obvious then that there is a so called faith, a **mere profession**, which is really no faith at all. If someone claims to have faith, but does not live a life consistent with the teaching of Christ, his/her faith is useless. True saving faith is that which produces the fruit of God's Spirit in the life of a Christian. ***Faith in Christ is not just mental agreement with the gospel message, but it is a life response to the gospel, which produces actions consistent with the children of God.***

The demons believe the Gospel message and know that it is true, but they have not conformed their lives to it. Many people are just like them, they have believed that the message is true, but that have not submitted their life to Christ to obey Him.

James 2:14-19 - 14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? **Can such faith save him?** 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 **In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.** 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19 **You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder.**

Faith is the reality and proof that our hearts have been cleansed and we have been reconciled to God. Faith has substance, and that substance is a transformed life. Remember how Jesus defined of faith.

Luke 9:23 - 23 And He was saying to them all, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.** NASB

You see He is calling for the transformation of one's life. It is a willingness to deny oneself and go where He goes and do what He does. It is not our good behavior that earns favor with God, but our good behavior is the **product** of the kind of faith that saves. If we realize that Christ had to die for our sins, how can we walk in them any longer! Eternal life is the free gift of God given to those who repent and have faith in Christ. It is by grace through faith in Christ alone that we are saved, not by our works. But **this faith produces a life surrendered to the Lordship of Christ** and is a testimony of Christ's power over sin. This is why we are exhorted toward good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10 - 8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith;** and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,** which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. NASB

Therefore **true saving faith is seen in contrast to mere profession** by a submission to the Lordship of Christ which produces a life of good works and obedience to God's commandments.