

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