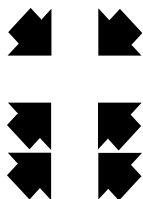


- (5) *The Watchtower*, 15 August 1972, p. 491.
 (6) *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1996, p. 8, insert added.

Notes on NWT Verses

(a) The Society has mistranslated the verb “believe” in the *New World Translation* to “exercise faith in”. By doing so, they convince their followers that they must “do” something, or work, in order to be saved. In reality, the Greek word for “believe” (Pisteuo) means, “to believe, also to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence” (*Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*), underline added. Notice that the phrase “exercise faith in” is not included in the dictionary definition.

(b) The Society has also mistranslated John 17:3 in the *New World Translation* to make it appear that people must be “taking in knowledge” of God in order to gain eternal life. However, the accurate translation of John 17:3 can still be found in the Society’s own *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, where we are told that everlasting life comes from “knowing” God, not from simply having a lot of knowledge about Him (see John 5:39, 40).



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What Must We Do To Be Saved? *The Watchtower Society vs. The Bible*

What must we do to be saved? This is the title of an article and a question posed in the February 1, 1996 issue of *The Watchtower*. It’s not the first time that Watchtower Society has sought to answer this question. In fact, the Society has spent more than a century attempting to tell its followers what they must do to be saved.

One past issue of *The Watchtower* urges readers to “come to Jehovah’s organization [the Watchtower Society] for salvation”(1). Another issue tells readers that “unless we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using [the Watchtower Society], we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do”(2). One article even states that “to receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization [the Watchtower Society] and serve God as part of it”(3). As a result, many people today are convinced they must follow the teachings of the Society if they want to be saved. But what does the Bible say are the requirements for being saved, and how does the Society’s teaching about salvation compare with the Bible?

As Christians, we’re told to “test all things” in 1 Thessalonians 5:21. We are also told in Acts 17:11 that the apostle Paul considered the Bereans to be of more noble character than the Thessalonians because they “carefully examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

So, let’s take the Bible’s own advice and “test all things” to see how the Society’s teachings about being saved compare with the Scriptures. Only then will we know what we really must do to be saved.

Working for salvation?

The Society readily acknowledges the need for faith. According to the Society, however, faith alone is not sufficient for eternal life. Faith must be accompanied by consistent works *and* devotion to the Society, as well as all of its teachings. One issue of *The Watchtower* states that “to get ones name written in the Book of Life will depend upon one’s works”(4). Another issue comments on “working hard for the reward of eternal life”(5). But does the Bible say a person must work hard to earn salvation? Are works a requirement for salvation, or is salvation the result of faith in Jesus alone?

For starters, in almost 200 verses in the New Testament, salvation is said to be by faith alone, without any mention of works. Let’s look at what Jesus himself said about works and being saved. Consider what he says about believing in him in the following verses:

- John 6:28,29 tells us that Jesus was asked “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”(a)
- John 6:40 says, “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”
- John 11:25 says, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”

According to Jesus himself, everyone who looks to him and believes in him will be saved. The apostle Paul affirms the words of Jesus. In Acts 16:30,31, the Roman jailer asks Paul what he must do to be saved. The apostle Paul answers, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." If works were a prerequisite for being saved, it only stands to reason that Paul would have said something about works, especially since he was presented with such a direct question. Instead, Paul said nothing about works. Indeed, the apostle Paul taught that the act of being saved had nothing to do with works at all. He even wrote an entire letter to the Galatians to oppose new leaders within the congregation who were introducing extra requirements (works) for justification beyond faith in Jesus. Paul also commented on faith in other verses, including the following:

- Romans 5:1 states, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- Romans 5:28 states, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."

Faith without works is dead

Responding to the above verses, the Society directs its followers to James 2:26, which says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead." This verse, the Society argues, proves that people must do good works to be saved. According to the Society, if people do enough good works, they might be saved (provided they are Jehovah's Witnesses). But does this interpretation of "faith without works is dead" agree with the rest of Scripture?

A recent *Watchtower* states, "We are not worthy of this magnificent gift [salvation], though, if we fail to demonstrate our love and obedience by doing the things that the Bible says God and Christ want us to do"(6). Yet James 2:10 says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." James knew there was no man who could be good enough, or work enough, to earn salvation. He understood that man was incapable of keeping all of God's commandments. The apostle Paul, a friend and colleague of James, stated many times that we are saved by grace alone. Consider the following:

- Ephesians 2:8,9 states, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and *this not from yourselves*, it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."
- Titus 3:4,5 states, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, *He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done*, but because of his mercy."

But did James also understand that man was saved by God's grace alone? Acts 15:1-21 provides strong proof that James, like Paul, did indeed believe man was saved through the grace of Jesus Christ. In verse 11, the apostle Paul states in the presence of James, "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." Paul was stating his belief that the Jews were saved by God's grace, just as the Gentiles were. James did not disagree with what Paul said. Had he believed that works were a requirement for salvation, this certainly would have been an excellent opportunity to say so. Instead, James agreed with Paul, even stating in Acts 15:19 that "it is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult

Earth...But How?," we must do four things to have the hope of being saved: study, obey God's Laws, identify with the Society, and be loyal to the Organization. Let's compare these requirements with the Bible's requirements.

The Society says that being saved depends on whether we study and take in knowledge of Jehovah.(b) The Bible says that all the knowledge in the world won't save someone, only Jesus can save. In John 5:39, 40 Jesus says, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." This is one of the reasons the apostle Paul "considered everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ and him crucified" (Philippians 3:8). Paul's Christian life was consumed in his personal relationship with Jesus.

The Society says we are saved by obeying God's Laws. The Bible says we are justified by faith. Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." Galatians 3:24 says, in effect, that God's laws were put here to make us aware of our sin and of our need for a Savior. They were never intended to make us righteous. That's why Romans 3:22 says, "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

The Society says we are saved by serving and identifying with God's organization (the Watchtower Society). The Bible says we are to serve Jesus and identify with him. In John 12:26, Jesus said, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." Jesus also said, "No one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). Serving Jesus and serving the Watchtower Society are not the same thing.

The Society says we are saved by being loyal to the Society and its teachings. The Bible says we are to be loyal to Jesus. In John 6:67, 68, Jesus asked the disciples if they too wanted to leave him. Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Notice that Peter never mentioned anything about an organization having the words of eternal life. Peter followed Jesus because he alone has the words of eternal life. In John 10:27, Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

The Verdict

Sadly, many Jehovah's Witnesses are still convinced that following Jesus is synonymous with following the Society and its teachings. Like the people Jesus spoke of in Matthew 7:21, they acknowledge Jesus as "Lord, Lord," but their real Lord—the one they are really devoted to—is the Watchtower Society. As a result, they spend their entire lives anxious about their salvation, unsure of whether they have worked hard enough to "earn" God's favor. They have never come to know the "peace of God, which transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). Meanwhile, Jesus is beckoning them to come to him. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

Index to Watchtower Quotes

- (1) *The Watchtower*, 15 November 1981, p. 21, insert added.
- (2) *The Watchtower*, 1 December 1981, p. 27, insert added.
- (3) *The Watchtower*, 15 February 1983, pp. 12-13, insert added.
- (4) *The Watchtower*, 1 April 1947, p. 204.

to be a requirement for entering the gate.

Can we know we are saved?

According to the Society, no one can know whether they are really saved. The February 1, 1996 issue of *The Watchtower* states “true Christians are in a saved condition in that they are in an approved position before God. As a group, their salvation is sure. Individually, they must meet God’s requirements.” Unfortunately, the Society contends that there is no way you can know you’ve met all of God’s requirements. They even ridicule people in “Christendom” who say they have been saved. But what does the Bible say? Can we know we have eternal life, individually, and not as a group? Consider the following:

- John 3:17, 18 says, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is *not* condemned.”
- John 5:24 says, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me *has* eternal life and will not be condemned; he *has* crossed over from death to life.”
- John 10:28 says, “I give them eternal life, and *they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.*”
- 1 Corinthians 1:8 promises that Christ “will keep you strong to the end.”
- Ephesians 1:13 says, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit *guaranteeing* our inheritance...”
- 1 John 5:11-13 says, “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. *He who has the Son has life*, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may *know* that you have eternal life.”
- Jude 24 guarantees that God “is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault.”

These verses are very clear. Whoever believes in him “has” eternal life. The Bible does not say they “may” or “might have” eternal life. Instead, it says they have eternal life. Jesus says they shall never perish and that no one can take them from him; he will keep his followers strong to the end. When we put our faith in Christ we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, who guarantees our inheritance. According to the apostle John, one of the reasons 1 John was written was so that we could “know” we have eternal life. And Jude insists that God is able to keep us from falling. Obviously, the Society’s teachings regarding the security of our salvation do not agree with the Bible.

A final analysis

While the Society frequently calls salvation a “free” gift, it’s obvious that they really don’t believe it’s free at all. To the Society, salvation is only free in the sense that God freely offers to wipe out the sin debt we inherited from Adam; the remaining part of our salvation depends on whether we work hard enough to deserve it, and whether we follow the Society’s teachings.

The February 15, 1983 issue of *The Watchtower*, summarizes what a person must do to be saved. According to the article “You Can Live Forever on Paradise

for the Gentiles who are turning to God.” He then requested that Gentiles abstain from four things: food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood. These were four areas where the Gentiles had particular weaknesses, and they were four areas that particularly repulsed the Jews because of the Mosaic Laws. By abstaining from these things, the individual Christian would benefit, and the relationship between the Gentile Christians and the Jews would be strengthened.

So, what was James saying when he said that “faith without works is dead”? In context, James was describing the type of faith that saves. He was not saying that works save, nor was he describing the type of works that save. A Christian will have faith that produces works. The works, however, come as a result of faith, and they are works that come from God. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 the apostle Paul talks about “your work produced by faith.” According to Ephesians 2:10, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” We don’t create works that, in turn, prove our faith. God creates the works for us, and we do them out of faith. Furthermore, we can’t produce anything unless we are following Jesus. Jesus said it himself in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” He did not say that apart from the Society you can do nothing.

Will everyone enter the kingdom?

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” In other words, many who we suppose have a saving faith may, in reality, have only a “said” faith. They honor Jesus with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. Notice, that this verse never says people will have to work to enter the kingdom of heaven, nor does it say they have to follow an organization or its teachings. Instead, he states that only those who do the will of his Father will enter the kingdom. What is the will of the Father? In John 6:40, Jesus says, “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life.” One of the Father’s primary desires for us is to look to the Son—not to the Society—and believe in him for eternal life. Jesus said in John 12:26, “My Father will honor the one who serves me.” God wants us to look to the Son for eternal life, and we are to serve him. When we follow and serve Jesus, we are doing the will of the Father.

Another “proof” verse cited by the Society is Luke 13:23, 24. Someone asked Jesus, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” Jesus responded, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.” The Society teaches that the phrase “make every effort” means you must work for your salvation. Again, the Society is reading something into these verses that simply is not there. Jesus is emphasizing that we must enter through the narrow door to be saved. He is not saying we must work hard for our salvation. In Matthew 7:13 Jesus refers to this same narrow door as a gate when he says, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” We learn the identity of this narrow door, or small gate, in John 10:9, where Jesus says, “I am the gate; *whoever enters through me will be saved.*” The Bible says Jesus is the gate, and we must enter through him to gain access into his kingdom. But works are never said