

# Arlington Church of Christ

**Wednesday night Bible study**

**Salvation Contradictions?**

Some reject the Bible because they claim that it gives contradictory answers to the question of how one is saved and gets to heaven. They say for example that the Bible says that salvation is a gift from God and yet in other places says that we must DO something to receive the 'gift'.

Ephesians 2:8-9

**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.**

Titus 3:5

**he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. **He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,****

But then they point out passages like:

Mark 10:17-19

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

<sup>18</sup> “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother



But then they point out passages like:

Acts 16:29-31

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

<sup>31</sup> They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

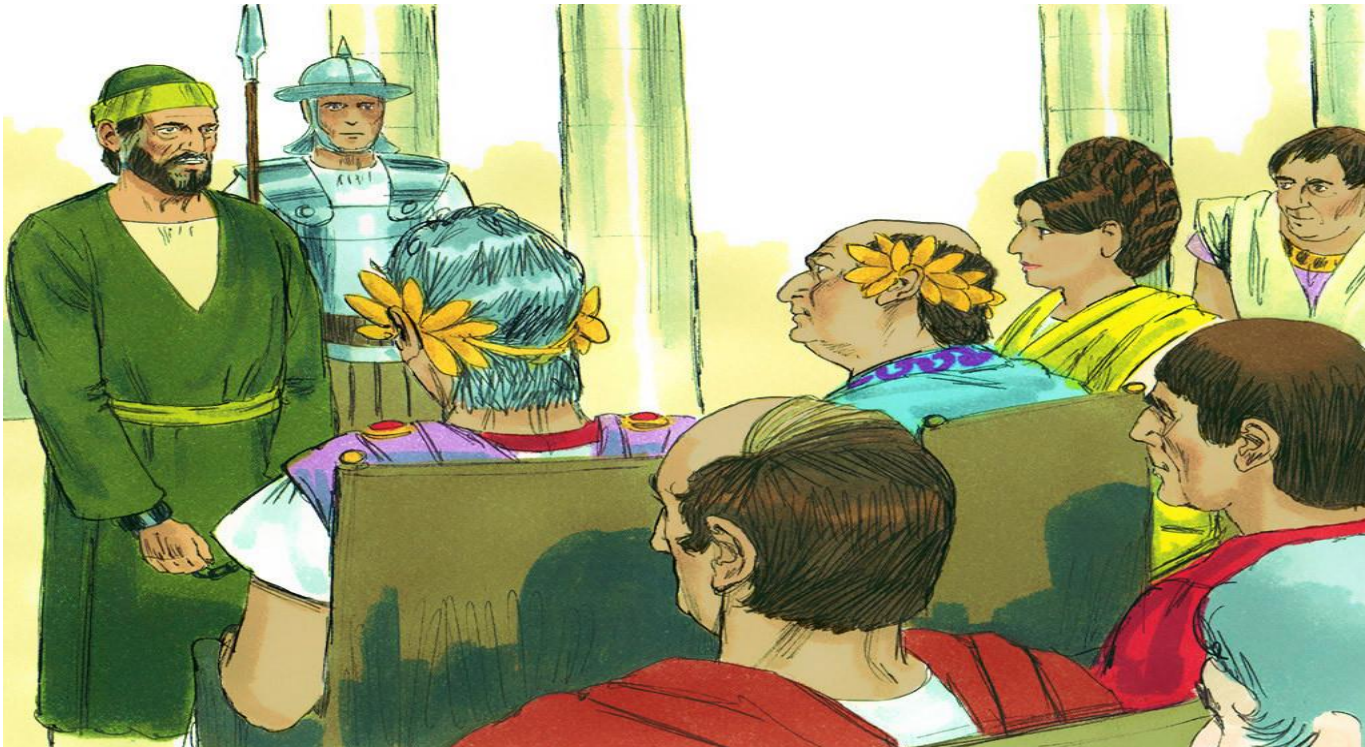


Luke 13:3

I tell you, no! **But unless you repent**, you too will all perish.

Acts 26:20

First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, **I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds**



So the argument is – how can salvation be a gift if one has to ‘DO’ something to receive it - even if that something is believing, repenting, or keeping commands. The assumption is that a ‘gift’ is something that is given with no qualifications or requirements (at least that is the way they want it to be), but is this the Biblical definition of ‘gift’?

Consider the ‘gift’ of the land of Canaan:

Genesis 12:7

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “**To your offspring I will give this land.**” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Exodus 6:8

And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand **to give** to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. **I will give it to you as a possession.** I am the LORD.”

Leviticus 14:33-34

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, <sup>34</sup> “When you enter the land of Canaan, **which I am giving you** as your possession, ....

Numbers 13:1-2

The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, **which I am giving to the Israelites.** From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.”

God describes the 'gift' that He is giving them:

Deuteronomy 6:10-12, 23

When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, **to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, <sup>11</sup> houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, <sup>12</sup> be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.**

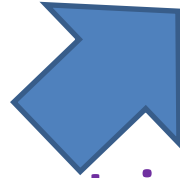
<sup>23</sup> But he brought us out from Egypt to bring us in and **give us the land he promised on oath** to our ancestors.



**But there were requirements for the Israelites to 'receive' the gift – they had to go into the land and conquer it by driving out the current residents (God had promised to help them do it, but they had to do the actual fighting).**

Numbers 13:30

Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “**We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.**”



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They had to spy out the land, cross the Jordan River, march around Jericho for seven days as told, then battle the inhabitants when the walls fell outward, and continue to battle with those who lived in the land to drive them out. And yet these were attributed to ‘faith’ -

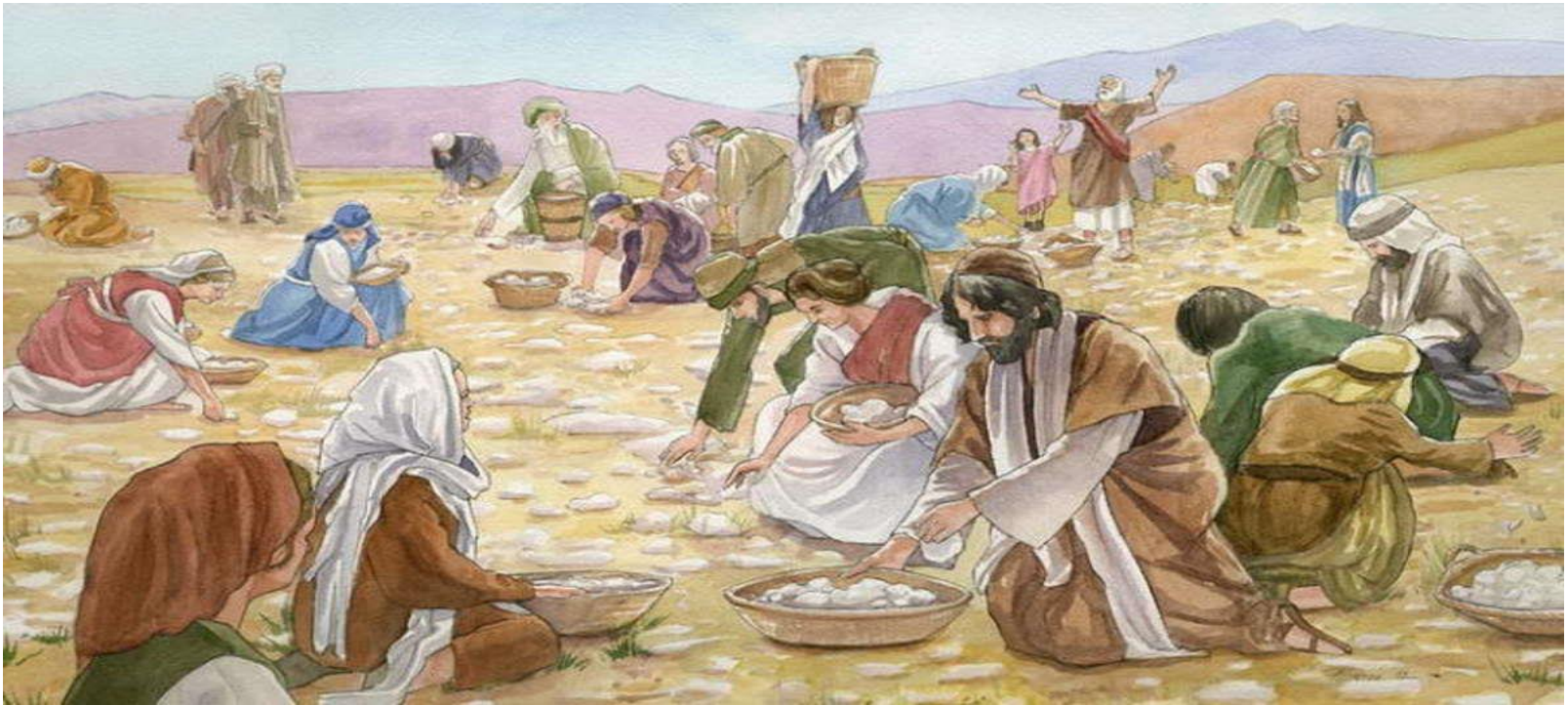
Hebrews 11:30 **By faith** the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. (Faith shows itself in works)



God also gave the Israelites manna from heaven as a gift -

[Exodus 16:32](#)

Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Take an omer of **manna** and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.’



God also gave the Israelites manna from heaven as a gift -

**But God required them to go out and gather it each day –**

Exodus 16:4-5

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. **The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day.** In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. <sup>5</sup> **On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”** (The gift was dependent on the people following God’s instruction)

**Something can be given as a gift from God even though there are conditions that must be met in order for the gift to be received!**

**In the same way, salvation is a gift from God, but there are conditions that we must meet in order to receive that gift.**

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" **Let the one who is thirsty come;** and **let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.**

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Acts 2:37-38

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “**Brothers, what shall we do?**”

<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

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Acts 22:10-16

“‘**What shall I do, Lord?**’ I (Saul) asked.

“ ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ <sup>11</sup> My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

<sup>12</sup> “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup> He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

<sup>14</sup> “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. <sup>15</sup> You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

**Why were different answers given?**

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Peter is preaching to the Jews on Pentecost. He has just convinced them that they were responsible for having Jesus, the Messiah, put to death and that God had raised Him from the dead – they heard the message and they believed it – the next thing they had to do was repent and be baptized to find the forgiveness of their sins.

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Paul and Silas are in prison for casting an evil spirit out of a slave girl. They had been singing and praising God and all in the prison (including the jailor) heard them. God sends an earthquake and the prison doors break open. The jailor thinks the prisoners have escaped and is about to kill himself when Paul stops him and says they are all still there. The jailor realizes the power of God and this Jesus they are preaching and asks what he has to do to be right with God. He doesn't know the whole story about Jesus, so he is told that he must first believe that Jesus is the Lord. Note the next verse and his reaction -

Acts 16:32-33 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. <sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then **immediately he and all his household were baptized.**

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“ ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus <sup>16</sup> And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

Saul had heard the voice of Jesus on the road to Damascus and recognized (believed) that he was the Lord. He is taken into Damascus and for three days is fasting and praying in repentance for the things he had been doing. When Ananias comes, Saul is told the next thing he is to do is be baptized to wash away his sins.

He already believed and was fasting, praying, repenting – but note that those did not remove his sin – he had to be baptized for that to happen.

**Some still object to the necessity of baptism even though Peter says:**

**1 Peter 3:21**

and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—  
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And some have even tried to argue with:

Mark 16:16

***Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***

By saying that it 'doesn't say and is not baptized' – but of what use or purpose would baptism serve if one does not believe?

**Others object to baptism saying that the thief on the cross was not baptized and yet he was saved - but consider:**

**1) The thief lived under the Old Covenant and under the Old Covenant the requirement for forgiveness was repentance of the sinner :**

**[Isaiah 59:20](#) “The Redeemer will come to Zion, **to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,**” declares the LORD.**

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**2) Jesus had the power while on the earth to forgive sins:**

[Matthew 9:6](#)

But I want you to know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.**” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.



### 3) The New Covenant requirement of baptism in the name of Jesus was not in effect because Jesus had not yet died:

Hebrews 9:15-17

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance— **now that he has died** as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

<sup>16</sup> In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, <sup>17</sup> because **a will is in force only when somebody has died**; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.

The New Covenant went into effect at the death of Jesus and was announced to the people on Pentecost by Peter and the other apostles through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

# What do the scriptures say that we must do to be saved?

## Believe that Jesus is God's Son

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## Confess your belief and trust in Jesus as the Lord

**Romans 10:9-10** If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

**Be baptized (immersed in water) to gain the forgiveness of sins and receive the indwelling helper, the Holy Spirit.**

**Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

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**Live faithfully the rest of your life**

**Revelation 2:10** Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown of life.

**In spite of example after example in the book of Acts of a person being baptized in obedience to the gospel, some still object saying that baptism is a work (something you do), and the Bible says that we are not saved by works. Yet they will say that a person must believe, and must repent without any problem at all, but look at what is said in:**

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John 6:28-29 Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

**Jesus said the belief ‘is a work’!**



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Jesus said the belief ‘is a work’!

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” Jesus said. “The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent and believe the good news!**”

Jesus said that repentance is something you must do – a ‘work’ !

If fact, all the things the Bible requires for salvation are 'works' – something we must do ourselves – no one can believe for us, no one can repent for us, no one can confess for us - these are all things that we must do ourselves, BUT:

*We cannot baptize ourselves ! In fact baptism is the only thing that isn't a 'work' – it is something that is done to us, we simply allow ourselves to be immersed.*

Salvation is a gift from God, we simply do what He told us to do – it is not a 'work' - just as the Bible says.

## 2 Timothy 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.