

Let's analyze the claims about marriage and its theological significance while emphasizing biblical truths about salvation and the sufficiency of faith apart from works or sacramental systems.

Marriage and Salvation: Distinction in Scripture

Marriage as a “mysterious sacrament” and its role in salvation or sanctification raises important questions. The Bible upholds marriage as a God-ordained institution (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6), but it does not place marriage at the center of the Gospel message or justification.

Justification by Faith Alone: Ephesians 2:8-9 explicitly states, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”* The New Testament consistently emphasizes faith in Christ as the sole means of justification (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16). Marriage, while a covenantal and sacred relationship, is not a sacrament necessary for salvation.

Role of Works and Sacraments: Elevating marriage as a “sacrament” that sanctifies participants through its mysterious nature risks adding works or rituals to the Gospel, which Paul condemns in Galatians 1:6-9. Any suggestion that marriage contributes to salvation contradicts the sufficiency of Christ's atonement.

Unity, Holiness, and Indissolubility: Biblical Perspective

The qualities of unity, holiness, and indissolubility in marriage are biblical but should not obscure the Gospel's central message of faith in Christ alone.

Unity: Scripture affirms marriage as a union between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5). However, this unity reflects God's design for human relationships, not the basis for salvation. Unity with Christ through faith—not earthly marriage—is central to salvation (Romans 6:5).

Holiness: While marriage is described as honorable (Hebrews 13:4), personal holiness comes through faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 6:11). The sacramental view of marriage risks conflating God's means of sanctification with the institution of marriage itself,

detracting from the transformative work of the Gospel.

Indissolubility: Jesus upholds the permanence of marriage (Matthew 19:6), but the indissolubility of marriage does not equate to the permanence of one's salvation. Salvation rests on Christ's unchanging promise to those justified by faith (John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39).

Christ's Sufficiency Over Legalism and Rituals

The Gospel's focus is not on adhering to external institutions or sacramental systems but on the transformative power of faith in Christ. The book of Galatians speaks directly against adding anything to the Gospel message, whether it be circumcision, adherence to Old Testament laws, or modern sacramental systems. Paul writes:

- *“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4).*

The idea that marriage has a mysterious or salvific quality risks veering into legalism or ritualism. While marriage can reflect God's covenantal love (Ephesians 5:25-33), it does not replace the sufficiency of faith in Christ alone.

Return to God's Truth

Marriage is a beautiful, God-ordained relationship, but it is not the cornerstone of salvation or the Church. The true foundation of the Church is Christ Himself, as Paul states:

- *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).*

Returning to the truth of *sola scriptura* reminds us that the Gospel is about Christ's finished work and the believer's justification through faith alone, not through marriage, sacraments, or human institutions. Marriage is a gift that reflects God's design, but salvation comes only through faith in the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Sanctification reflects the ongoing work of grace, and that it is the Holy Spirit, not

adherence to Old Testament law or legalism, that transforms believers into the image of Christ. This truth is foundational to the Gospel and central to the Reformation's message of realigning the Church with biblical truth.

Grace, Not Legalism, as the Foundation of Salvation

The Reformation rediscovered the doctrine of *sola gratia* (grace alone), emphasizing that salvation is a gift of God's grace, entirely unmerited and freely given through Christ. Paul writes:

- ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).***

This grace does not negate the moral law but fulfills it in Christ. Jesus declared, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). However, our obedience flows out of the grace we have received, not as a means of earning salvation.

Sanctification: The Ongoing Work of Grace

Sanctification is the Spirit's work of conforming believers to Christ's image. It is an ongoing process, not achieved by works of the law but by the Spirit's transformative power:

- ***“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).***

Legalism relies on human effort, but sanctification depends on grace, which empowers believers to walk in obedience as a response to God's love, not as a requirement for justification.

The Law: Its Role Fulfilled in Christ

The moral law reflects God's holiness and continues to guide believers, but it is not a means of salvation. The ceremonial and civil laws of the Old Testament pointed forward to Christ and were fulfilled in Him. Paul clarifies the role of the law:

- *“The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian” (Galatians 3:24-25).*

In Christ, the law is fulfilled, and believers are empowered to live according to its spirit—not as a means of salvation, but as a reflection of God’s character and the Spirit’s work within them.

Reformation: Realignment with Grace and Truth

The Reformation realigned the Church with the truth that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This corrected the Church’s drift into legalism and works-based righteousness. Luther emphasized this in his famous statement:

- *“The law says, ‘Do this,’ and it is never done. Grace says, ‘Believe in this,’ and everything is already done.”*

This shift restored the focus on God’s grace and the sufficiency of Christ’s finished work, empowering believers to live out their faith through the Spirit’s transformative power.

Grace Supersedes the Law but Does Not Negate It

Grace does not nullify the moral law; it fulfills its purpose. Believers, through grace, are freed from the law’s condemnation (Romans 8:1-2) and enabled to live by the Spirit, reflecting the righteousness of God. Paul explains:

- *“What the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4).*

Grace leads believers to obedience, but it is an obedience born of love and gratitude, not fear or compulsion.

Grace as the Foundation

The Church must continually reform to align with the truth that *grace, not legalism, is the foundation of salvation*. Sanctification is the Spirit's work of applying this grace in believers' lives, transforming them into the image of Christ. By resting in God's grace and relying on the Spirit, believers can live in obedience that reflects the Gospel, not legalism or a return to Old Testament laws.

Faith alone justifies, grace alone sanctifies, and Christ alone fulfills the law. This is the heart of the Gospel and the truth to which the Church must cling.

The Church's primary calling is to proclaim and embody the message of Scripture: faith, grace, and love. This truth liberates believers from the weight of extra-biblical rules and regulations, focusing instead on the transformative power of God's Word and the Spirit.

Faith: Trusting in God's Promises

- Scripture declares that faith, not works or human traditions, is the means of salvation:

“For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Romans 3:28).

Faith calls believers to rest in the sufficiency of Christ's finished work, not in institutional or man-made requirements.

Grace: God's Unmerited Favor

- Grace reminds us that salvation is God's gift, not something earned:

“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace” (Romans 11:6).

Grace sets believers free from the burden of legalism and allows them to live in the rhythm of God's unconditional love.

Love: The Fulfillment of the Law

- Jesus taught that love is the greatest commandment, summarizing the entire law:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Love transforms rules into relationships and rituals into worship.

Trust the Rhythm of God's Love

God's love is written on the hearts of believers, and the Spirit guides them in freedom, not bondage:

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

Believers are called to live authentically in the grace and freedom Christ offers:

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1).

Freedom in Faith, Grace, and Love

The Church thrives when it remains faithful to Scripture, rejecting the weight of extra-biblical traditions and embracing the simplicity of faith, grace, and love. Trusting the rhythm of God's love allows believers to live freely and joyfully in alignment with His truth.

Faith is not a static concept but a dynamic and transformative journey that continually molds us into the image of Christ, deepens our understanding of God, and draws us closer to His heart.

Faith as a Journey of Transformation

- **Shaped by Grace:** As we walk in faith, God's grace transforms us day by day. Paul writes:

"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Faith shapes us by revealing our weaknesses and allowing God's strength to shine through.

- **Challenged by Trials:** The journey of faith includes trials and challenges, but these are opportunities to grow deeper in trust and reliance on God. James reminds us:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:2-3). Challenges refine our faith and bring us closer to God.

Faith as a Journey of Drawing Near to God

- **Seeking the Heart of God:** The essence of faith is a relationship with God, not merely a belief in doctrines or rules. Hebrews encourages us:

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith invites us to seek and know God intimately.

- **Walking by Faith, Not Sight:** Faith draws us into a deeper dependence on God’s guidance and love, even when the path is unclear. Paul says:

“For we live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

This journey requires trust in God’s promises and timing.

Faith Brings Us Closer to God’s Heart

- **Faith is not about perfection but about relationship.** God’s desire is for His children to draw near to Him, trusting in His love and grace. David’s psalm reflects this beautifully:

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

As we trust Him, we experience His love and presence more fully.

Faith as a Lifelong Journey

Faith shapes us by calling us into deeper trust, challenges us to grow through trials, and brings us closer to God’s heart with each step. It is a journey that reveals God’s unchanging love and transforms us to reflect His glory. As we walk in faith, we are continually reminded that the heart of God is not just a destination—it is a presence we live in daily through His Spirit.

Abundant faith is a beautiful reflection of the limitless grace and love of God. Such faith is not confined by time, human understanding, or earthly boundaries—it is eternal, overflowing, and immeasurable.

Faith Beyond Measure

Paul beautifully captures the abundance of faith and grace in Christ:

- *“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).*

Faith surpasses human understanding because it connects us to the infinite God who works beyond what we can see or comprehend.

Faith Rooted in Eternity

Faith so abundant reminds us that it is not limited to this lifetime. It is anchored in eternity:

- *“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).*

The faith we live out now extends into eternity, far exceeding what a lifetime—or any earthly measure—could contain.

Faith as an Overflow of God’s Love

God’s love is the source of this abundant faith, pouring into our hearts through His Spirit:

- *“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).*

Faith that surpasses lifetimes is faith that overflows from a deep awareness of God’s love and His eternal promises.

Faith that Outlasts Time

Jesus reminds us that the kind of faith He gives is eternal:

- *“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28).*

This faith is not bound by the limitations of mortality but reflects the infinite life God offers.

Faith Without End

Faith so abundant that it surpasses two lifetimes is a glimpse of eternity—a faith that connects us to God’s unchanging love and promises. It is the kind of faith that sustains us, inspires us, and points us toward a reality far greater than this world. It is the faith that declares, “*God is faithful, through all generations*” (Psalm 100:5).

Prepared By: Teddy Tran
January 9, 2025