

The Dilemma

Like any doctrine that has been preconceived in the minds of men, a person can find one or more verses in the Bible that will appear to teach what they believe to be true; but what happens when we find passages that contradict that doctrine? The doctrine of justification by 'faith alone' or 'faith only' may be a comforting one to all who hold to its precepts, but it is in fact, as will be shown, a doctrine that Satan has so subtly substituted for the truth that millions blindly believe their salvation ends with a mental trust in the works of Christ.

The dilemma faced by those who adhere to the doctrine of 'faith only' is that they truly do not believe in this doctrine at all. While one may say that they are saved by 'faith alone,' they have not honestly scrutinized the doctrine they depend upon for their soul's salvation. When asked to define this doctrine, the reply is commonly; "*We are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone!*" We will examine this statement further as our study progresses, but it is my prayer dear reader, that you will honestly review what has just been stated and think through it rationally.

Another false understanding that promotes this doctrine is what Jesus stated while on the cross, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30). In an attempt to certify the 'faith only' doctrine, this statement is used to show that there is nothing we need to do to add to the work of Christ, because He finished it all, according to their logic. Again, we will address this statement as well. Finally, faith only salvation is a reactionary doctrine to the belief that all men are born totally depraved, therefore we can do nothing on our own to change our course of sinful living. For this reason it is believed that God must do all the work of justifying us, that is in drawing us to Him, because our so called 'sinful nature' will not allow us to make that choice by ourselves.

These are the dilemmas facing us as we try to prove that the doctrine of 'faith alone' is not only unscriptural, but is one that has captivated the minds of millions and one that will be their down fall on

the day of judgment, unless they renounce it before it is too late.

Alone vs. Only

Let's begin our study by looking at the two words which form this doctrine – 'Alone' and 'Only.' Webster's Dictionary defines the word '*alone*' as: "*Separated from others, isolated; exclusive of anything else; solitary.*" The word '*only*' is defined as: "*nothing more or different; exclusively; solely; alone in its class.*" From these two words we should understand then that if salvation is by 'faith' alone or only, faith would be isolated from anything else – that is it would be exclusive with nothing else required! That would eliminate grace, repentance, confession of Christ as the Son of God, or faithful living. Please go back over the definitions of these two words and carefully think about their meaning how they would have no association with anything else if it is true that faith alone saves.

It is for this reason that I believe most people really do not believe in this doctrine because they understand that we must have God's grace, and we must repent and confess Christ, as well as live faithfully to the end. This being true, it is logically impossible for the doctrine of 'faith alone' or 'faith only' to be a God ordained teaching, for God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). It is logically impossible because grace, plus faith, plus repentance, plus confession, plus faithful living negates faith 'alone' – that is – faith being the exclusive element of ones salvation. Remember the statement: "*We are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone?*" Notice how many times the word 'alone' was used to try to establish the doctrine of 'faith alone.' The definition of 'alone' and 'only' demands that it is either exclusively by 'grace' or exclusively by 'faith' or exclusively by 'Jesus Christ' it can not be by all three, or by two or more.

Therefore, this doctrine falls by the words 'alone' or 'only' because nothing else can be added to faith or grace if it is 'alone.'

"It is Finished!"

Teachers of the doctrine of 'faith alone' contend that Jesus' statement; "*it is finished*" (John 19:30) means that Jesus did everything on the cross that was required for the salvation of mankind, which is intended to mean there is nothing left for man to do to obtain his salvation. If it is the case, that Jesus' death on the cross fulfilled ALL the requirements of the law, then why the need for faith? The circular reasoning of false doctrine always gives and takes. In other words, Jesus finished it all, but He didn't finish it all because we have to believe, trust in God's grace, and repent of our sins. So, did Jesus finish it all, or didn't He finish it all?

What was Jesus referring to when He said "*It is finished?*" Was it ALL work including ours, or was it something else? Only God's Word can give us the answer. In John chapter 17 we find a recorded prayer that Jesus prayed shortly before His death. He prayed to God the Father, "*...I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do*" (vs. 4). Our Savior said that His purpose for coming to earth was to complete the will of God (John 4:34; 6:38). What was God's will? To provide the perfect system for binding all men and women back to Him. The word religion comes from a Latin word that means "*to bind back.*" Christianity is that system – the only system that provides the means of binding us back to God – that is, saving us from our sins (Acts 4:12).

Therefore, what Jesus finished or completed at the cross, was the salvation plan devised in God's mind in eternity (Ephesians 1:4-10). In other words, at the right point in history, the Son of God came into the world, prepared the way for the gospel, the church and the plan of salvation (Galatians 4:4; 3:23-27; Luke 24:44-47; Acts 2:38-47). No where does the Bible teach that there is nothing that is required of us in order to obtain salvation (Acts 2:37; 4:4; 8:12; 16:30). In each case there was something required of those wanting to be saved, meaning that Jesus did not finish their works on the cross, but His own.

Original Sin

The doctrine of Calvinism is widely accepted as Biblical teaching. It is however, not a thirty-second cousin to anything found in the Word of God. Most will attest that it is the Bible, not they themselves who teaches a sinful nature, limited atonement, predestination, and once saved, always saved. It is in fact a reaction to the doctrine of John Calvin that has brought about 'faith alone' salvation.

It is taught that we are born so depraved that we cannot on our own seek anything good, then it must be the case that God is required to draw us to Him in some miraculous manner. Because we must have faith in order to seek God, faith becomes a work of God, and not something that we ourselves must choose to do. John 6:29 & 44 are abused to supposedly make the case. I totally agree with Jesus that the Father must draw us to Him in some manner, but the question is 'how' does He draw us?

When we harmonize the Scriptures concerning the subject of salvation, we find that drawing and calling are synonymous terms. God calls us as well as draws us to Him through His Word, the gospel of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14; John 6:44-45). It is the Word of God – the gospel – that is God's power to save mankind (Romans 1:16). When the Jews heard the gospel on Pentecost 30AD, they asked what they needed to do to be saved (Acts 2:37). Cornelius the Centurion was told that Peter would tell him words, whereby he would be saved (Acts 11:14). It was the preaching of the gospel message that produced many disciples (Acts 14:21; 17:3-4; 18:8; Matthew 28:19; etc.).

Therefore it is the preaching of the gospel that draws mankind to God; in other words, it is the hearing of the gospel that produces saving faith; the type of faith that motivates an individual to be obedient to God's plan of salvation. Original sin should not even be in the equation of how one is saved, since original sin is not even taught in the Bible! ALL men and women are born innocent and free from sin (Ezekiel 18:20; 28:15. etc.).

Saved by Faith

There is no controversy that the Bible teaches we are saved by faith. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1). *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.....”* (Ephesians 2:8-10). We could list more, but these are the main verses chosen by “faith only” advocates and we totally agree that faith is a must toward our soul’s salvation.

The question is not whether we must believe, or trust in God, but if more is required than mere faith alone? Even proponents of ‘faith alone’ believe there is more, for they say they are saved by *“God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.”* Immediately we learn that ‘faith alone’ is false, because grace has been added to it. So if grace is required (and we hardily agree that it is), and faith is needed (to which we say amen), why not more? When asking a ‘faith only’ believer if they must repent, the reply is “Yes!” Again we applaud their agreement with the Scriptures (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9). So now we have three requirements to the equation of man’s salvation (grace, faith & repentance); that’s certainly not ‘faith only!’

We are not questioning the fact that the Bible teaches we are justified by faith (Romans 5:1), but when are we justified by faith is what we must ask. If we are justified immediately upon receiving faith as a miraculous work of God as it is argued, then consider the following.

1. Why did the Holy Spirit say *“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (Romans 10:17)?
2. Why did the Apostles preach and teach Jesus which then caused men and women to believe (Acts 4:4; 5:14; 5:42-6:1; 8:12; 8:35; 11:14, 20-21; etc.)?

3. Why did Peter not tell the Jews God’s work of faith justified them (Acts 2:37-38)?
4. Why did Ananias not tell Saul God’s work of faith washed away his sins (Acts 22:16)?

When it comes to any subject taught in the Bible we discover that we must sift through figures of speech, poetry, prophetic language, and symbolism in numbers; not every passage is to be taken literally. The subject of faith is no different. Many times the word ‘faith’ is used as a figure of speech known as *synecdoche*, ‘meaning a part of a thing is used for the whole of a thing.’ Example: Farmers and Ranchers often use this figure of speech when discussing their livestock – *“I have 100 head of cattle.”* We understand that he doesn’t have a literal 100 heads from the cows sitting out in a pasture somewhere, but that he is referring to the number of cows that he possesses. The same is true of faith. When the Bible says we are saved by faith, it is using ‘synecdoche’ to represent everything that must be done to obtain the salvation offered by God to man. The way we determine what is required is by example of what others did in the first century.

It has already been admitted that more than ‘faith alone’ is required, as men will readily admit grace is part of the equation, as is repentance and faith. But cannot stop there, for the Bible clearly demands that we confess before men that Jesus is the Christ (Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:37). We have also pointed out that hearing the gospel is a must, because it is what produces saving faith (Romans 1:16; 10:17). Therefore we have God’s grace, plus hearing the gospel, plus faith, plus repentance, plus confession. Is there anything else that is required of God in order for us to be saved/justified? Of course there is, our sins must first be forgiven by God before we can be at peace with Him.

Paul said we are justified by faith (Romans 5:1); and by grace (Titus 3:7). James said we are justified by works and faith (James 2:21). So from these verses we discover that justification comes by more than ‘faith alone.’ Combine these passages with Romans 5:9 which says we are justified by the blood of Christ and we begin to see the whole picture. Paul said the Corinthians were justified ‘when’ they were washed (1 Corinthians 6:11). Again we are told that

we are justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption that is *IN CHRIST* (Romans 3:24). Washing must occur in the blood of Christ, but when do we contact that cleansing blood? If Paul was told by Ananias to wash away his sins in baptism (Acts 22:16), and the Corinthians were justified when they were washed, and if baptism does now save us (1 Peter 3:21), then it must be the case that baptism is an essential element of our salvation – as much as hearing, as much as believing, as much as repenting, and as much as confessing that Jesus is the Christ! It is only IN baptism that our old man of sin is buried, and we contact the saving blood of Christ (Romans 6:3-7; Galatians 3:27). All of these elements are required before we obtain justification before God, and before we can be sanctified in His sight.

The doctrine of ‘faith alone’ is one that has in the past and continues today to damn the souls of countless millions. We have presented the facts of the Bible concerning the truth of what God expects of us to be saved. The rest is up to you. Do you have an open and honest heart? Will you not be as the noble Bereans and search the Scriptures DAILY until you come to a full understanding of what you must honestly do to be saved? We pray you will.

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Faith Alone



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