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Salvation: Is It "Solely" By Faith?

by Thomas N. Thrasher

No more important question could be asked by an alien sinner than "What must I do to be saved?" Men have given a variety of answers to this question, including the response that salvation is by "faith only." however, this answer is wrong! I know this because of what you can read in your Bible and what I can read in mine. Let us together examine briefly the salvation by "faith only" position.

Does Anyone Teach That Salvation Is By "Faith Only"?

It is difficult to imagine that a person would claim that no one has ever taught "salvation by faith only"; however, this has been claimed. Mr. Albert Garner (a well-known Baptist preacher and author) wrote, "Among the falsehoods usually circulated by Campbellites to dupe their victims and keep them from attending other churches is the falsehood that Baptists and others teach that one is saved by 'faith only.' When you hear the charge that there are those who teach that one is saved by 'faith only,' you should take special notice. They make such claims either through ignorance or dishonesty. This you will find to be true: the fellow who makes such claim will cite no representative man of any faith as having ever made such a claim. So far as I have been able to find there has never been any recognized minister of any religious faith or group who ever taught that one is saved by 'faith only' " (A Few Aspirins For Campbellism, page 1). Has Mr. Garner told the truth in this statement? Even though just one example would be necessary to refute his claim, I will cite several to prove he has not told the truth about the matter.

From the ninth of the "Articles of Religion" of the Methodist Discipline (1896 edition) I quote: "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." The names of eighteen outstanding ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church are listed. They use the very words "faith only" to characterize what they call a comforting and wholesome doctrine. Clearly, Mr. Garner's allegation against those whom he maliciously labels "Campbellites" is false! It is difficult to imagine that he was not aware of this statement in the Methodist Discipline.

Mr. Glenn V. Tingley, a leading preacher of the Christian-Missionary Alliance, affirmed this proposition: "The Scriptures teach that alien sinners are saved by faith alone before and without water baptism" (Porter-Tingley Debate, page 180). Mr. Tingley asserted that "we're saved by faith alone" and that "man's saved by faith alone" (page 234). He made similar statements repeatedly in his speeches. He clearly affirmed and taught that salvation is by "faith alone." Mr. Garner's claims about false charges are once more shown to be false themselves.

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Times of Services

Sundays - 2:00 pm Bible class, 3:00 pm Assembly Wednesdays - 6:30 pm Bible class

Solely by Faith? (continued)

Mr. A. U. Nunnery (an outstanding Baptist preacher and debater for many years) said, "If that's not enough, what more could Jesus have told her, any man could have told her, that she's saved by faith only" (Woods-Nunnery Debate, page 109). Mr. John L. Causey (another outstanding Baptist preacher) stated: "Thus we are saved by faith only and you deny the word of God" (Goodwin-Causey Debate, page 76). More examples could be given in which various religious leaders assert that salvation is by "faith only," but these demonstrate that some have so taught.

Salvation By "Faith Only" Is Not True Because The Bible Teaches There Are Other Conditions

A simple reading of the New Testament will make it abundantly clear that God requires several things in addition to "faith." I will cite just a few instances of such passages. **Repentance is not faith**, yet repentance is required in order for a person to be saved. God "commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is unto life (Acts 11:18). Those who do not repent will perish (Luke 13:3). Obviously, salvation cannot be by "faith only" if repentance is also required. **Confession is not faith**, yet confession is a condition of salvation: "... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). Observe that faith and confession are separate conditions--they are not the same things. However, both are required for salvation. **Baptism is not faith**, yet baptism is necessary to salvation. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Take note of the fact that belief (faith) is not baptism, but Jesus said that one who believes and is baptized will be saved! The Samaritans who heard the gospel "believed" and "were baptized" (Acts 8:12). "And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). When Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian, he believed and was baptized (Acts 8:35-39). When the hearers on Pentecost believed in Jesus they asked what they should do. Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:36-38). The word of God shows that "faith only" falls short of what God requires. God also commands people to be baptized in water (Acts 10:48). **People often contend** that salvation must be by "faith only" because some Bible passages only mention "faith." For example, Romans 5:1 says people are "justified by faith," but does not state other conditions. Of course, it is easy to show the error of this argument. Some passages only mention "repentance" (e.g., Luke 13:3; Acts 11:18; 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9). Do these prove that salvation is by "repentance only"? If so, then salvation is not by "faith only"! It cannot be only by faith and also only by repentance! However, if these passages that only mention repentance do not prove that salvation is by "repentance only," then those passages that only mention faith do not prove that salvation is by "faith only" either! Furthermore, Peter mentions neither faith nor repentance, but only baptism in 1 Peter 3:21. Does this mean that salvation is by "baptism only"? Certainly not! It proves that baptism is a condition, but not the only condition. Likewise, passages that mention "faith" prove that faith is a condition, but not the only condition! The teaching of "faith only" salvation is a serious error.

Salvation By "Faith Only" Is Not True Because The Bible Plainly Says It Is Not!

Although I think all of the preceding points are worthwhile in our study of this issue, and they demonstrate conclusively the truth on this question, there is one verse that directly settles the issue for those who respect the Bible as the inspired word of God. After emphasizing the necessity of a certain type of works (obedience to God's commands), James writes: "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Could it be any plainer? "NOT BY FAITH ONLY"! Your favorite preacher may say that one is saved by "faith only," but the word of God says, "... not by faith only." Our choice is simple. We can accept and practice what the Bible teaches or we can accept and practice what some men teach. Since Jesus is the author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9), I urge you to submit to what He says about how to be saved.

-- by brother Thomas N. Thrasher, via *The Religious Instructor* website, June '98 issue

Editor's Note: If you would like a Home Bible Study in the privacy of your home, or would like to study further over the phone, or by computer (email), please feel free to contact us: Mark J. Ward, 445 Touchstone Parkway, Brunswick, Georgia 31525, (912) 265-6936 - markjward@yahoo.com

Attend the church of GOD's choice,
Not the church of YOUR choice.
Romans 16:16 "...the churches of Christ salute you."
