

One of the most deadly and dangerous religious errors taught by men today is the doctrine of **Faith Only**. This doctrine states that God pardons sinners by faith and excludes any and all “works.” It is dangerous because it teaches that sanctification and justification are passive and comes by simply believing in Christ and accepting Him as the Savior. The idea is that mankind is saved separate and apart from any action on their part. The origin of this doctrine has been attributed to either John Calvin or Martin Luther. While it is true that these two men held and taught the faith only doctrine, we find even earlier accounts of men who espoused that same belief. The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* gives a quote by Jerome (347-420) on Romans 10:3: “God justifies by faith alone...”

This doctrine is both deadly and dangerous because multitudes of men are basing their eternal salvation on a religious position which is not valid. It is not valid because it is not Biblically sound. Many rely upon what is known as the “Sinner’s Prayer” for salvation. This prayer has various wordings, yet all give the same false assurance. Joel Osteen asked his audience to pray this prayer: *“Here’s a simple prayer you can say: (If you say this and mean it in your heart you will be saved and understand why we believe what we do.) Dear God I know I’m a sinner, I know I am not where I want to be, and I want your forgiveness! I believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for my sins. Please wash me clean from all sin, shame, and guilt, come into my life Jesus to be my Lord and Savior. I ask this in your name Jesus. Amen!”* He then commented: *“If you prayed that prayer then we believe you are saved.”* This is a clear example of one seeking to be justified by **Faith Only**.

What Is Biblical Faith?

Our English word faith comes from the Greek word *pistis* (πίστις) and is defined as *persuasion*, that is, *credence*; moral *conviction* (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially *reliance* upon Christ for salvation...by extension the system of religious (Gospel) *truth* itself: - assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity. (Strong’s Greek and Hebrew

Dictionary #4102). It is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Biblical faith is evident when we look at the “honor roll” of faith recorded in Hebrews chapter eleven. Each of the examples cited in these verses found favor with God not because they had faith only but because they were obedient to Him. Verse 7 records Noah’s response to God’s command; “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” By faith he “moved with fear.” Noah clearly acted as God instructed.

What Does the Bible Say About Salvation by Faith Only?

Let us take a close look at what inspiration has to say about this doctrine of “faith only.” The proponents of this teaching use John 3:16 to affirm their position. This, they feel proves that if we simply believe **IN** Christ we will be saved. Does this verse teach that **ALL** one has to do is believe in Christ as the Son of God? If we will look closely at the context we will see the teaching contained in verse 16 is a conclusion of what had been discussed earlier. Jesus had said, “ye must be born again” (Verse 7, also verses 3, 5). Nicodemus asked, “...How can a man be born when he is old, can he enter the second time into his mothers’ womb, and be born?” Jesus made reference to Numbers 21:1-7. In this passage the children of Israel sinned and God had sent fiery serpents as punishment. When a person was bitten he died. Israel pleaded with Moses to intervene for them. The solution given by God through Moses was, “...Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.” Surely we can understand that God provided the means to their salvation, yet every person who was bitten had to **look upon the object designated by God**. The people could not avoid death by saying, “I have faith, I know it is there.” No, the command was clear. In the passage we see God doing His part and requiring men to do their part.

What does the Bible say about “Faith Only?” The only time this phrase is found in Scripture is in James 2:24: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only**.” In fact James 2:26 says, “...faith without works is dead...” Also we see that if it is the case that belief only produces salvation, the devils will be saved, “Thou **believest** that there is one God; thou doest well: the **devils also believe**, and tremble”(James 2:19). What does the Bible say? It is very plain and clear, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17)!

What Kind of Works Are Required?

Those who teach and believe in the faith only doctrine also use Ephesians chapter two as proof of their position. They refer to verses eight and nine which says, “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.” Salvation by God’s grace is clear and without question. But look closely at the passage.

- **Verses 1-7 tells of man’s plight.** There comes a time when all men fall into the category of being guilty of sin (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10). In that condition he is separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Deuteronomy 32:20). However, God did not leave mankind without hope. He sent His only begotten Son to be the sacrifice for our sins (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-10). God chose to pay the price to redeem mankind.
- **Verse 8-9 speaks of God’s grace.** Just what is this grace? Grace has been defined in various ways. Some say “unmerited favor,” Thayer’s Greek Definitions define the word (*charis*) as “loving kindness, favor.” Let me also suggest the word carries the idea of God doing for mankind what mankind could not do for himself. Unmerited favor is the bestowing of undeserved blessings upon all men. In verse 8 we read, “...ye are saved THROUGH faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast” The phrase “are ye saved” is in the passive tense and makes clear the words “and that not of yourselves.” WHY? It is that which is provided by God (Romans 6:23).

- **Verse 10 explains and identifies what kind of works that are required.** We must not boast of our works (Vs. 9) for we are His workmanship. Workmanship (poiema) means the product, or thing that was made. Notice, "...we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works..." Ephesians 2:1 reveals that mankind was once dead IN sin, but had been quickened (made alive). It was God's choice to save mankind (Genesis 3:15; John 3:16). But we also know that not everyone will be saved. What is the difference between the saved and the lost? Not the blood of Jesus only because His blood was given for every man. Man's salvation is secure when they choose what God chose for them. What works are we to do? Please notice "...good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Walk in what? The good works which God "before ordained." In other words, there are works that have been set in place by which we must walk. 1 John 1:7 states that we are "to walk in the light." Scripture states that we are to WALK by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), we are to LIVE by faith (Galatians 3:11), we are JUSTIFIED by faith (Romans 3:28) as well as to PURIFY our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9). These are actions that men do. But each of them (as well as others) are accomplished BY an obedient faith. Carefully read Hebrews 5:9 "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Salvation is a gift from God! Of that, there is no controversy. The misunderstandings come when we do not recognize that God's gift is conditional. This does not nullify God's grace. Peter uses the conditional phrase in 2 Peter 1:10 "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for **if ye do** these things, ye shall never fall." Robertson's Word Pictures tells us that the phrase "if ye do these things" is a present active circumstantial (conditional) participle. That condition phrase does not weaken or remove God's gift.

We know that Noah was saved by faith (Hebrews 11:7). Genesis 6:8 tells us that Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." God's grace did not take away the fact that Noah was to BUILD

an ark. Not only was he to build the ark, he was to follow carefully the instructions. The way was given by God and Noah chose to do as God commanded (Genesis 6:22; 7:1-16; Hebrews 11:7).

Conclusion

From this study we have seen that every man must have faith (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is not a strong "I hope so" or simply a "mental assent" to the belief that Jesus is God's Son. Faith includes the belief in His deity but Biblical faith is putting into practice all that God has set forth for us to do.

The wonderful grace of God includes everything that He has done for mankind that men could not do for themselves. Faith involves and includes everything that mankind must do in response to and with respect for God's grace. Paul said to the Roman saints, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Every man must make a choice. It is either to live by an obedient faith or reject the commands of God. What will we do? Let the Bible answer. In Acts 2:37 we read, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we **do**?" Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the
29th Annual Mid-West Lectures,
"They Shall Be Turned Unto Fables"
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**"They Shall Be Turned
Unto Fables"**

**"Man Is Saved
By Faith Only,
Not By Works"**

by
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International Bible Studies
Tract Series