



The Good News

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“Faith-Only”

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One of the most encountered beliefs of the religious community is the belief that “faith” is the only thing necessary for salvation. It is, perhaps, one of the easiest and most convenient beliefs that one can have, as it requires little or no actual commitment or action on the part of the one being “saved”. In addition, it is only logical to progress from “faith only” to “once saved, always saved” which makes religion easy as people can do what they want and never have to worry about sin being imputed. After all, the same grace that clothed me when I accepted Christ into my heart continues to clothe me even after I have been “saved”, making me impervious to the effects of sin. This is logical...right? Consider the following points:

Belief is necessary: If I do not believe in Christ, that He died for my sins, then there is no point in continuing further. In **Heb. 11:6** we are told that “*without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” Belief is a key component of faith, but it is not the only component.

Repentance is necessary: In order for me to be saved, I must acknowledge that I have something from which I must be saved: sins. If I do not acknowledge that I have sins, then I must say I have no need for a Savior (which is a lie; see **I John 1:8, 10**). We learn in **II Cor. 7:10** that “*godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation...*” I must be sorry for all the things I have done in my life that have gone against God’s law of righteousness. In **Acts 17:30**, we learn that “*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent...*” “Repent” means to turn away and avoid. Therefore, because I am sorry for my sins, I no longer wish to commit sin and I turn away from those evil choices. Repentance is an action, not just an emotion or a mindset. Repentance means that I will diligently seek the “way of escape” (**I Cor. 10:13**) when confronted with temptations.

Confession: In **Phil. 2:9-11**, Paul says, “*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” We find the Ethiopian eunuch doing exactly this in **Acts 8:37**, “*Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’*” We find that confessing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is vital to our being accepted by God. In **Matt. 10:32**, Jesus says

“*Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in Heaven.*” This is a reference to having such a convicted belief that we are willing to confess that Jesus is the Christ, even in the face of persecution and trial. Confession is an action. It’s literal, not just symbolic or figurative. I must physically confess (either by mouth or some acknowledgment) the sovereignty of my Lord if I am to call on Him to save me.

Baptism: In order to be saved my sins must be taken away. For this to occur, the Bible has made it clear that it is the combination of belief, repentance, confession and also baptism that saves from sin. In **Mark 16:16**, Jesus says, “*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.*” In **Acts 2:38**, Peter says tells the Jews, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;*” In **Acts 22:16**, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” In **I Pet. 3:21**, Peter says that “*baptism doth now save us*”. Baptism is an action. It is not just figurative or symbolic. It is the actual moment when the blood of Christ washes me of my sins.

Living faithfully afterward: This is where we understand that “once saved, always saved” is not a Biblical concept. Paul told the Christians in Galatia that they had once been in the grace of God, but they had “*fallen from grace*”. They had run well but were no longer running the race according to Truth (**Gal. 5:4, 7**). Paul calls on the individual who has embraced Christ in baptism to “*walk in newness of life*” (**Rom. 6:1-4**) and to “*not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts*” (**Rom. 6:12**). This “walk” is a continual pattern of action, showing forth in my conduct the transforming power of the Gospel.

When we combine these components, we get to the heart of the matter: “*But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*” (**James 2:20, 26**). Ultimately, what our religious community defines as “faith only” is actually “belief only”. Biblical faith combines belief in the Truth with the conviction and persuasion that The Truth is the Only Truth, and that the soul must submit to The Truth to be saved. The soul submitting will willingly obey whatever actions are commanded, and the actions that God commands are repentance, confession, baptism, and a holy life. “*You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!*” (**James 2:19**). Belief is only the beginning.