

Is the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith Alone Taught Only in Paul's Epistles?



The question in the title of this article is the topic of discussion with one of my friends. He wrote me saying,

"Salvation by faith not of works is not just a mere opinion of Paul. It's the *central thesis* of his letters! Paul passionately believes it and he stands or falls on this doctrine. The important question then is whether this doctrine is true. If we were to read the Bible through, from Genesis through Revelation but without the Pauline letters, would we get the impression that we don't need works? Or that the Law is dead?"

This question casts doubt on what the Apostle Paul wrote in his epistles about salvation:

Ephesians 2:8-9 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.

But does Paul teach that Christians do nothing at all after getting saved? In his letters, the phrase "good works" appears 11 times. Here's one of them.

1 Timothy 6:18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

My friend's statement about works and the law and about reading the Bible without including any of Paul's letters inspired me to research the question directly from the Bible. I could search the Internet and tell you what other preachers have to say, but I want to see what the Scriptures themselves have to say. Is the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the Word of God alone taught *only* by Paul who called himself an apostle of Christ? I was

inspired to take up the challenge to see if the doctrine of salvation through grace alone, through faith alone is taught by other writers of the Bible as well, and not only by Paul.

In this Bible study, I will purposely not reference any of Paul's letters to the churches. Let's search the Scriptures if the doctrine of salvation through faith alone and grace alone came only from the Apostle Paul or if other writers of the Bible also confirm it.

Confirmation from the Gospel of John

Let's start out with the Gospel of John. Did you know the word "*believe*" occurs more in the Gospel of John than all the other three Gospel accounts combined? In Matthew it occurs 7 times, Mark 11 times, Luke 5 times and John 52 times! And if you include the word "*believeth*," Matthew has none, Mark has 2, Luke has none, and John has 17! I will list only the verses with the words believe or believeth that apply to salvation. Saving faith is believing what the Word of God says.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to **become the sons of God**, even to them that **believe on his name**.

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but **grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**.

John 3:14-16 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That **whosoever believeth in him should not perish**, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth in him should not perish**, but have everlasting life.

John 3:18 **He that believeth on him is not condemned**: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 **He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life**: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life**, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is **the work of God, that ye believe on him** whom he hath sent.

John 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that **every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life**: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.**

John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for **if ye believe not that I am he** (Christ), ye shall die in your sins.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: **he that believeth in me**, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and **believeth in me** shall never die. Believest thou this?

John 20:31 But **these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ**, the Son of God; and that **believing ye might have life through his name.**

There are more verses about the importance of believing who Jesus is in the Book of John, but these are the ones I think are the clearest that apply to salvation.

Confirmation from the first Epistle of John

The Apostle John also makes it clear in his letters that salvation comes through belief in the Word of God about Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:1 **Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God**: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

1 John 5:13 These things have I written unto **you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life**, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Why is belief in God's Word so important? When a person hears God's Word and accepts it as truth, God counts it to that person as righteousness! The very first occurrence of the word "righteousness" in the Bible has to do with belief in God's Word!

Genesis 15:4-6 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him (Abraham), saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And **he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**

James 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, **Abraham believed God**, and it was **imputed unto him for righteousness**: and he was called the Friend of God.

Confirmation from Jesus to the dying thief on the cross

Luke 23:39-43 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, **To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**

In my opinion, this passage from the Gospel of Luke is one of the strongest proofs of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The dying criminal had no opportunity to do good works, or even to receive water baptism, and yet because of his proclamation of faith in Jesus as Christ, Jesus told him that he would be with Him in paradise! What amazing grace!

Confirmation from the Apostle Peter

The Apostle Peter in the Book of Acts taught the house of Cornelius salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:43-44 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name (Jesus Christ) **whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.** While Peter yet spake these words, **the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.**

The Holy Ghost fell on them because they not only heard the Word of God, but they *believed* it as well!

Peter also defended the doctrine of salvation through grace by faith in the Word of God in Acts chapter 15.

Acts 15:5 But there rose up certain **of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.**

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, **Peter rose up, and said** unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Peter in his epistle wrote about it:

Peter 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of **the grace** that should come unto you:

Confirmation from James

The concept of obtaining righteousness through belief in the Word of God is confirmed by James, the half-brother of Jesus, the writer of the Book of James. This is especially interesting for me because the Catholic Church and other legalists use the Book of James to try to prove we need to do good works and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.

Acts 15:13 And after they had held their peace, **James answered**, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that **we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:**

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

As you see here, James gave only four ordinances for the Gentiles to keep. Sabbath day observance was not one of them!

Confirmation from the Book of Hebrews

The authorship of the Book of Hebrews is in dispute, but it's safe to say that Paul did not write it. The style of writing is different from Paul's letters to the churches. Hebrews teaches us that we are no longer under the old Mosaic Covenant but under a new Covenant, the Covenant of Christ!

Hebrews 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he (Jesus) is **the mediator of a better covenant**, which was established upon better promises.

Hebrews 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

Hebrews 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Hebrews 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because **they continued not in my covenant**, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Hebrews 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

Hebrews 8:13 In that he saith, **A new covenant, he hath made the first old**. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Salvation by faith alone through grace alone are two of the four *solas* (Latin meaning alone) of the Protestant Reformation. They are: Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone), solus Christus (Christ alone), sola fide (faith alone), sola gratia (grace alone).

This is exactly the *opposite* of what the Roman Catholic Church teaches! The Roman Catholic church teaches that Christ, having purchased redemption by His blood and death, delivered it to the *Catholic Church* to be distributed to men through her sacraments. The Catholic Church teaches, "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," or, "outside the Church there is no salvation." This doctrine ties you to organized religion, the Roman Catholic Church, and not a direct relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ based on your personal knowledge of the Word of God in the Bible and your belief in it. In fact, the current pope, Pope Francis, actually *discourages* you from having a personal relationship with Christ! He says,

"There are those who believe that you can have a personal direct and immediate relationship with Jesus outside the communion and mediation of the Church. These temptations are **dangerous and harmful**."

"It is an absurd dichotomy to love Christ without the Church; to listen to Christ but not the Church; to be with Christ at the margins of the Church. One cannot do this. It is an absurd dichotomy," the Pope explained in a mass he gave on Jan. 30, 2014.

By absurd dichotomy, the Pope means it's absurd to separate salvation from the Church! And what is his definition of "the Church"? He's not talking about the biblical definition of church which is the true Body of Christ, the true believers in Jesus Christ, he's talking about the Roman Catholic Church, his organized religion! And of course, he excludes all other churches because they don't hold the popes of Rome as the Vicar of Christ on earth. The Roman Catholic hierarchy wants you to be dependent on *them* because they consider

all other churches competition. This is also the attitude of the Russian Orthodox church. They don't like missionaries coming to Russia and ripping off their sheep. It's less income for them when they lose church members.

Conclusion

We are no longer under the law of Moses according to the Book of Hebrews, but under a new law, the Law of Christ! That means if we are truly saved and been born again into God's family, we will keep God's commandments! And we will do good works to help others! It comes naturally after being born again in Jesus Christ!

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

This is Christ's Law of Love. If we obey it, we will not lie, cheat, steal, curse, kill, or do anything ungodly to our neighbor or our brother or sister or wife or child or anybody! We will be kind even to God's creatures, cats, dogs, etc. We will automatically fulfill the Law of Moses and love the Lord our God our all our heart and soul and mind and our neighbor as ourselves.