

## Saved by Faith Only? Grace Only?

Jason P. Hilburn

Did you know that when I use a computer to search for the phrase “faith only” I get only one result in the whole Bible? *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”* (James 2:24, emphasis JPH). A search for “grace only” or “grace alone” yields zero results. A search for “into Christ” yields one result: *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:27). A search for “into Jesus” yields one result: *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”* (Rom. 6:3).

I plead with my friends who believe that water baptism has nothing to do with salvation in Christ to listen to everything God said (not just bits and pieces of it). Many think baptism cannot be necessary, because it is a work of obedience. Are all works bad or unnecessary? There are many kinds of works (both good and bad), and words like “works” must be defined by context. The term “works” in the New Testament most often refers to works of the Law of Moses—not all kinds of works (see the context following Eph. 2:8-9; compare passages like Gal. 2:15-16; James 2:14-26). Remember that Paul wrote his epistles while Judaism was still a serious hindrance to the Gospel (I Thess. 2:14-16).

The Bible says that some works of obedience are required for salvation (Matt. 7:21; Acts 10:6, 34-35, 48; Rom. 6:17-18; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 5:9; James 2:14-26). A person is not saved at the point of belief (Jn. 12:42-43), but only after obeying God’s commands for salvation (Rom. 6:17-18; I Pet. 1:22), which Peter described as “working righteousness” (Acts 10:34-35; cf. Psa. 119:172; Matt. 7:21; Rom. 6:17-18; Heb. 5:9; I Pet. 1:22). The words “believe” or “faith” do not always refer to belief alone, but often refer to obedient faith in Jesus or the entire New Testament system of faith (Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Gal. 1:23, etc.).

Paul often contrasted this obedient “faith” in Christ with “works” of the Law of Moses (Gal. 2:15-16; cf. 3:26-27), but he never taught salvation by belief alone or grace alone, and he never taught that works of obedience are completely excluded when it comes to man’s salvation (Rom. 6:17-18; Gal. 5:6; II Thess. 1:7-9, etc.). In fact, Paul himself was not saved until after water baptism (Acts 22:16), and he put a great emphasis on the necessity of water baptism for salvation (Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:10-13, etc.). Friends, please don’t be like those mentioned in Second Peter 3:15-18 who twisted Paul’s writings to their own destruction! Nobody can earn salvation or rightfully claim that they deserve it, but nobody gets the gift of salvation without meeting God’s conditions of faithful obedience.

Below is a list of things or persons the Bible says are involved in man’s salvation. To take any one of these and put “alone” or “only” after it is to argue with God Himself. If a person studies this and still says, “I don’t believe some of these things have anything to do with man’s salvation,” then with all due respect, how can he be a person of faith, when he does not believe what God said? (Rom. 10:17). We must find the harmony between all of these things and learn how they all fit together (II Tim. 2:15). The Bible says people

are saved by:

1. God (John 3:16-17; Titus 2:11; I John 4:9-10, 14).
2. God's Love (John 3:16-17; I John 4:9-10).
3. Christ (Matt. 1:21; I Tim. 1:15).
4. Christ's blood (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 1:5).
5. Christ's death (Rom. 5:6).
6. Christ's resurrection (Rom. 4:25; 5:10).
7. Christ's name (Acts 4:12).
8. The Holy Spirit (John 16:8; Titus 3:5; II Thess. 2:13-14).
9. Ourselves (Acts 2:40; Php. 2:12; I Pet. 1:22; Jude 21).
10. Mercy (Titus 3:5).
11. Grace (Eph. 2:5, 8; Titus 2:11-12).
12. Preaching (I Cor. 1:18).
13. Words (John 6:63; Acts 11:14; 20:32; James 1:21).
14. Hearing (Rom. 10:15-17).
15. The Gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4).
16. The love of the Truth (II Thess. 2:10).
17. Believing (Mark 16:16).
18. Obedient faith (Gal. 5:6; cf. Matt. 7:21; Rom. 6:17-18; Heb. 5:9; I Pet. 1:22).
19. Repentance (II Pet. 3:9).
20. Confession of faith to men prior to calling on the authority of the Lord in baptism (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10-13; cf. Acts 2:21, 38; 22:16).
21. Water Baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:11-13; I Pet. 3:20-21).
22. Being born of water and of the Spirit (water baptism by the instructions of the Spirit - John 3:5; cf. John 6:63; Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5).
23. The washing of water (water baptism by the instructions of the Word - Eph. 5:25-26; Heb. 10:22; cf. Acts 8:36-39; 22:16; John 3:5; Titus 3:5).
24. The washing of regeneration (rebirth; water baptism to walk in new life - Titus 3:5; cf. John 3:5; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; Eph. 5:26).
25. Calling on the name (authority) of the Lord (water baptism in the name of the Lord - Acts 2:21; cf. 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 10:13, 16).
26. Obeying the Gospel (dying to sin, buried in water baptism, raised to new life - Rom. 10:16; II Thess. 1:7-9; I Pet. 4:17; cf. I Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 6:3-5).
27. Working righteousness (Acts 10:34-35; Gal. 5:6; James 2:14-26).
28. Hope (Rom. 8:24).
29. Fire (I Cor. 3:15).
30. Heeding and continuing in true doctrine (I Tim. 4:16).
31. Being faithful, even to the point of death (Rev. 2:10; cf. II Pet. 2:20-22; Heb. 3:1-14; 4:1, 11; 6:11-12; 10:23-31, 38; 12:25, 28-29; I John 1:7-9).