

only what was on the bottom half of the first page. The recipe might say something like, “Add eggs, flour, and chocolate.” On the next page, the recipe would say, “Add sugar and butter.” If you followed just the directions on the first page, that would be one of the worst cakes you ever ate! Why? You did not follow the entire recipe. A person must examine *all* of the Bible’s instructions on a particular subject in order to understand its teachings on that subject. This is especially true in regard to salvation—which is why the “belief only” doctrine cannot stand up to a careful scrutiny of the Scriptures. We cannot “pick and choose” passages here and there that we “like” or that we think are “comforting.” Rather, we must take all of what the Bible says on a subject. The psalmist said, “The entirety of Your word is truth” (Ps. 119:160). When a person says, “All you have to do to be saved is believe,” they have omitted other important steps pertaining to what a person must do to be saved. As we continue our study of “belief alone,” let’s notice what the Lord says one must do to be saved.

Christ said that a person had to confess Him before men to be saved. “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 10:32-33). Paul repeated this sentiment when he wrote, “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). Thus, “belief alone” cannot be the only step in salvation. Jesus said that a person must also confess Him as Lord and Savior.

Jesus likewise said that a person must repent (i.e., change his or her heart and ac-

tions). In the context of some sins being worse than other sins, Jesus said, “I tell you no, but unless you repent you shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3,5). As the Gospel was just beginning to be preached in the Book of Acts, Peter said, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). We learn once again that “belief alone” cannot be the only step in salvation, since Jesus and Peter both affirmed that repentance also is required.

Our Lord also taught that baptism was an essential step in the plan of salvation. Jesus says clearly, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mk. 16:16). Peter agreed when he said on the Day of Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Saul (who became Paul) was taught that baptism was a part of God’s plan of salvation. Ananias said to him, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). In the clearest passage of all Peter wrote, “...baptism does now also save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). Again, “belief only” cannot be the *only* step in salvation. Jesus, Paul, and Peter all taught that baptism, too, was a part of the plan of salvation.

We must not believe everything we hear about salvation. Some preacher, teacher, or friend may tell you that all you have to do to be saved is “just believe.” But that is *not* what God’s Word says! The Bible teaches that in order to be saved a person must hear God’s Word (Rom. 10:17), believe in Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 8:24), repent of past sins (Lk. 13:3), confess Jesus (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). And, may we never forget the words of the Lord’s half-brother

when he said, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and *not by faith only*” (James 2:24). Remember: the only time the phrase “faith only” occurs in the Bible is where God says that “faith only” *will not save!*

Belief Alone Will Never Save

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In recent years, “belief only” has become one of the fastest growing doctrines of salvation. This doctrine teaches all a person has to do to be saved is to “believe in your heart that Jesus is God’s Son and your personal Lord and Savior, and you will be saved.” If this doctrine were true, it would be, as one creed book suggests, “a very wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.” However, does the Bible teach that “belief alone” is all a person must do to be saved? What do the Scriptures say concerning “belief only?”

One of the most amazing proofs that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is its ability to correct false doctrine. I find it absolutely astonishing that many in the religious world say that “belief only saves,” when *God’s Word* says, “We see that a man is justified by works, and *not by faith only*” (Jas. 2:24, emp. added). Isn’t that incredible? The religious world suggests that to be saved, all you have to do is believe in Jesus. Yet, the only time “belief only” actually occurs in the Bible, God says the exact opposite. God says that “belief only” *will not save anyone!*

If a person were going to prove from the Scriptures that “belief only” is *not* the proper plan of salvation, what would he have to do? He would have to show clear-cut cases in the New Testament where people *believed in Jesus -- but were still lost*. Let us do just that. In the New Testament, there are several cases where people believed in Jesus but still were not saved. The first is found in John 12:42. John records: “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” It is evident from this verse

that the rulers did “believe” in Jesus. The question must be asked, “Can a person believe in Jesus but be unwilling to confess Him and be saved?” The Scriptures clearly teach that those who do not confess Jesus are not saved. Jesus said, “Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 10:32-33). The apostle Paul also said that we must confess Jesus with our mouth before we are saved (Rom. 10:10). What do we learn from these verses? If a person believes in Jesus, yet is unwilling to confess Him, that person will not be saved! This destroys the “belief only” argument. The Jewish rulers in John 12:42 had faith in Jesus (in fact, “faith” was all they had—i.e., they had “faith only”!). If a person were true to the teaching of “faith only,” they would have to say these rulers were *saved*. Yet, such a position would be in direct opposition to what Jesus had already said concerning the essentiality of confession. Thus, belief alone did not save the rulers *then*, and it will not save people *now!* As I watch various preachers on television, or listen to them on the radio, they often will bring their sermon to a close by saying, “To become a child of God today all you have to do is believe in Jesus, and you will be saved.” Is this what the Bible teaches? Let us notice two more examples of people who believed in Jesus, yet who still were lost.

In John 8:30, we are told, “As he spoke these words, many believed on Him.” It is evident from this text that three people described here had “faith” in Jesus. Yet, in the same context Jesus said of those very people, “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your desire to do” (Jn. 8:44). What a powerful point! Some of the same people who had had “faith only” in Jesus are called *children of the devil*. What do we learn

from this text? A person can have “faith only” in Jesus, yet still be a child of the devil!

Two more texts which teach that a person *can believe in Jesus and still be lost* are Acts 9 and Acts 22. These are the accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (who later became the apostle Paul). In response to the blinding presence of Jesus, Saul said, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” (Acts 9:6). It is evident by Saul’s usage of the word “Lord” that he had “faith only” in Jesus. He was now convinced that his actions in persecuting the church were wrong and that Jesus Christ truly was Lord and Master. Yet we learn from the similar account of Saul’s conversion (in Acts 22) that he was not saved at the point of “faith only.” In response to Saul’s question of Acts 9:6, he is told “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). What do we learn from this verse? Saul, who already had “faith only” in Jesus, was not saved until he washed away his sins through baptism (Mk. 16:16). Thus, “belief only” did not save Saul. *And it will not save anyone today.* People sometimes come to a passage in the Bible and quote only that one passage in an attempt to prove a particular doctrine true. For example, Mormons will quote John 10:16 (“other sheep I have”) to promote their view of Christ going to preach to Native Americans. Jehovah’s Witnesses will cite Isaiah 43:10 (“You are My witnesses”) to suggest that their denominational name is ordained by God. However, as one examines both of these Scriptures in their context, it is easy to determine that they are being pulled out of their context and are being sorely misused. This same principle of ignoring both the *immediate* and *remote* contexts that apply to various passages of Scripture also applies directly to the “belief only” doctrine. Let me explain.

One can quote certain passages which teach

that *belief is essential to salvation*. Luke records: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). Jesus says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). A person also can quote certain passages which teach that *repentance is essential to salvation*. Jesus says, “I tell you, no: but, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3). Peter states, “Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...” (Acts 3:19). One also can reference certain passages which teach that *confession is essential to salvation*. Paul writes, “...with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). Jesus says, “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 10:32). A person also can locate certain passages which teach that baptism is essential to salvation. Peter commands, “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Jesus says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mk. 16:16). All of these passages *individually* teach a *single point* about salvation. All of these passages *together* give us the *full picture* of what a person must do to be saved. Why would a person pick one of these passages and exalt it above others that are equally important? We would not do that in other areas of life. Allow me to illustrate. If you were going to make a chocolate cake, you would get out your recipe book and look up the chocolate-cake recipe. Suppose that the recipe starts on the bottom half of one page and continues at the top of the next page. Imagine what it would be like if you followed