

Too Many “Onlys”

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The billboard beside the church building contained six words, setting forth the congregation’s basic creed:

Grace Only

Faith Only

Scripture Only

Apparently, these words were also intended to convey the means by which men might come to God for salvation through His Son.

Obviously, the church responsible for the billboard failed to comprehend the meaning of the word *only*: “with no other one or anything else besides.” By definition, therefore, it is impossible to have **more than one** “only” ingredient for any product, including salvation. One may as well say that water is composed of “hydrogen only” and “oxygen only.”

If God saves men by “grace only,” then “no other...thing... besides” grace is necessary. This dictum eliminates any human response to God’s will, either mental or physical (even faith) on the part of sinners. Inadvertently perhaps, but truly, those who chant the “grace only” mantra imply universal salvation, for God’s grace is available for all (Tit. 2:11). If even one sinner can be saved by “grace only,” so can all, for “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11).

On the other hand, if God saves men by “faith only,” then “no other...thing...besides” one’s faith is necessary. This dogma not only eliminates all other obligations toward God; it also eliminates God’s grace. When pressed, many who **profess** to believe in salvation by “faith only” agree that sinners must actually do more than merely believe (e.g., repent of their sins). The moment they allow the necessity of even **one** element involved in salvation besides faith, they have destroyed their “faith only” contention. If salvation is by “faith only,” it cannot be by “grace only,” and vice versa.

What about “Scripture only”? This statement is correct, and if one respects it, he will abandon both “grace only” and “faith only” creeds. “Scripture only” repeatedly teaches that we are saved by grace (Rom. 3: 24; Eph. 2:5, 8; Tit. 2:11; 3:7 et al.), **but never by “grace only.”** “Scripture only” also teaches repeatedly that we are saved by faith (John 3:16; Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8; et al.), **but never by “faith only.”** Salvation by faith includes belief in God’s

grace through His Son and obedience to Him (Heb. 5:9). The Bible explicitly opposes the “faith only” doctrine: “By works a man is justified, and **not only by faith**” (Jam. 2:24; emph. added).

“Scripture only” demands removal of *only* after *grace* and *faith*. Sinners are saved “by grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, October 9, 2009].

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