

A Gross Misapplication

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“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). The foregoing words from the apostle Paul may be among the most frequently abused and misused in Scripture. The abuse occurs when one uses this passage as if it were the only New Testament statement on the subject of salvation. Indeed, other passages state other/additional conditions of salvation.

Those who advocate the *faith only* doctrine relating to salvation (i.e., that God forgives and saves one the moment he believes in Jesus as God’s Son) often quote Paul’s statement above as their “proof text.” However, this very passage refutes their error. Note that it requires not only the heart-action of belief, but also the mouth-action of confession of that faith (thus **not** “faith alone”). The New Testament contains not a single statement to the effect that salvation occurs the moment one merely believes in the Christ. The one passage in which “faith only” appears (i.e., Jam. 2:24) declares that one **cannot** be justified/saved thereby. Rather, the New Testament makes many statements to the contrary.

Admittedly, many statements of Scripture (e.g., John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 5:1; et al.) state that one is saved by faith, but not one of them has the word *only* or *alone* in connection with saving faith. Those who promote Romans 10:9 (or any other single verse) as the totality of teaching on the terms of pardon create contradictions between the inspired men, including the Lord Himself. A principal rule of Biblical hermeneutics (i.e., interpretation) is that any interpretation of a passage that contradicts another passage or passages cannot be correct. To state it another way, the Scriptures must be so interpreted as to harmonize throughout. One has a very low opinion of the Bible if he is not concerned that his view of passage *A* directly contradicts passage *B*. If Paul taught *faith only* salvation in Romans 10:9, he contradicted:

- Ananias, who baptized him, in which act his sins were “washed away” (Acts 22:12–16)
- Himself (Acts 17:30; Rom. 6:3–4, 17–19; Gal. 3:27; et al.)
- Peter (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21; et al.)
- The Son of God (Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16; et al.)

A synopsis of these passages (plus the detailed accounts of conversions in Acts) reveals that faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, oral confession of that faith, repentance of sins, and baptism in water to receive forgiveness of sins are all conditions of Divine pardon. The Scriptures no more teach *repentance only* or *baptism only* salvation than they do *faith only* salvation. Any who teach otherwise are false prophets, whether or not they intend to be so.

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