

A Brief Exposition of "Faith only" Proof Texts

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Most of the following are common (a few are a little unusual) denominational "proof texts" used for decades by faith only proponents who seem to have small regard for context and less regard for the integrity and harmony of the Scriptures. Proof texting is the practice of isolating out-of-context quotations from the Bible to attempt to prove a presupposition. Proof texting results in *eisegesis*, the imposition of the reader's bias into a text, rather than *exegesis*, which is drawing out meaning that inheres in the text.

The Bible student must first gain an appreciation for understanding every statement in context, then learn how to determine context. Who is speaking? Who is being addressed, for example, Christians or non-Christians, those who need to do something, or those who have already done it? What is the main topic under consideration? What kind of speech is being utilized, for example, parable, figurative, rhetorical, exhortation, direct statement, etc.? How does the teaching fit into the paragraph, chapter, book, testament/covenant, and Bible as a whole? How does it relate to other passages that discuss the same thing(s)?

Some good indications that something is not being properly understood include: apparent contradiction of other Scripture; accepting apparent contradictions in order to cling to an error; failure to distinguish between covenants; casting doubt on, or denial of, the inspiration of other parts, or books, of the Bible; rejection of contextual limitations, or refusal to consider context, such as considering a teaching in light of other passages that teach on the same subject; failure to harmonize with passages which teach on the same subject; preference for tradition, or to believe denominational doctrine, or "pastors," rather than accept clear teaching from Scripture.

Taken in context, all of the following passages prove just the opposite of what "faith only" people try to affirm by misusing them.

Romans 10:8-13

Verse 16 defines the character of "believe" in this passage, e.g., "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" Here, believing the report, calling upon the name of the Lord (making a appeal to His authority), and obeying the gospel are clearly and undeniably bound together. One does not exist apart from the other. This is in perfect harmony with the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16). The one who does not believe cares not to obey, and the one who does not obey cannot be said to believe. If not, why not? Romans 1:5 and 16:26 couch everything that Paul wrote in between in the context of an obedient faith, and not in a "faith only" which repudiates every teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles that establishes the necessity of a faith "which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). Faith that does not work by love is typified in James 2:14-26 as unprofitable, demonic, dead, and which justifies no one. Please see also Romans 2:4-11; 3:12 (yet, "faith only" proponents maintain there is "nothing to do"); 6:15-18 (did they cease being servants of sin before or after they "obeyed from the heart"?). The "form of doctrine," in context, is discussed in 6:3 and following.

John 3:16-18

Please keep reading. "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (Jn. 3:21). "Doeth truth" necessitates that action is required of those believing. Compare 1 Jn. 1:6 and Jn. 8:44. Further, if there is nothing to be done, then there are no deeds which may "be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Its interesting that the context of vs. 22-23 associates the baptisms in Judea and near Salim with the deeds wrought in God of the preceding verse.

Verse 36 establishes that believing on the Son, and believing the Son mean the same thing. In every case those who believed on Him also believed Him, and in no case did those who believed Him refuse baptism, or any other act of obedience. The word translated "believeth not" (KJV), is from *apeitheo*, meaning, (Thayer Definition) 1) not to allow one's self to be persuaded 1a) to refuse or withhold belief 1b) to refuse belief and obedience 2) not to comply with. If to disbelieve means to refuse to comply, to disobey, what does to believe mean? Obviously, belief included obedience. It is also notable that those who rejected baptism are said to have

"rejected the counsel of God against themselves" (Lk. 7:30). Read also Mat. 7:21-27 and Lk 6:46-49 - Who is wise? Who is a fool?

Further, in John 3:1-7, the Lord Jesus clearly states that only those who are born of water and of the Spirit can enter into the kingdom of God. Clearly, this is equated with believing on Him. The water can only be a reference to baptism (immersion in water), because it is part of being "born again." It makes no sense in the context to force it to refer to amniotic fluid as many faith only advocates attempt to do.

John 5:24-25

Again, please continue reading. V. 29 identifies two classes which will be present at the general resurrection: those who have done good, and those who have done evil. It is axiomatic that those who refuse to do good default to doing evil. The context of the entire passage identifies those who "believeth on Him that sent me" with "they that have done good." As in Jn. 3:21, "done good" necessitates that action is required of those believing.

John 6:40

Consider Jn. 6:28-29. Belief is defined as a work, "work" in English and Greek involves action, hence, believing on Christ involves action.

Acts 2:20-21

See discussion under Romans 10:8-13 above. Calling on the name of the Lord involves obeying the gospel. Please read on to vs. 37 and following. V. 38 identifies the mode of calling upon the name of the Lord. Acts 22:16 is helpful, indicating that Saul's arising and being baptized is to be understood as the mode of his calling upon the name of the Lord. "Call on the name of the Lord" does not say, "Call the name of the Lord." The phrase, in English and Greek, means to make an appeal to His authority to save, which is revealed and itemized in v. 38. Note the response that Peter's message brought forth from "they that gladly received his word" (v. 41). Note the joyful obedience, and the absolute absence of any argument against the necessity of baptism. This is harmonious throughout the book of Acts, wherein it is revealed how the apostles of the Lord interpreted the Great Commission, how they preached it, and how penitent believers responded to it by being baptized.

Acts 4:12

Name, here, in English and Greek, is synonymous with authority; there is no other authority under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. See Col. 3:17 for a detailed treatment of the form of speech, where the Colossians were admonished to keep all their words and deeds within framework of Christ's authority. The following verses show how penitent believers called on the name of the Lord and were saved by His authority: Acts 2:38-47; 8:12, 26-40; 9:18 (also 22:16; 26:19); 10:47-48; 16:13-15; 31-34 (note when "having believed" is said of the jailer and his household - before or after their baptisms? Compare Mk. 16:16); 18:8; 19:3-5.

1 Corinthians 1:17

Paul's remark is an excellent commentary on Mark 16:15-16. The gospel must be preached and believed before any increase can be given by God (1 Cor. 3:6). If the equation is changed in any way, then neither belief nor baptism produce the desired result. "Faith only" theology teaches, "He that believeth and is saved, may be baptized." "Grace only" theology teaches, "He that is saved will believe and may be baptized." The Lord Jesus still teaches, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" Regarding the second phrase in Mk. 16:16, baptism serves no purpose for unbelievers. Paul identified part of what was causing division at Corinth as factionalism based upon who did the baptizing (see vs. 10-16). He nowhere denies the necessity of baptism, admitting that he had also baptized some. He contrasted the division present at Corinth with the unifying influence of his preaching of the gospel. The Corinthians evidently thought that they were disciples of whoever baptized them. Paul showed the foolishness of that misconception in vs. 12-13. They had all been baptized in the name of Christ, hence, they must comply with v. 10.

Galatians 3:2-14, 22

The law under consideration here is the law of Moses, which justified no one under it, and justifies no one now. The churches in Galatia were being troubled by false teachers who were attempting to bind elements of the law of Moses upon Gentile converts to Christianity, teaching that obeying such elements was necessary to being a disciple of Christ. Paul's used Abraham as a past example of evidence that one could serve God elsewhere than under the law of Moses. Again, as in all the other passages, faith in Christ Jesus in no manner excludes obedience (see Hebrews 5:8-9), and is in no place rendered "faith only," or "faith alone." James, the brother of the Lord, is the only New Testament writer who use the phrase "faith only," and he uses it in only true scriptural sense (see Jas. 2:18-26). Further, please read Galatians 3:25-29. Verse 27 identifies specifically how people become children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (v. 26). The Greek work translated "For" at the beginning of v. 27 is "*gar*," meaning "because." Is is not the same word as the one translated "for" (*eis*, meaning unto, in order to) in Acts 2:38. The Galatians were children of God by faith in Christ Jesus because they were baptized into Him. Again, perfectly harmonious with Mark 16:16.

Galatians 5:3-6

Again, Paul is addressing the false teaching that disciples of Christ must submit to the law of Moses. He specifically states that for any Christian to submit to the law of Moses is to fall from grace. Please read v. 7. Paul marveled that some Galatian Christians were being hindered from obeying the truth. We might well marvel about the same today. Paul upholds the necessity of obeying the truth (gospel of Christ), while denying the necessity of submitting to the law of Moses. Again, please read Mark 16:15-16. The commission is to "preach the gospel," which is inclusive of, "He who believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There is nothing complicated about this passage, and it harmonizes perfectly with every other passage which addresses becoming a Christian.

Ephesians 1:13-14

Verse 12 and 2:8-10 should also be included. Paul is addressing people who are already Christians. How did they become such? Read Acts 19:1-7. There is no reason to believe that Paul taught anything else to the other Ephesians than what he taught to these twelve. Their trust had been in John and in his baptism. Paul taught them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the result being that they were baptized in His name. "Not of yourselves" (Eph. 2:8) identifies the works that are repudiated in v. 9, while the works of v. 10 are necessitated for all who are "created in Christ Jesus" (see also Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:26-27; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Romans 3:22-28

Read v. 20 - the "deeds of the law" of Moses are under consideration.

Romans 4:10-13

Again, in context, the law of Moses is under consideration. Abraham's relationship with God was established outside of the law of Moses. Read carefully vs. 21-22. In summary, being fully persuaded, he performed (did what he was told to do by God), and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Had he remained unpersuaded, or failed to perform, righteousness could not have been imputed.

Romans 8:1-2

Again, "the law of sin and death" under consideration is the law of Moses, to which no Christian is obligated. The "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (v. 2) is the same as the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2), and "law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25; 2:12). Christians are free from obligation to the law of Moses, but are obligated to the law of Christ.

Romans 9:16

Ref. to works of human merit by which no one can be saved. See also Titus 3:5. The doctrine of salvation by faith only fails to properly distinguish between useless works of human merit, or self righteousness, and the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), obeying the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17), being obedient to

the truth (Rom. 2:8; Gal. 3:1; 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). See also: Jn. 14:15, 23 - Who loves Jesus? Who will the Father and the Son abide with? Jn. 14:24 - Who does not love Jesus? Jn. 15:14 - Who is a friend of Jesus? Who is not His friend? 1 Jn. 5:2-3 - How do we know that we love the children of God? How do we express our love for God? How do we express lack of love for Him? 1 Jn. 2:1-6 - How do we know that we know Jesus? What is evidence that a person does not know Jesus? Col. 2:10-12 - Is baptism through faith in a work of human merit or through the faith of the operation (Gk. *energia*, working) of God? See also 1 Pet. 3:18-22.

Romans 11:6

Reflecting back to 10:1-3, the remnant of Israel was offered salvation in Christ, not because their works (establishing their own righteousness) merited it, but because of God's grace, which can never be merited by anyone, Jew or Gentile, since there are none righteous (Rom. 3:10), all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Everyone who is saved is saved by grace, for no sinner can merit the Lord Jesus Christ's work on the cross. God's grace is offered to all, but is beneficial only to those who receive it on His terms, otherwise all would be saved, none would be lost, the Bible would be a useless book, and the Lord's death on the cross would have been unnecessary. Paul warned the Gentile converts to Christ that they should take care to remain faithful lest they, as grafted in branches, not be spared in the same manner as the natural branches (Israel.)

2 Timothy 2:15-19

This passage deals with necessities which help Christians remain faithful to Christ. V. 15 requires of Christians that they study (give diligence) to show themselves workmen approved of God. Diligence means to exert oneself, to endeavor to accomplish a thing, again, proving just the opposite of salvation by faith only.

1 John 5

See discussion under Romans 9:16, above, particularly ref. 1 Jn. 5:2-3. 1 Jn. 5:4 - Who are those born of God if not those who love Him and keep His commandments? Whose faith (4b) is John speaking of, unless it is those who love God and keep His commandments? "He that believeth" (v. 5), in context, is he who loves God and keeps his commandments. If not, what rule of grammar requires a change of subject at this point? God still give eternal life to even those who love Him and keep His commandments (vs. 1-11), because, as the Lord Jesus said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Lk. 17:10). Under those conditions it is clear that no person can merit salvation, and it is equally clear that the question of merit does not absolve the person of at least attempting to do all for the Master that it is his duty to do.