

## 17 *Does It Matter If We Rely Only Upon Jesus?*

---

### *Two Paths*

In our Christian walk, what would be the difference if we had to explain salvation from Jesus' Words Only? Without using Paul? What would we say instead? How does the message change when we add Paul to the mix? If the message *substantially changes*, doesn't this raise the question of why did we ever regard Paul as inspired in the first place?

So what would salvation look like if we had Jesus' Words Alone? Then once we establish Jesus' doctrine, then we were supposed to measure whether Paul *fits* into Jesus' salvation doctrine. (2 John 1:9.) If we cannot fit Paul, we were supposed to eject Paul's words, not Jesus' words, from what we obey.

---

### *What Jesus' Words Only Means*

If we quote only Jesus, we have to tell people that Jesus explains we are *justified* by repenting from sin. (Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, Luke 18:10 *et seq.*) We have to explain Jesus gives a simple choice of two roads. You can go to heaven maimed by repenting from sin. Or you can refuse to do so and go to hell whole. (Matthew 5:29; Matthew 18:8; and Mark 9:42-46.)

**“And if your eye ensnares you, cast it out; it is good for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye [rather] than having two eyes to be cast into hell (Gehenna).”  
Mark 9:47**

We can witness to others by memorizing Jesus' steps on how to have eternal life given to the rich young man. (Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-26.) Jesus told him to follow the Ten Commandments,<sup>1</sup> deny himself (*viz.*, give away his wealth) and follow Jesus. Our Lord then explains His meaning immediately thereafter. He tells His twelve apostles that if you give up fathers, mothers, and brothers for Him, deny yourself, take up your cross, and "follow Me," you "*shall* have eternal life." (Matthew 19:27-29.) *See also*, Matthew 10:37-39.

It was as Jesus says elsewhere. Those who are following Him and are losing their life in this world to serve Him do so for "life eternal." (John 12:25-26.)

However, the young rich man did not respond properly to this invitation. The cost was too high for him. His work worthy of repentance that Jesus required for him to receive eternal life was giving up all his wealth and giving it to the poor. Jesus said *grace was not free*, contrary to what we are so often told. Jesus elsewhere said that you need "to count the cost" of becoming a Christian or otherwise you would not "complete" the course, but fail to continue and be destroyed. (Luke 14:28.) Thus, Jesus taught the rich young man (and ourselves) that *salvation came at a price*—a price the rich young man was unwilling to pay. It is as Jesus says in Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able [*i.e.*, lack strength]." Salvation requires a stern repentance from sin that most people *refuse* to entertain. They want eter-

"I say unto you,  
This man went down  
to his house justified  
rather than the other.  
For every one that  
exalts himself shall  
be humbled but he  
who humbles himself  
shall be exalted (*i.e.*  
raised high)."  
Luke 18:14.

---

1. When asked again how to have "eternal life" by a teacher of the Law, Jesus likewise told the teacher to obey the Law. (Luke 10:25-37.)

nal life but only if it comes free. Jesus expressly *rejects* such free-grace teaching, regardless of the sincerity of those who insist this doctrine belongs to Christianity.

Jesus told us vividly what the correct response should have been from the rich young man. Jesus tells us that Zaccheus did correctly understand and accept Jesus' gospel. Zaccheus is a model of what a proper response should look like. Zaccheus repents of extortion by paying back fourfold what he stole. He gives the rest of his money to the poor. Then he follows Jesus. After those works worthy of repentance, Jesus responds: "Today salvation has come to this house...." (Luke 19:9.)

Thus, if Jesus' words alone applied, we would boldly tell people that they should follow Zaccheus' example. 'Be a Zaccheus!' we would say. Zaccheus is an actual concrete example of a person whom Jesus said received salvation. What prompted that response from Jesus should be the focus of almost every salvation sermon. Alas! Today Zaccheus is a forgotten man.

If we had Jesus' words alone, what would be the meaning of the salvation promised to the thief on the cross? All the thief says is "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." (Luke 23:42.) Jesus tells us the thief will be with Him that day in Paradise. Wasn't the thief saved because he "confessed me before men," declaring Jesus was the king—another way of saying He was Messiah?<sup>2</sup> Did not Jesus say that anyone who did this, He would then "confess him before the angels in heaven?" (Luke 12:8.)

Was this a promise of salvation for belief alone? Or is confession a step beyond mere believing? Apostle John gives us the answer in clear *unmistakable terms*. "[E]ven many of

---

2. The thief no doubt was Jewish and knew the Messianic prophecies. He realized that Jesus was *the king*. The prophesied figure of a king who would rule eternally was identified only one time in Hebrew Scripture as prince *Messiah*. (Dan 9:25-26.) All other references were to a king or ruler whose kingdom was universal and would endure forever. (Gen. 49:27; Numbers 24:16-19; Isaiah 9:6-7.)

the rulers *believed* in Him [*i.e.*, Jesus], but because of the Pharisees they were *not confessing* [Him] for fear they would be put out of the synagogues.” (John 12:42 NASB.) Thus, confession is a courageous step beyond believing. Jesus therefore promised salvation to the thief precisely because the thief took a step beyond mere belief. Faith alone would not have saved the thief any more than it could have the *believing* rulers who were fearful and would not confess Jesus. The thief is in Paradise because he was willing to go further than *faith alone*. The thief *confessed* Jesus in front of those who would likely whip him for standing up for Jesus. Thus, we see *confession* for the thief was a means of “bear[ing] his own cross” and following Jesus despite those risks. (Matthew 19:27-29.) The thief confessed Jesus in the most unfavorable circumstances possible. He also first had to repent from sin. Originally the thief like everyone else was ridiculing Jesus. (Matt. 27:44.)<sup>3</sup> Without this repentance, there would be no confession.

Without Paul in the mix, we see the thief was saved by something other than mere private mental assent of facts about Jesus. The thief is thus saved precisely because after repenting of sin he made a confession of trust in Jesus *as a king (messiah)* in public before men when the pressure surrounding him was to do otherwise. Jesus tells us this is one path to Him that saves you. (Luke 23:43.) Jesus promises He will “confess” you before the “angels in Heaven” if you “*confess me before men.*” (Luke 12:8.) If on

“Neither Calvin nor Luther treated repentance as a condition for eternal salvation. Both stood firmly for ....faith alone.”  
Zane C. Hodges  
**Absolutely Free**  
Chapter Twelve

---

3. As John MacArthur says of the thief: “Repentance wrought a dramatic change in his behavior, and he turned from mocking Christ to defending him.” (J. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus, supra*, at 155 n. 1.)

the other hand, you deny Jesus, then Jesus says he will deny you—Luke 12:9, which emphasizes this confession must be *out loud* in a *pressure situation*, not just in your heart.

What does this threat by Jesus to deny those who cowardly deny Him mean? Remember the rulers who “believed” in Jesus but were “*afraid* to confess” Him? (John 12:42.) They were moral cowards. God tells us the “cowardly” will be thrown in the “lake of burning sulfur” with “unbelievers.” (Rev.21:8.) Hence, Jesus’ threat to deny those who deny Him was intended to threaten actual *believers*, like the rulers were *believers*, who were “afraid to confess Him.” This fact proves conclusively that the thief took a *crucial* step for salvation which belief alone could not provide. For the same reason, the belief alone of the rulers of John 12:42 will not save them. If they remained cowards to the end, God tells us such cowards will be end up in the same place as those who are unbelievers: in hell itself.

Thus, without Paul in the mix, the thief would be the perfect illustration that faith alone cannot save. What saved the thief was precisely going beyond faith and confessing Him (as Messiah-King). This is no easy step, but involves danger, and resisting cowardice. Thus, Jesus’ promise to the thief of salvation is the equivalent of Jesus’ promise of “eternal life” if you “deny yourself,” “take up your cross,” and “follow me.” (Matthew 19:27-29.) Accordingly, faith alone could not therefore possibly be what saved the thief. ***He had courage, and not just belief***, and thus was saved. By contrast, the rulers in John 12:42 ***had the belief, but not the courage*** to confess Jesus and hence were lost. The cowardly but believing rulers of John 12:42 should remain a constant reminder that faith alone does not save.

Alas, with Paul in the mix, the thief is almost never remembered for anything other than to address the question whether someone is saved without water baptism.<sup>4</sup> And the Paulinists never try to examine how the cowardly but believing rulers of John 12:42 pin-point what saved the thief: his courageous confession.

Furthermore, if we relied upon Jesus' words alone, we would have to tell a prospective Christian whether faithfulness is necessary. We would tell our listener that Jesus assured those who "kept guard" of His word "should never taste death." (John 8:51, ASV.) He promised you "**shall** be saved" if you "endured to the end." (Matt. 10:22.) *Cfr.* John 3:16 (if continue to believe then "should" be saved.)

In particular, if we trusted in Jesus' words alone, we would have to tell a new Christian it is imperative to be forgiving to others *post-salvation*. Jesus makes our *post-salvation* forgiveness from God and ultimate salvation expressly conditional on our being forgiving to others. If we refuse subsequently to forgive others, God will revoke our prior forgiveness, and absent repentance, send us to hell.

For example, Jesus told us to pray daily: "Forgive us our debts, **as** we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matt. 6:12.) This makes our request for forgiveness *conditional*. We cannot make an *unconditional plea* for forgiveness that disregards our own failure to forgive.

- 
4. The thief's experience is potentially relevant on the issue of baptism. Those who claim baptism is crucial to salvation cite promises of salvation if you are baptized. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:28, 38; Acts 22:16; and 1 Peter 3:21). However, a promise is not the same as a command to be water baptized as a condition of *all paths of* salvation in Jesus. ***These promises which mention baptism among other conditions contain one element of a sure way to be saved.*** However, what is ignored by baptizers-for-salvation is that Jesus gives us similar promises without the condition of water baptism, such as publicly confessing Him (Luke 12:8). This is precisely what the thief did. ***This is equally a sure way to be saved in Jesus.*** The thief was saved without baptism. There is no valid verse saying *negatively* that whoever is not baptized is lost with the possible exception of John 3:5. It says "no one can enter the kingdom of heaven" unless they are born from Spirit and "water." However, because this does not say "born again" in this verse, it is possible "water" means the birth-waters that a baby passes through. It is plausible two births are envisioned in John 3:5, and thus water baptism is not absolutely crucial for all paths of salvation in Jesus.

Likewise, in Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus tells us that if after we are forgiven a mountain of debt which spares us from prison (hell), if we *later* are unforgiving, then our Master will be “wroth” with us. He will send us to the “jailers.” These jailers are at the same prison (hell) we at first avoided by being forgiven all our debt. If you later are unforgiving, Jesus expressly says your forgiveness will be revoked and the jailers will “torment” you until you pay the entire originally forgiven debt of sin. (Matt. 18:28-35.) This means an endless imprisonment. The debt of 10,000 talents at stake in that Parable of the Unmerciful Servant is insurmountable. Hence, Jesus does not portray a Christian who later sins by being unforgiving as someone who is going to heaven. To the contrary, Jesus teaches such a Christian will be separated from God forever. Such a Christian will suffer torment in a prison which in the parable symbolizes Hell.

Furthermore, if we had Jesus' Words alone, we also would tell our friend who accepts Christ that if you deny Christ under pressure, then Jesus promises you Hell. (Luke 12:4-9.) There is no freedom to deny Christ and be faithless, and yet God will forgive you anyway. We would teach this clearly if we only had Jesus' words as the measure of orthodoxy. (Paulinists deny this threat exists for a Christian, citing Paul's assurance to the contrary in 2 Timothy 2:13.)

If we had Jesus' Words alone, we would likewise have to tell our friend that after initial salvation some ‘fruit’ is necessary. It is not optional, or mere proof of your saved status. John the Baptist calls for “works worthy of repentance” and then adds: “every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Matt. 3:10.) Later Jesus repeats this statement in the context of warning about false prophets: “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Matt. 7:19.) Jesus promises hell for those who lack good fruit.

In fact, Jesus makes the most explicit link between good works and salvation in John 5:28-29: “Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their

graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have *done good*, to the *resurrection of life*, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” Gathercole comments on this verse, and acknowledges, as worded it means that “John’s Jesus [says]...the criterion for whether one is punished or receives life at the *eschaton* [*i.e.*, the age to come] is the ‘doing’ of good or evil.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus repeats this principle of the necessity of *fruit* or *works* many other times. For example, in John 15:1-6, Jesus at the Last Supper, after Judas leaves (John 14:7), says “you,” the apostles, are “branches” and Jesus is the Vine. They are also reassured that they are all “clean” right now. Then Jesus tells them that a branch that “keeps staying” in Him and produces fruit will be continually “cleaned.” *Cf.* Deut. 6:25. This way it bears more fruit. Jesus also warns and encourages them in verses five and six that “a branch in me” that produces *no fruit* because it failed to “keep staying” in Jesus, will be thrown “outside” the vineyard. It is as a branch that died (“dried up”). It is gathered up into the “fire and is burned.”

If our friend knows of Paul, he may not listen to Jesus’ words alone from the Metaphor of the Vine which requires *works* after initial salvation. Perhaps you need to quote another passage of Jesus. In the Parable of the Unprof-

---

5. Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5*. (Eerdmans 2002) at 114. However, Gathercole claims that John’s Jesus does not equate “doing good” with “obeying Torah” because of Jesus’ answer in John 6:26-29. (*Id.*) However, Gathercole is relying on a Pauline translation of that passage, as explained at Footnote No. 15 on page 254. In fact, it stretches all credulity to think in John 5:28-29 that Jesus means by “good works” simply “belief” in Himself. To even suggest this is just another example of the Pauline mantra in contemporary Christian commentary that overshadows the literal meanings of Jesus. If Jesus had in mind those who had *belief* alone were raised, then Jesus should not have had in counterpoise that the condemned were those who have ‘done evil.’ He should have said those who ‘did not believe’ rise to condemnation. Jesus’ words were well chosen to say salvation depends also upon doing good.

itable Servant, Jesus reiterates the point. Three servants are each given money — one talent, two talents, and five talents respectively. The servant given one talent hides it. The other two servants produce fruit with the money given them. When the master comes back and sees the servant given one talent still has only one talent, this servant is thrown *outside* in outer darkness. The unproductive servant suffers there weeping and gnashing of teeth. Only the two other productive servants are saved. In Matt. 25:14 *et seq.*, Jesus says of the unproductive servant: “now throw this unprofitable servant into ***outer darkness*** where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 25:30, KJV).<sup>6</sup>

If our friend still balks at listening to Jesus alone on faith and works, we can further cement the point with the Parable of the Sower. In this parable, only the fourth seed is saved. The second seed “*believes* for a while,” sprouts, but in time of temptation falls away and dies. (Luke 8:13.) The third goes further, grows substantially but is then choked by thorns—by the pleasures and riches of this life. As a result, the third seed never brings any fruit to completion. (Luke 8:14.) The fourth seed is sewn into good ground. It alone produces to the end. (Luke 8:15.) It alone is saved. Thus, Jesus again taught faith without bringing your fruit to completion does not save. Jesus expressly taught faith alone does not save. When faith is destroyed by sin, such faith is dead. Faith plus endurance in producing fruit saves, our Lord insists.<sup>7</sup>

---

6. Some Paulinists admit if the two productive servants are believers, there is no textual reason to believe the third servant is not a believer. (Dillow, *Reign of the Servant Kings*, *supra*, at 355.) Other Paulinists use circular logic to deny the servant with one talent was ever a saved Christian. Since he was evidently lost due to lacking works, they insist he could never have been a Christian. Yet that presupposes the very issue at stake—the validity of Paul’s contrary teaching of *faith alone*.

7. For a full discussion on the Parable of the Sower, see “What The Parable of the Sower Confirms About Faith in John’s Gospel” on page 171 *et seq.*

Yet, if our friend still needs convincing what Jesus says about *works*, then cite him to Jesus' Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. (Matt. 25:32 *et seq.*) Both the sheep and goats call Jesus Lord. One group serves Jesus by feeding the brethren in need, clothing them, and giving them water. The sheep in essence give charity. The other group who calls Jesus Lord fails to give any charity. Jesus calls them the goats. On Judgment Day, Jesus says he will separate the sheep from the goats. He will send the sheep to heaven but the goats to "eternal fire." It is as James says, the one who has "faith alone," lacking works of charity of feeding the brethren and giving them clothes, food, and drink, has a faith that is "dead" and "cannot save." (James 2:14-17.) As Gathercole concedes, Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46 says "**deeds** of hospitality...are **certainly** the criterion for judgment."<sup>8</sup>

If we had Jesus' words alone, then we would have seen the identical message of faith plus works appears in the Metaphor of the Vine, the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant, the Parable of the Sower, and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. The productivity that Jesus implores is not optional. It is not forensic proof of some already sufficient status of being saved. Instead, if we rely on Jesus' words alone, we need to tell our friend that Jesus says productivity is **essential** to avoid becoming spiritually "dried up" (dead). It is **vital** to avoid being thrown "in outer darkness" and "outside" to be "burned." Otherwise, we will suffer "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in "eternal fire." As Jesus said, "every tree that does not bear good fruit...is cast into the fire." (Matt. 7:19.) Jesus also added that only those who have "done good" will rise to eternal life while those who have "done evil" will rise to condemnation. (John 5:28-29.) If we had Jesus' Words Only, the addition of "good fruit" (works) to faith as an *absolute condition* for salvation would never have caused a controversy at all.

---

8. Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Eerdmans: 2002) at 113.

It is as Jesus says in a proper translation of Luke 13:24. Jesus literally says: “use all your strength [*agonizomai*] to be entering into the cramped door which, I tell you, [many] shall be seeking to enter [it] but they shall not *be having strength* [to do so].”<sup>9</sup> Jesus’ words meant many will be fighting to enter because of the cramped nature of the doorway itself. But only those who strive with all their might, and are strong enough, can enter. Jesus portrays salvation as something you must use all your strength to obtain.

Yet, we must not forget that in the Metaphor of the Vine, Jesus taught that “staying in me” was the crucial means of having vital strength. The way to avoid sin that destroys the faith of the second seed in the Parable of the Sower is to “keep holding to the Root.” The key is to pray every day Father “lead us from temptation.” (Matt. 6:13.) We must *pray* for the strength to enter the kingdom. However, absent such strength, we will not be strong enough to enter the kingdom. The spiritually weak—those who do not pray to resist temptation—will not be able to enter. Christians whose prayer life

---

9. Because this runs afoul of Paulinism, this verse is often translated in a tepid manner. Yet, commentators acknowledge the true meaning. For example, Barnes agrees *agonazai* in Greek “literally [means] agonize,” not *strive*, which is the common translation. (KJV.) Barnes likewise acknowledges in context it means to be “diligent...to overcome our sinful propensities.” Thus, Jesus means to say salvation depends on our effort to avoid sin. Jesus thereby exhorts us in the strongest possible terms *to believe this*. In Greek, the gate here is not the same gate as in Matthew 7:13 where Jesus talks of the narrow and wide gait. Robertson explains that in Matthew 7:13, the gait is *puls*, an outside gate, while in Luke 13:24, it is *thurast*, the door to enter a house. This is important, for the emphasis here is on the *cramped* nature of the gate to enter the house. Finally, the last part of the sentence is also normally translated very tepidly. Jesus supposedly warns some “will not be able” to enter. (KJV.) However, the Greek word emphasizes they “lack being strong.” The Greek word is *ixycocin*. John 21:6 uses the same word to say the apostles were “not strong enough” to draw the net with the miraculous catch of fish. In Luke 13:24, Jesus is re-emphasizing His point that our salvation depends on our strength. Of course, that strength comes through prayer from God. Yet, Jesus intends His exhortation to stimulate such prayer.

dies, and they succumb to sin, Jesus teaches that they will not have the strength to enter the kingdom. Faith must add works or it dies and you lack the strength to enter the kingdom. Thus, Jesus exhorts we agonize to enter into salvation—we use the very last ounce of strength that an athlete uses to finish a race—or otherwise you can expect on being in the fiery furnace forever.

---

*Paul's Different Message*

However, if we preach Paul's message, we have only one simple formula to explain. Simply say with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe "in your heart" that He rose from the dead. If you do so, then you are saved. (Romans 10:9.) It is belief plus nothing, as some say. In fact, as Paulinists explain, Paul does not mean you exert even the effort to say Jesus is Lord. Rather, the Holy Spirit entered you first and caused the words to come forth. *See* 1 Cor. 12:3 ("no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit"). Thus, it was the *belief* given by the Holy Spirit alone that saved you. Paulinists teach salvation never depends on anything you do or initiate.

It is impossible to deny Paul teaches belief-plus-nothing saves you. And Paul teaches this belief is itself *supernaturally bestowed* with no effort on your part to even believe. When all of Paul's teachings are cross-analyzed, Paul certainly teaches salvation is a free gift at every point. (Eph. 2:8-9; Romans 4:4.) Paul teaches that if any effort beyond changing belief is required for salvation, then salvation is by works. (Rom. 4:4-6.)

This leads to a stark contradiction of Jesus. For example, if we teach repentance from sin as a condition of salvation, as Jesus in Mark 9:42-48 makes indispensable, then it is salvation by works. Based on Paul's teaching against works, the *Ryrie Study Bible* says repentance from sin is "a false addition to faith" when added as a condition of salvation.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, Dr. Bob Wilkin says Paul's teaching on grace and works makes "appalling" any idea that we need to obey the repentance-from-sin principle to enter heaven. Wilkin explains how contrary Paul's teachings are to that principle: "It is gibberish to speak of a free gift which costs us everything."<sup>11</sup> Wilkin further cements unwittingly the stark contrast between Paul's doctrines and Jesus' teaching in Mark 9:42-48. Wilkin says a promise of heaven based on repentance from sin is a gospel "not [based upon] a free gift. It is an earned wage." (*Id.*) Exactly! As Bonhoeffer explained in the *Cost of Discipleship* (1937), Jesus said grace is costly. Paul has a different message that grace is free!

We have reached the amazing situation where R.C. Sproul can declare that "faith alone" is all there is to justification. If you reject it, you are apostate and unsaved. (R.C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).) Any church or person that adds any requirement besides faith as a condition for salvation is lost and apostate. By Sproul's definition, Jesus is lost and apostate!

There is no doubt Jesus made repentance from sin an indispensable condition of salvation. Jesus said believers in Him must be careful not to be ensnared by sin. They must realize they can go to heaven maimed by repenting from sin. Or, if they refuse to do so, they will go to hell whole. (Matthew 5:29, Matthew 18:8, and Mark 9:42-48.) This is no doubt why Jesus warned that the road to life is "hard" and "few" find it. (Matt. 7:13, 14.) Jesus exhorts you "strive" and in Greek *agonazai*—use your very last ounce of strength you have—to enter the way that leads to life. (Luke 13:24.) With Paul in the mix, salvation relies on the *easy* step of *belief*

---

10. Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976) at 1950.

11. Dr. Bob Wilkin, *Repentance and Salvation: A Key Gospel Issue* (1988) (reprinted at <http://www.faithalone.org/news/y1988/88june4.html>).

alone. You never *strive* to enter into salvation. It does not depend on how much strength (*e.g.*, your prayer-life) you have. Jesus and Paul are at *total odds*.

---

*Don't Paul & Jesus Agree on Confession with the Mouth?*

What do Paulinists say about *confession of Jesus* before men? As noted earlier, Jesus promised this was one way to become saved. (Luke 12:8.) But verbal confession is more than belief (John 12:42, rulers believed but would not confess), and hence a work in the Pauline sense. What would Paulinists say about that path to salvation?

Paul in his famous *dictum* on how to be saved in Romans 10:9 said one part is “saying with the mouth” that Jesus is Lord. This appears to be an *action* beyond mere belief which even Paul endorsed. However, Paulinists stress Paul’s other salvation formulas that eschew any kind of *work* as necessary for salvation. Thus, most Paulinists also dispense with *confession* with the mouth as a step in salvation. If confession were necessary in any formula, the Paulinist insists Paul would be contradicting his own teaching against *works* in Ephesians 2:8-9. In other words, the *public confession* of Jesus as Lord, if necessary for salvation, would be a work, mainstream Paulinists insist. Thus Dr. Bob Wilkin says Paul teaches against the idea that public confession is a step in any formula for salvation. He bases this upon Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 4:4. If a public confession were really necessary, Dr. Wilkin says such an idea “results in works salvation.”<sup>12</sup> To keep Paul squared with Paul, Dr. Wilkin says public *confession* is the fruit of faith. *Public confession* is not what saves you despite Paul saying this is so in Romans 10:9.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, Jesus promised a public confession of Him “before men” would be matched by His confession of you before the Father. You will be treated like the thief on the

cross. If you died that same day as your confession “before men,” Jesus would promise you salvation just like He gave the thief on the cross. Jesus gave no mixed messages that a silent confession of *belief* alone had the same promise of salvation. (Luke 12:8.) Jesus told us plain and clear that confession with the mouth “before men” was one path to salvation. Jesus never cast that principle in doubt by excoriating anyone who would add *any kind action* to any salvation formula.

When previously we compared Jesus’ and Paul’s main salvation message, they were at direct odds at so many points. However, even when they appear consistent such as on the confession issue (Luke 12:8; Romans 10:9), the Paulinists dodge even drawing a parallel. They insist upon re-reading Paul to not line up with Jesus. They re-interpret Paul to match Paul’s *faith alone* statements in Eph. 2:8-9 and Romans 4:4. They do not acknowledge that *confession with the mouth*—a clear *action*—is a necessary step to Paul’s formula in Romans 10:9, even though Paul says so in this verse.

- 
12. Bob Wilkin, *Is Confessing Christ a Condition of Salvation?* (1994) (reprinted online at <http://www.faithalone.org/news/y1994/94july3.html>). Ironically, Wilkin says “[s]ince the Bible [*i.e.*, Paul] is clear that eternal salvation is a free gift and that it is not of works..., this passage [*i.e.*, from Luke 12:8, ‘confess me before men, and I will confess before the Father’] **cannot be dealing with the Gospel.**” Jesus’ words are thereby nullified based on Paul! Wilkin is the author of such works as *Confident in Christ*. He is also the head of the Grace Evangelical Society.
13. The word translated *confess* that Paul uses is *homologeō*. (It is the same word used in Luke 12:8.) It means *to have the same word or agree*. Paul then says this must be in your *stoma*. This means *mouth*. Thus, in context Paul is saying *agreement with your mouth* has a promise of salvation if combined with a subjective belief in the resurrection. If an *agreement with the mouth* is truly part of the formula, then how is salvation by *faith* (belief), *not works?* (Eph. 2:8-9.) They are inconsistent. This is why most Paulinists re-read Paul in Romans 10:9 to mean *believe in your heart* Jesus is Lord. Then they see the fruit of this will be *public confession*. Thus, when you first believed in your heart, you were instantaneously saved without the *work* of a confession in public. (See prior footnote.) Thus, if you pay close attention to Paul’s formulas, he is not always consistent.

Yet, it is not their fault: Paul does utter self-contradictory statements that undermine the very formula for salvation he gave in Romans 10:9. Paul's self-contradictions thus make it always impossible to line up Paul with Jesus even when Paul says the very same thing as Jesus.

---

*What About John 3:16?*

Picking just one verse from Jesus that sounds Pauline (*i.e.*, John 3:16) is not a solution. The verb tense for *believes* in John 3:16 has indeed been translated to sound Pauline. In the original Greek, it means something not only quite different, but also actually the opposite of how it reads in the KJV and NIV. It should read: "He who *continues to believe/trust* should have eternal life." This is the true meaning of the underlying Greek verbs. (See Appendix A: *Greek Issues*.) Faithfulness, not one moment of faith, is what *should* save.

Therefore, we have a choice to make. We can explain salvation based on Jesus' Words Only. Or we can use Paul's words. They are two radically different messages.



Andreas Rudolph Borenstein von Carlstadt (1480-1541). Co-leader of Reformation with Luther. Believed Jesus' words in Gospels more important than epistles for formulating doctrine.

**TABLE 10. Salvation Checklist — Jesus versus Paul**

<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Paul</b>
The one who repents from sin is “justified.” (Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. Luke 18:10-14.) The son who was dead but now repents is “alive again” (born again). (Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:1-32, <i>viz.</i> v. 24.)	One is not justified nor born again by repentance from sin, but by faith alone. (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:4.) Any such addition to Paul’s salvation by faith alone doctrine is the heresy of “works salvation.” (Wilkin, Stanley, Hodge.)
The one who relies upon God’s election to salvation and does not repent goes home unjustified. (Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. Luke 18:10-14.)	The one who relies upon God’s election alone for salvation is relying on the right thing. (Rom. 8:33.) God elects you to salvation by means of predestination, and hence without any work on your part. Faith is given to you as part of God’s work in you. (Phil 1:6) (Wilkin, Stanley.)
To have eternal life, follow the Ten Commandments, deny yourself ( <i>i.e.</i> , repent and do works worthy of repentance) and then follow Jesus. If you give up fathers, mothers, and brothers for Jesus, deny yourself, take up your cross, and “follow Me,” you “shall have eternal life.” (Matthew 19:27-29; Matthew 10:37-39; John 12:25-26.)	To have eternal life, say with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe He is resurrected. (Rom. 10:9.) Do not add any work. “Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt.” (Rom. 4:4.) If salvation depends on keeping the Law, then salvation by faith is made void. “[I]f they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void...” (Rom.4:14.)
A Christian will go to hell if they deny Christ under pressure. (Luke 12:4-9.)	If we deny Jesus, He will deny us, but in the end God will still accept us because He cannot deny Himself. (Stanley.) Paul says: “if we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for He cannot deny himself.” (2 Tim. 2:12-13.)

**TABLE 10. Salvation Checklist — Jesus versus Paul**

<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Paul</b>
<p>As part of an answer on how to have eternal life, Jesus tells a rich man to repent by giving his wealth to the poor. The man is grieved. (Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-26.) Jesus tells another rich man who repents and repays those he stole from that “Today salvation has come to this house....” (Luke 19:9.)</p>	<p>Salvation could not possibly depend on any works of repentance. Salvation is by faith alone. (Eph.2:8-9; Rom. 4:4.)</p>
<p>The thief on the cross, in front of a crowd hostile to Jesus, says: “Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.”(Luke 23:42.) Jesus had said that if you “confess me before men” then he will confess you before the angels in Heaven. (Luke 12:8.) Jesus thus tells the thief “this day you will be with me in Paradise.”</p>	<p>Salvation could never depend on a confession of Jesus before men. If it was a means of salvation, this would be works righteousness. Instead, even though Paul said that if you “say Jesus is Lord with your mouth” and believe He was resurrected, then you shall be saved (Rom. 10:9), faith is all you need to be saved. (Rom. 4:4.) Paul must mean that such confession will flow naturally from faith rather than salvation is produced by a public confession. (Wilkin.)</p>
<p>Salvation is based on God forgiving your sin. If you do not forgive others after you receive forgiveness, God will revoke your forgiveness and send you to hell to be tormented. (Matt. 18:28-35; cf. Matt. 6:12.)</p>	<p>Salvation is not contingent on your forgiving others. Salvation only has one condition: a one-time faith. (Romans 4:4.) If you ever once had faith (Romans 10:9), you are no longer able to be condemned. (Romans 8:1.)</p>

**TABLE 10. Salvation Checklist — Jesus versus Paul**

<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Paul</b>
<p>Jesus promised those who “kept guard” of His word “should never taste death.” (John 8:51.) “He who continues to trust/believe should be saved.” (John 3:16.) He who continues to “disobey” the Son continues to be under God’s wrath. (John 3:36.)</p>	<p>There is no endurance in any action required. Only a one-time faith is necessary for salvation. (Romans 4:4.) One could fail to keep and guard Jesus’ word and still be saved because one is eternally secure based on a one-time faith. (Romans 8:1, 10:9.)</p>
<p>Jesus said “a branch in me” that produces no fruit because it failed to keep staying “in me” will be thrown “outside” the vineyard. It is as a branch that died (dried up). It is gathered up into the fire and is burned. (John 15:1-6.)</p>	<p>If fruit or works were necessary to avoid being thrown outside God’s vineyard, becoming dead and then being burned in hell, it would be a salvation by works. Instead, salvation is by faith without any works. (Romans 4:4, 14; Eph. 2:8-9.)</p>
<p>A servant of Jesus who produces no fruit is useless, and he will be “thrown...into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 25:14 <i>et seq.</i>) This place of weeping and gnashing is the “fiery furnace.” (Matt. 13:42, 50.)</p>	<p>If fruit or works were necessary to avoid being thrown outside and be burned in hell where there is weeping and gnashing, it would be a salvation by works. Instead, salvation is by faith without any works. (Romans 4:4, 14; Eph. 2:8-9.)</p>
<p>If you receive the word with joy and “believe for a while,” but in time of temptation, you fall away, you are lost. If you are choked by the pleasures of this world, and bring no fruit to completion, you are lost. If on the other hand, you bring forth fruit to the end, in patient endurance, you will be saved. (Luke 8:13-15.) You “shall be saved” if you “endured to the end.” (Matt. 10:22.)</p>	<p>If you receive the word with joy and believe for a while, you are eternally saved. (Romans 8:1; 10:9.) Salvation cannot depend on you or anything you do thereafter. Otherwise, it is salvation by works. (Romans 4:4, 14; Eph. 2:8-9.) Thus, if you fall away or are choked with the pleasures of this life and have no fruit, you are still saved. There is no need to endure in faith as long as you believed once.</p>

TABLE 10. Salvation Checklist — Jesus versus Paul

Jesus	Paul
Among the sheep and goats who both call Jesus Lord, the group who serves Jesus by feeding the brethren in need, clothing them, and giving them water, goes to heaven. The other group who calls Jesus Lord but who fails to provide such charity are, as a consequence, sent to “eternal fire.” (Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. Matt. 25:32 et seq.). A faith that ignores the poor brethren is “dead” and “cannot save.” (James 2:14-17.) “Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Matt. 7:19.)	Anyone who “shall call” on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:13.) This is permanent, and no condition subsequent can be put on this that you must be charitable or have fruit thereafter. Otherwise, it is salvation by works. (Romans 4:4, 14; Eph. 2:8-9.) Hence, it cannot be true that if the goats, in fact, ever once called on the name of the Lord that they should be sent to hell. James’ statement that paraphrases the principle of Matthew 25:32 <i>et seq.</i> contradicts Paul, and we are not to believe even an angel from heaven if he should contradict Paul. (Gal. 1:8.)
“I keep telling you the one who keeps on listening to my teaching and keeps on believing in the one who sent me keeps on having eternal life and does not come into condemnation but has departed out of death into life.” (John 5:24.) For the basis to this translation, see pages 167-70.	Once in Christ, there is now no condemnation. This entry is by a one-time faith. (Rom. 10:9). As a result, freedom from condemnation is not secured by any continuity in listening to Jesus’ teaching or believing in God-the-Father.

---

*Faith in the Pauline Sense?*

When you abandon column one—the words of the historical Jesus—and replace His teaching with column two—the words of Paul, you have a radical separation. Yet, the one following Paul is told they are following Jesus. They label themselves a Christian. They claim they trust in Christ, and are saved. Yet, they are not following the words of Jesus Christ on *how to be saved*. Then precisely what are they

doing when they follow Paul? They are following an abstract idea of what they want Jesus to be for them without a willingness to actually accept Jesus' commands and teachings. John Sobrino explains that the question comes down to:

whether this Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus or some vague, **abstract Spirit** that is nothing more than the sublimated embodiment of the **natural 'religious' person's desires and yearnings**. If it is the latter, then it is not only different from, but actually contrary to, the Spirit of Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, if people are asked to "accept Christ" without being told about the message of the historical Christ, how can we be sure that "Christ" is not just an abstract symbol for them? We cannot. It is a situation reminiscent of what Jesus said was happening with the Pharisees and their followers.

(13) But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter. (15) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, **ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves**. (Mat 23:13, 15)(ASV)

The Pharisees were highly evangelistic. Jesus said *do not mistake this as proof they are from God*. They were blind guides. People wanted to enter the kingdom, and the Pharisees were abroad evangelizing them. Yet, the Pharisees had a false teaching that made their proselytes not enter the kingdom of God.

What did Jesus say they were falsely teaching? Jesus said the Law has two components: the weighty and less weighty. The Pharisees focused on the easy stuff. They ignored preaching the *hard stuff from the Law*. Jesus said:

---

14. John Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Orbis Books: 1982) at 384.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have **left undone the weightier matters of the Law**, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and **not to have left the other undone**. (Matt. 23:23)(ASV)

The modern Pauline pastor leaves out all the *hard commands* of the Law and of Jesus, just like the Pharisees left out all the *hard commands* of the Law. Instead, the Pharisees watered down the Law to the simple stuff. Jesus was very serious about the *Law* being followed *in toto*, and called them blind guides. We have followed Paul, and stripped all the *Law* away. Paul's solution was to leave both the weighty and less weighty matters undone, replaced by the principle that "all things are lawful, but not all things are expedient."<sup>15</sup> No one can say this was Jesus' message. With Paul's doctrines predominating, we have reduced everything down to faith, and left the Law, justice and mercy undone. (We have retained only tithing, thus repeating virtually identically the error of the Pharisees.)<sup>16</sup> When those are removed, one may legitimately question whether we have even done *faith* justice.

Jesus has a warning for those who teach Paul's contrary message to what Jesus taught:

Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell? (Mat 23:33)(ASV)

---

15. See "The New Morality In Its Place" on page 80 *et seq.*

16. Ironically, most Paulinist churches revive one command from the 'Old Testament'—the duty to tithe. This is the only command from the 'Old Testament' that supposedly was not abrogated. (Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions & Eternity* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 2003) at 174-75, 181.) Thus, we repeat the same error as the Pharisees: we are big on tithing, but not on the *weightier matters of the Law*. This is why you will most often hear the Pharisees' wrong doctrine miscategorized as if they taught a strict adherence to *all* the Law. The commentators must distort the description of the Pharisees' error. Otherwise, Jesus would be pointing the finger of condemnation at us because we similarly reduced the Law down to tithing.

Historical Note: JWO Spurred The Reformation  
Or Who Was Carlstadt & The Evangelical Brotherhood?

Carlstadt and Luther were co-lecturers at the same university. Together they launched the Protestant Reformation between 1516-1521.

A forgotten fact is the Reformation really gained momentum under Carlstadt during 1521-1522. In this period, Luther was hidden in a tower for his safety. Luther's words at the Diet of Worms were feared to make him a target of assassins. "During [Luther's] absence Professor Andreas von Carlstadt assumed leadership of the Protestant movement in Wittenberg."<sup>17</sup> This means the Reformation gained its early momentum largely *without* Luther's direct involvement.

By 1524, the Evangelical Brotherhood (aka "the Brethren") movement grew to the size of 250,000 people. (Schaf.) They had a Jesus' Words Only focus. They relied primarily upon Carlstadt's focus on the Lord Jesus' doctrine.

Carlstadt insisted that the Gospels about Jesus were more important than the epistles (of Paul). Carlstadt rebuffed Luther on the alleged invalidity of James' Epistle. Carlstadt argued James' Epistle cannot be shuffled aside for teaching faith and works at odds with Paul. (See page 470.) Carlstadt also insisted that Jesus reaffirmed continuation of the Law of Moses, even while Luther insisted that Paul abrogated the Law. (See page 74.) Carlstadt taught Jesus wanted the less weighty and weightier matters of the Law to be followed.<sup>18</sup>

How could Carlstadt insist the Law of Moses was still valid? ***Because Carlstadt had a different view of Paul's Epistles when compared to the Gospels.*** As Durant notes:

---

17. Ross Vander Meulen, *Essay on Revolution 'The College's Role in Revolution*, talk given at Knox College's Opening Convocation on September 7, 1972, reprinted at <http://www.knox.edu/x5040.xml>.

Later in the same year [1520] Carlstadt issued a little book—*De Canonicis Scripturis Libellus*— **exalting** the Bible over popes, councils and traditions, and **the Gospels over Epistles**. If Luther had followed this last line, **Protestantism might have been less Pauline**, Augustinian, and Predestinarian.<sup>19</sup>

Luther and Carlstadt became embittered over James' Epistle. Luther wanted the Epistle of James removed from inspired canon because it conflicted with Paul. (See page 247.) However, Carlstadt insisted that one cannot toss out James, as Luther had done, by relying upon Paul's doctrines as the criteria to determine valid canon.

[A]s early as 1520, Luther's Wittenberg University co-reformer Bodenstein von Carlstadt...**condemned Luther's rejection of James** and argued that one must **appeal either to known apostolic authorship** or to universal historical acceptance (omnium consensus) as the test of a **book's canonicity**, not to **internal doctrinal considerations [of a conflict with Paul]**. (Carlstadt, *De canonicis, Scripturis libellus* (Wittenberg. 1520) para, 50.)<sup>20</sup>

Carlstadt was saying Paul's words were not a permissible basis to close off James' words. Carlstadt resisted Paul's doctrines being used to test what is canon.

In response, Luther from his place of hiding tried demanding his old allies push out Carlstadt. The rift on the Law, James and Paul was too much. In 1521, Luther wrote a savage attack on Carlstadt entitled *The New Judas*.

---

18. Dr. Barnas Spears summarizes in *Life of Luther* (Philadelphia: 1850) at 401: "Carlstadt differed essentially from Luther in regard to the use to be made of the Old Testament. **With him, the law of Moses was still binding**. Luther, on the contrary, had a strong aversion to what he calls a legal and Judaizing religion. Carlstadt held to the **divine authority of the Sabbath** from the Old Testament; Luther believed Christians were free to observe any day as a Sabbath, provided they be uniform in observing it."

19. Wil Durant, *The Reformation* (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1944) at 352.

20. John Warwick Montgomery, "Lessons from Luther on the Inerrancy of Holy Writ," *God's Inerrant Word* (1974), reprinted online at <http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar37.htm>.

By 1524, Luther still had not won his battle among Protestants against Carlstadt. So in 1524, Luther wrote a new pamphlet in which he strongly declared agreement with the Catholic doctrine of trans-substantiation. Luther vehemently attacked Carlstadt's position that communion was symbolic. Luther retreated from his own prior views which had said the same thing as Carlstadt about communion. Now Luther insisted, instead, that "the body of Christ... is really and substantially present in, with and under the Supper..."<sup>21</sup>

Why did Luther change his position on trans-substantiation and attack his old ally Carlstadt? When Luther returned from the Tower in Thuringia, Carlstadt had more followers than Luther. This apparently further embittered Luther:

The work which he [Luther] wrote against him [Carlstadt], he entitled, 'The Book against the Celestial Prophets.' This was uncandid; for the controversy related chiefly to the **sacrament of the supper**. In the south of Germany and in Switzerland, **Carlstadt found more adherents than Luther**. (Dr. Barnas Spears, *Life of Luther* (Philadelphia: 1850) at 403.)

Yet, due to Luther's pamphlets, in 1524 Carlstadt was expelled from Saxony. "[H]e [Carlstadt] was crushed by the civil power, which was on the side of Luther." (*Id.* at 400.)

Then what was Luther to do about the 250,000 Protestants who were influenced by Carlstadt's Jesus-focused doctrine? The Brethren were willing to sacrifice home and comfort to fight for religious freedom. They wanted to obey Jesus' words in all things. They did not want to pay taxes to the Catholic church any longer. It was morally offensive. They wanted to operate their own churches. (Scaff, *History of*

---

21. "The Eucharist," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* reprinted online at <http://bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Def.show/RTD/ISBE/ID/5577>

*the Reformation*, Vol. 7; Bax, *The Peasant War*, ch. 3.) Yet, they were unaware that their emphasis on the Jesus-focused doctrines taught by Carlstadt would bring them into conflict with Luther.

In 1524, Luther published a tract which told Catholic rulers to kill the Brethren as ‘dogs’ because they violated Paul’s directive to obey rulers as God’s ministers (in Romans 13:1 *et seq.*) Yet, the Brethren were all Protestants! With Luther’s blessings, 100,000 of them (with women and children in significant numbers) were brutally slain in 1524-25. (Scaff.) Luther rationalized this result based on Paul, claiming “God has forbidden insurrection....”<sup>22</sup> But was paying tithes to a deficient church system the better choice? When faced with a force holding a civil power urging a contrary principle to God’s law, Peter and the apostles said “we ought to obey God rather than men.”(Acts 5:29.)

Thus, while no one can say every member of the Evangelical Brotherhood was pure, at least the cause they died for is still not lost. Their cause was the cause of Christ. The cause of the early Reformation. The cause Carlstadt was persecuted for defending. It was the cause that said Jesus’ words in the Gospels are more important than Paul’s words.

Fortunately, Luther came around later — denouncing in 1537 his own earlier doctrines of antinomianism. Luther insisted the Ten Commandments applies to *all* Christians. Their violation impacts salvation. (See page 106.) Luther even said this: “To abolish the Law is therefore to abolish the truth of God.”<sup>23</sup> Leaving Paul out-to-dry, Luther said anyone who would “discard the Law would effectively put an end to our obedience to God.” (*Id.* at 32.) Yet, this same Luther earlier said in 1525 Paul “abolished the Sabbath” and declared all the Law “abolished,” even the moral law. (See pp. 74, 76.)

---

22. Martin Luther, *An Earnest Exhortation for all Christians, Warning Them Against Insurrection and Rebellion*, in *Luther Works* (Philadelphia Edition)(1955) III, 201-222, quotes from 206-213, 215-16.

23. Martin Luther, *Antinomian Theses* (1537), reprinted as *Don’t Tell Me That From Martin Luther’s Antinomian Theses* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2004) at 33-34.