

Back To Faith

***Reclaiming Gospel Clarity in an
Age of Incongruence***

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What does Faith Alone Mean?

Romans 4:1-4 (ESV) What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.

What does Faith Alone Mean?

Romans 4:20-25 (ESV) No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

What does **Faith Alone** Mean?

Faith + Nothing?

Faith + Works?

Faith (that Works) + Nothing?

Faith (that Works) + Nothing?

Hyper Arminian

Hyper Calvinists

No "works".....**Faith**.....No "works"

Lost

**True
Faith
Lost**

**Never
REALLY
Saved**

**True
Faith
Never Had It**

Faith (that Works) + Nothing?

THE INCONGRUENCE

A.W. Tozer

Antinomianism is the doctrine of grace carried by uncorrected logic to the point of absurdity. It takes the teaching of **justification by faith** and twists it into deformity *(Paths of Power)*

A.W. Tozer

In the Bible the offer of pardon on the part of God is conditioned upon intention to reform on the part of man. There can be no spiritual regeneration till there has been moral reformation. That this statement requires defense only proves how far from the truth we have strayed. In our current popular theology pardon depends on faith alone. (The Root of the Righteous, p. 43)

John Piper

So, yes, the gospel is the good news that, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, salvation comes to believers. Therefore, it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who **believes**.

Piper, God is the Gospel, 32

John Piper

For 'the ungodly'—who know when they are riding the *Titanic* to destruction—the best news in all the world is the news that God will, by faith alone, count them as righteous because of Christ. This is the great ground of joy in the word of the cross: justification is by *grace alone* (not mixed with our merit), through *faith alone* (not mixed with our works), on the basis of Christ *alone* (not mingling His righteousness with ours), to the glory of God *alone* (not ours).

Piper, *When I Don't Desire God*, 83.

John Piper

*...justification is by grace alone (not mixed with our merit), through **faith alone (not mixed with our works)**, on the basis of Christ alone (not mingling His righteousness with ours), to the glory of God alone (not ours).*

When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy
(Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 83.

John Piper

In order for the Christian gospel to be good news, it must provide an all-satisfying and eternal gift that undeserving sinners can receive and enjoy. For that to be true, the gift must be three things. First, the gift must be purchased by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, the son of God. Our sins must be covered, and the wrath of God against us must be removed, and Christ's righteousness must be imputed to us. **Second, the gift must be free and not earned.**

John Piper, God is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2005), 14

John Piper

A life of obedience 'springs out necessarily' from a true and living faith. Good works 'are the fruits of faith.' Justifying faith is not merely alongside good works, but is also the agency employed by the grace of God to give rise to good works. **Thus good works are the evidence of authentic faith.**

John Piper, *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in...Future Grace* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Publisher, 1995), 24.

John Piper

There is no doubt that Jesus saw a measure of real, lived-out **obedience to the will of God as **necessary for final salvation.****

-Piper, *What Jesus Demands*, 160.

Overview of the Incongruence

Roman Catholicism

VS

The Reformers

The Council of Trent

Wherefore no man ought to **flatter himself in faith alone, thinking that by faith alone he has been appointed heir,** and will obtain the inheritance, although he do not suffer with Christ, that he may be glorified with him. For Christ himself, though he was the Son of God, learned obedience from the things which he suffered; and being made consummate, became **the author of eternal life to all who obey him.**

“It is therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone.”

**— John Calvin
From The Antidote
(to Trent)**

The cliché was clearly in the minds of the framers of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*,

Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.

Martin Luther

“Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works.

A.W. Pink

When Christian theologians affirm that the sinner is justified by faith alone, they do not mean that faith exists alone in the person justified, for justifying faith is always accompanied by all the other graces which the Spirit imparts at our regeneration."

Doctrine of Justification

The chain is unbroken unto our day where the phrase “...alone...yet not alone” is attributed to saving faith from divines such as John Owen, John Wesley, and George Whitefield, to C. H. Spurgeon, to Warren Wiersbe, and to **Billy Graham. Graham states,**

Perhaps so, for the faith that saves has one distinguishing quality—saving faith is a faith that produces obedience, it is a faith that brings about a way of life. Some have quite successfully imitated this way of life for a time, but for those who trust Christ for salvation, that faith brings about in them a desire to live out that inward experience of faith. It is a power that results in godly living and surrender.

The Incongruency

**Faith Alone
Is Not Alone**

R.C. Sproul

“those who possess saving faith necessarily, inevitably, and immediately begin to manifest the fruits of faith which are works of obedience”

MacArthur, et al., *Justification by Faith Alone*, 33.

John Gerstner

...In a response to Scott Hahn, a former Presbyterian turned Roman Catholic, Gerstner expresses his same dismay, While doing some research recently at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, PA, I read a recent Roman Catholic writer who said:

'Luther never meant that a habitual adulterer, murderer, liar, could be justified by faith alone. Otherwise he would not have opposed Karlstadt, Agricola, and other easybelievers of his time.'
Scott does not seem EVER to have gotten that point, even though he is widely read, has studied and taken a degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and exhibits an unusual degree of religious theological erudition. He is also extremely fluent in stating his views.

Back to Faith, Fred Lybrand, p.58

John Gerstner

...Rather than acknowledging a disagreement, Gerstner admits he is dismayed, if not confused, as to why five hundred years of this discussion has not been convincing to the Roman Catholic Church, Romanists have always tried to hang antinomianism on Protestantism. They seem incapable even of understanding 'justification is by faith alone, but not by the faith that is alone,' though that formula has been present since the Reformation...

The Example: John Piper

A few remarks

John Piper does not Affirm Faith Alone

The fruit does not make the tree good. The tree makes the fruit good. Good deeds do not attach us to Jesus. They are not the ground of our being declared righteous. Trusting Jesus connects us with Jesus. This connection results in God's declaration that we are perfect, and this same connection releases the power that produces fruit...

John Piper does not Affirm Faith Alone

The reason Jesus can say, 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire' (Matt. 7:19) is not because the fruit is the basis of our acceptance with God—the tax collector had no fruit to offer—but because the absence of fruit shows we are not connected to Jesus.

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2006), 211.

John Piper does not Affirm Faith Alone

“How we love each other in regard to nonessential differences is an essential issue. It can lead a person to heaven or to hell.”

- From “We Will All Stand Before the Judgment of God,” [article online]; January 2006; article appeared in *Desiring God Ministries* newsletter, 30 October 2005

John Piper does not Affirm Faith Alone

There is no doubt that Jesus saw some measure of real, lived-out obedience to the will of God as necessary for final salvation. What God will require at the judgment is not our perfection, but sufficient fruit to show that the tree had life—in our case, divine life.

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2006), 211.

The Response

Can a Believer Be Unfruitful?

175 ἄκαρπος [*akarpōs* /ak·ar·pos/]

adj. From 1 (as a negative particle) and 2590; TDNT 3:616; TDNTA 416; GK 182; Seven occurrences; AV translates as “unfruitful” six times, and “without fruit” once. **1** metaph. **without fruit, barren, not yielding what it ought to yield.**

adj **adj**: adjective

Fruitless Believer Text 1

Titus 3:14 (ESV)

And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be **unfruitful**.

Fruitless Believer Text 2

2 Peter 1:8 (ESV)

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or **unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's Talk Logic

Affirming the Consequent
The Causal Array

My Experience at DTS

We can't look at someone doing good works and know they're saved, can we?

So, how can we look at their lack of works and decide they're lost?

Other Bits of Reason

Imagine a different cliché asserting the same idea and form, "We are saved by Christ alone, but the Christ who saves is never alone." So what? What difference does it make if Christ is indeed accompanied by his friends and family? Accompanied or not, Christ alone saves those who believe in him.

More to the point, however, Christ was indeed alone, even to the point of being forsaken by the Father. When those who hold to the cliché insist that "faith is not alone while it is the lone instrument of salvation," they display the inherent incongruence the cliché naturally communicates. In saying that faith is never apart from works, though it is the lone instrument of salvation, they are missing the issue. Murder is analogous...

The Bonnie & Clyde Argument

If Clyde murders Ed with Bonnie as his (Clyde's) sidekick, she is considered an accomplice. Clyde kills Ed alone, and yet Clyde is not alone when he kills Ed because Bonnie is always with him. Many of those who hold to the cliché seem unaware that they are making works an accomplice in justification by the very nature of the argument.

Other Bits of Reason

Dr. Tony Evans, Adjunct Professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, refers to this tendency to make works an accomplice as adding a "surcharge" to the gospel.

Problem Texts

See the Book!

James 2 (Isaac)

Good Tree Good Fruit Passages

2 Corinthians 13 (Examine yourselves)

John 15 (false / Judas branch)

The Scriptural Viewpoint

Justification

does NOT equal

Sanctification

Final Arguments

Pragmatic Invalidity

Lordship Sanctification

Antinomianism

“Advice to Calvin” (split the question)

* Do you mean works for the
Believer or for the Unbeliever?

“It is therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone.”

**— John Calvin
From The Antidote
(to Trent)**

Not So Fast!

The Value of Rejecting the Cliche

1. The Gospel Stays Clear
2. Judgmentalism Goes Away
3. Assurance Returns
4. Sanctification (growth) is Elevated
5. Works are Vindicated
6. The Bible Achieves Greater Clarity