

APOLOGETICS MADE EASY

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Salvation by Faith Alone

In addition to the belief that the Bible is the sole source of authority for Christians, the second foundational principle of the Reformation is that we are saved by faith alone, not by our works, our actions. This principle is based on Romans 3:28, where St. Paul writes that we are justified by faith, not by works.

Then, in Romans 10:9, St. Paul states “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” These two passages explain the widespread Protestant belief that one is saved, once and for all, by expressing that Jesus Christ is our personal Lord and Savior.

The Catholic position is that we have to read the Bible in its entirety and not isolate a single passage. Even other passages in the Letter to the Romans, at 3:28 and 5:6,7,10 and 13 indicate that God will repay everyone according to their works. Jesus says in John 6 that we are saved by receiving his body and blood, in Mark 16:16 that we are saved by Baptism and in Matthew 25 we’re saved by how we treat the least of our brothers and sisters.

The strongest statement in the Bible about the relationship between faith and works is found in the Letter of James 2:14-26, which Luther wanted to have deleted from the Bible. In this passage, James writes that faith without works is dead and that our works demonstrate our faith, noting that even the demons believe who Jesus is.

The best way of summarizing the Catholic understanding of salvation is in Ephesians 2:8, which says: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God...” An authentic faith is expressed in our works, but ultimately our salvation is an undeserved gift from God.