

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,*

*holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## The Inconsistencies of the “Faith Only” Heresy

**M**ost denominational churches teach that we are saved by faith alone. To be fair, that doesn't mean they all believe that man doesn't have to do anything in order to make it to heaven. Some indeed teach that there is something to do after one becomes a Christian. However, they do all believe that one doesn't have to do anything other than believe in order to become a child of God. They like to say, “We are save by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone.” Their inconsistency, however, is easily revealed. Most faith only advocates will admit that repentance is necessary. The contradiction here is clearly seen. Since faith and repentance are two different things, if repentance is required, salvation can't come by faith alone. On the other hand, if salvation comes by faith only, then repentance is not required.

Many, who promote the faith only doctrine, ridicule those in churches of Christ for teaching that there are five steps that one must take in order to be saved. They like to call us five steppers. Interestingly enough, many churches known for believing that we are saved by faith only have their own steps. For example, we recently received a flyer from Grace Baptist Church advertising their upcoming VBS. On the backside of the flyer they give an invitation for those who want to know Jesus as their Lord by saying “just follow the ABC's below. These ABC's are three steps that one has to follow in order to be saved. The steps are 1) Acknowledge your need for a Savior. 2) Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. 3) Confess Jesus in your heart, and commit your life to Him. Isn't that interesting? This comes from those who claim that we are saved by faith alone. It seems to me like they have two too many steps. Should they mock themselves as being three steppers? This reminds me of an email exchange I had with a Baptist preacher in Louisville. He, too, liked to call us five steppers, but also would throw in that we are a bunch of legalists for believing in those five steps. Now, after writing several pages of correspondence about how we are saved by faith alone, he finally got around to writing this about how to be saved.

“We are saved by faith alone but not faith that is alone. Saving faith involves three things: (1) Knowledge. One must believe certain facts about the gospel. (2) Belief. Assurance the gospel is true. (3) Trust. Trusting in the gospel which is equivalent to trusting in the Christ of the gospel (Romans 10:9-10).”

Who would have known that many self-proclaimed “faith alone” advocates, perhaps even the majority of them, are in reality three step legalists? They believe that we are saved by the finished work of Christ on the cross + KNOWLEDGE + ASSENT + TRUST (or confession, depending on what group the 3 stepper is a part of). All their rhetoric is lost in this admission. By the way, what they refer to as knowledge is what I teach every Lord's Day when I tell people they must hear. Furthermore, their assent step is something we emphasize in our invitations as well. We call it personal belief in Christ.

If we could just get these folks to take a couple of more steps, they could become children of God.

The truth is faith only advocates are forced to be inconsistent because their doctrine isn't in harmony with the Word of God. It sounds good on the surface, and it appears to be giving God all the glory, but, the fact of the matter is, God doesn't need their help. His wonderful scheme of redemption, which includes man's obedient response to the gospel of Christ, is already perfect. He doesn't forfeit His sovereignty by demanding that we believe, repent, confess and are baptized; nor does our response to His commands earn us a spot in heaven. We are all saved by grace, as opposed to the meritorious works of the Law (Ephesians 2:8-9). We owe God honor and glory and thanksgiving for the mercy that He has demonstrated towards us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Still, nowhere in the Bible does any part of the sacred text teach us that we are saved by faith alone or by anything alone for that matter. There are many factors involved in salvation. Salvation, of course, begins with God. When we were dead in sins, He quickened us by the gospel of His Son (Ephesians 2:1-4). How did God make us alive? Peter tells us. "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:22-23).

When it comes to God's plan of salvation, consistency can only be maintained when we follow the Word of God. That means we must take all of what God says on the subject of salvation, and then we will have the complete truth.

*Don*

## What Sin Does

Aric Russell

**I**n Judges 16, we read of the life of Samson. Samson was one of the Judges of Israel, but he was different from the others. Samson had strength that no one could measure up to. With God's spirit in him, no man or army could stop him until God's spirit left. He then became a weak and defeated man. Samson made a big mistake that caused him to lose his strength. His mistake should remind us of what sin does in our lives. Let us notice three effects that sin has on our lives today.

**Sin Blinds Us.** When Samson finally told Delilah the truth about his strength, she had a man shave off the seven locks of his head while he was asleep, and his strength left him. (Judg. 16:19) The Philistines then took him and put out his eyes. (Judg. 16:21) What a terrible thing this must have been.

Notice though, sin also has a blinding effect on us today. We see only the thrill of the moment, the satisfying of the flesh, but fail to see the destruction that is occurring. Our eyes are put out when it comes to seeing the physical and spiritual consequences. Have you noticed that sin, in God's word, is often associated with darkness? Jesus said in John 3:19, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."

**Sin Binds Us.** Not only did they blind Samson, but they also bound him with bronze shackles. (Judg. 16:21) He had been a free man to travel where ever he wanted to go, but now his freedom was gone. His life was now under someone else's control. Millions today do not know it, but sin still

has a binding effect. We may be deceived into thinking that we can live as we please and be free. Yet, this is not true, because sin has a way of binding our lives. Just think of those that are bound with physical pain and illness because they chose a life of sin. Some of the most binding habits known to man come from sin and its effects. Galatians 6:7-8 tells us that we will reap what we sow. Are you bound to sin?

Sin Grinds Us. Samson lost his eyesight, was bound, and he did grind in prison. (Judg. 16:21) Samson was stripped of his dignity, and was worked as an animal. His God-given purpose was distorted as he wasted away in prison. Sin has robbed millions of their God-given talents to fulfill their purpose in life, and to glorify God as their creator. Their lives are spent doing things that destroy instead of building for the future. These fail to lay up treasures in heaven, (Matt. 6:19-21), and will face death and eternity without God.

What effect is sin having in your life? Have you fallen and faced the effects that sin has on your life? Have you overcome these effects and turned back to God? If not, will you this day dedicate your life to Christ? Do not let your sins blind you, bind you, or grind you!