

FINDING YOUR STORY IN THE STORY

I. Titus 3:3-8 Ephesians 2:1-10 2 Timothy 1:9-10

A. Today we want to help you find your story inside of THE STORY. We're referring to *The Story* of the blood-bought redemption found only in Jesus Christ...

B. Let's begin with a few either/or statements:

- * You're either residing in darkness or you're basking in the Light of Christ.
- * You're either spiritually dead or spiritually alive...
- * You've either experienced one birth or two births...
- * You're either who you've always been or you've been made anew...
- * You've either been washed, regenerated and renewed in God's mercy, goodness and lovingkindness by the Holy Spirit or you're still mired in sin...
- * You've either been saved and your salvation is evidenced by the fruit of good works or you're aimlessly laboring to go good works to earn your salvation...
- * You're either striving to keep God's laws written on stone tablets or your actions beautifully reflect that God's laws have been written upon your heart...
- * You're either experiencing life as bad as it will ever get, or sadly, you're experiencing life as good as it will ever get...
- * When it comes to Christ, you're either a poser or the genuine article. But know this, God wants to make each of you His if He hasn't done so already!

C. Two teenagers, Tyler Smith & Heather Brown went swimming at Vilano Beach a couple weeks ago. While trying to swim to an island, a strong current swept them 2 miles out to sea. They were in dire straights. It's then that Tyler cried out: *"God, please don't let this be the end... Send someone to save us!"* Then, Captain Eric Wagner, bound from Delray Florida to NJ, heard and spotted two kids struggling in the ocean. Wagner turned his boat around and made the rescue. The name of his yacht was *"Amen."* They were the only boat in the area. Captain Wagner said, *"I don't want to call it dumb luck, it wasn't, it was the hand of God."* (Share about encounter in the ER at OSU Medical Center...)

D. In the same way, it is never by chance that you hear the Good News. I don't believe anyone stumbles into this Chapel by accident. God is all about it. I urge you to hear Him out. Respond to the Holy Spirit's tug. Yield yourself to Him!

E. So before we unpack our Scriptures, let me ask a few questions:

- * If God has to make you miserable to make you vulnerable to make you apprehendable by His grace, are you okay with that?

* If God has to make you blind (like Saul) to make you see (like Paul) are you okay with that?

* If God has to put you on your back to make you look up, are you okay with that?

* If God has to make your life like hell in order to help you long for the glories of heaven to come, are you okay with that?

F. Titus 3:3-8 (ESV) tells how our story becomes enveloped in THE STORY:

1) **V3: 3** *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. (That was our story. Those were our BC days, i.e. 'Before Christ.)*

2) **V4-7: 4** *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (Has that happened to you?) 7 so that being justified by His grace (Justified by His grace: God's undeserved mercy and love being such that He has declared us righteous instead of guilty--just-as-if-I'd-never-sinned; just-as-if-I'd-always-obeyed--because Jesus bore the wrath of God's punishment for our sin. He died in my place!) (And the result of this is?) we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Did you earn this or deserve this justification? NO!)*

3) **(So is there any place for good works?) V8: 8** *The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. (The Bread & Cup remind us...)*

G. Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV) echoes Titus 3:3-8. Let's look for the parallels...

1) **V1-3: 1** *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which **you** once walked, (Is the "you" there just for the members of the Ephesian church or does the "you" refer to all of us?) following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom **we** all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Again, our BC days! We were all members of the original **Axis of Evil**--the world, the flesh, and the devil.)*

2) **V4-7: 4** *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace (God's undeserved mercy & love effects our awakenings!) you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (The grace received thus far is just a sip of the grace to come.)*

3) V8-9: 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **(Did you earn this gift? Do you deserve this salvation? NO!)**

4) (So is there any place for works?) V10: 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. **(The Bread & Cup remind us...)**

H. When I was twelve years old, my story was enveloped in *THE STORY, HIS STORY*. I learned He died in my place. Since then I've wanted everyone's story to be found in *THE STORY*. That's essentially why I'm a pastor instead of something else. That's certainly why I'm your pastor. I believe in Him who died for you--in your place! Jesus said, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" **I don't want any of you to lose your souls! Jesus said of Himself, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me." I believe that. I want each of you to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and worship Him, forever and ever and ever!**

I. What you were in your BC days, whether horrible or remarkable, marvelous or mundane, famous or foolish, means little in comparison to what Christ wants for you now and in the future. Your history means far less than your destiny. Jesus did not die in your place to help you stay in your sins and remain as you were; He shed His blood for you to pay for your sins, to deliver you from them, to make you His own, and all that forevermore. (The Bread & Cup remind us...)

J. Share the lyrics to "In My Place" by Matt Damico...

*** Pray & Serve Communion...**

*** 2 Timothy 1:9-10 (NLT) takes us home: 9** For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan from before the beginning of time--to show us His grace through Christ Jesus. **10** And now He has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Titus 3:3-8 (ESV)

3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. **4** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, **6** whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, **7** so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. **8** The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV)

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- **6** and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

2 Timothy 1:8-10 (NLT)

8 So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for Him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. **9** For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan from before the beginning of time--to show us His grace through Christ Jesus. **10** And now He has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.

Bonus Stuff

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (ESV)

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, **10** nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (AMP)

3 Blessed [gratefully praised and adored] be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant and boundless mercy has caused us to be born again [that is, to be reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose] to an ever-living hope and confident assurance through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** [born anew] into an inheritance which is imperishable [beyond the reach of change] and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, **5** who are being protected and shielded by the power of God through your faith for salvation that is ready to be revealed [for you] in the last time. **6** In this you rejoice

greatly, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, **7** so that the genuineness of your faith, which is much more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested and purified by fire, may be found to result in [your] praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **8** Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and though you do not even see Him now, you believe and trust in Him and you greatly rejoice and delight with inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** receiving as the result [the outcome, the consummation] of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Quote by Martin Luther

"They mistakenly assume that their good works can save them. Just make sure that you are born again. Because if you are not, your good works are worthless."

Quote by Martin Luther

"Works are the fruits and signs of faith. God judges people according to these fruits. These fruits spring from faith in a way that publicly indicates whether or not we have faith in our hearts."

Quote by Paul Washer

"We know that men are saved by repentance and faith, and whoever does call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But salvation is a supernatural work of God that will always produce fruit. And the evidence, not the cause, but the evidence of salvation is a changed life, a changing life."

Quote by Matt Slick

"Two words are worth introducing here: *ascentia* and *fiducia*. *Ascentia* is the mental assent--the mental acknowledgment of something's existence. The demons acknowledge and believe that God exists. *Fiducia* is more than mental acknowledgment. It involves a trust in something--a giving over to it, a complete believing and acceptance of something. This is the kind of faith that a Christian has in Christ. A Christian, therefore, has *fiducia*; that is, he has real faith and trust in Christ and not simply an acknowledgment that He lived on earth at one time. Another way to put this is that there are many people in the world who believed that Jesus lived: *ascentia*. But they do not believe that He is their Savior, the one to whom they should look and trust for the forgiveness of their sins. *Ascentia* does not lead to works. *Fiducia* does. *Ascentia* is not of the heart. *Fiducia* is."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"The greatest enemy to human souls is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation."

Quote by John Wesley

"I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Quote by George Whitefield

"And now let me address all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to accept of mercy and grace while it is offered to you; Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; and will you not accept it, now it is offered unto you?"

Film Clips & Articles

"In My Place" - Matt Damico - Kenwood Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohS-y4i17V8>

Are We Saved by Faith Alone, or Do We Need Works, Too? - Article by Matt Slick

<https://carm.org/catholic/are-we-saved-faith-alone-or-do-we-need-works-too>

Justification & Sanctification - Tim Keller & John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QecyvLgSuN8>

Two Florida Teenagers Rescued At Sea

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LazjGE-6W0>

10 Ways to Spoil an Apology

<https://emmascrivener.net/2019/05/10-ways-to-spoil-an-apology/>

Salvation by Faith Alone or Works Too?

By S. Michael Houdmann - Got Questions?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/faith-alone.html>

Question: *"How can you believe in salvation by faith alone when the only occurrence of 'faith alone' in the Bible (James 2:24) says that salvation is not by faith alone?"*

Answer: It is entirely true that the one verse in the Bible that contains the exact phrase "faith alone" seems to argue against [salvation by faith alone](#). [James 2:24](#) reads, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (ESV). However, rejecting the doctrine of salvation by faith alone based on this verse has two major problems. First, the context of [James 2:24](#) is not arguing against the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Second, the Bible does not need to contain the precise phrase "faith alone" in order to clearly teach salvation by faith alone.

[James 2:14–26](#), as a whole, and especially verse 24, has been the subject of some confused interpretations. The passage definitely seems to cause serious problems for the "salvation by faith alone" concept. First, we need to clear up a misconception, namely, that James means the same thing by "justified" in [James 2:24](#) that Paul means in [Romans 3:28](#). Paul is using the word justified to mean "declared righteous by God." Paul is speaking of God's legal declaration of us as righteous as Christ's righteousness is applied to our account. James is using the word justified to mean "being demonstrated and proved."

The 2011 NIV provides an excellent rendering of [James 2:24](#): “*You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone*” (emphasis added). Similarly, the NLT translation of [James 2:24](#) reads, “*So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone*” (emphasis added). The entire [James 2:14–26](#) passage is about proving the genuineness of your faith by what you do. A genuine salvation experience by faith in Jesus Christ will inevitably result in good works (cf. [Ephesians 2:10](#)). The works are the demonstration and proof of faith ([James 2:18](#)). A faith without works is useless ([James 2:20](#)) and dead ([James 2:17](#)); in other words, it is not true faith at all. Salvation is by faith alone, but that faith will never be alone.

While [James 2:24](#) is the only verse that contains the precise phrase “*faith alone*,” there are many other verses that do, in fact, teach salvation by faith alone. Any verse that ascribes salvation to faith/belief, with no other requirement mentioned, is a declaration that salvation is by faith alone. [John 3:16](#) declares that salvation is given to “*whoever believes in Him*.” [Acts 16:31](#) proclaims, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved*.” [Ephesians 2:8](#) says, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith*.” See also [Romans 3:28](#); [4:5](#); [5:1](#); [Galatians 2:16](#); [3:24](#); [Ephesians 1:13](#); and [Philippians 3:9](#). Many other verses could be referenced in addition to these.

In summary, [James 2:24](#) does not argue against salvation by faith alone. Rather, it argues against a salvation that is alone, a salvation devoid of good works and obedience to God’s Word. James’s point is that we demonstrate our faith by what we do ([James 2:18](#)). Regardless of the absence of the precise phrase “*faith alone*,” the New Testament definitely teaches that salvation is the product of God’s grace in response to our faith. “*Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? . . . On that of faith*” ([Romans 3:27](#)). There is no other requirement.

Recommended Resource: [Faith Alone, The Doctrine of Justification: What the Reformers Taught...and Why It Still Matters by Thomas Schreiner](#)

- While he is not the author of every article on GotQuestions.org, for citation purposes, you may reference our CEO, S. Michael Houdmann.