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William Paley’s Explains Problems With Faith Alone Doctrine

At this juncture, let’s turn to no less a figure than Reverend William Paley (1743-1805) — someone you all know and trust — to address the most thorny of issues in Christian history: is Jesus’ salvation message one of faith alone?

Paley was a famous Christian preacher in his day. The Chambers *Cyclopedia of English Literature* (1844) under “Dr. Paley” at page 651 *et seq.* says “he was the greatest divine of the period,” gifted with “remarkable vigor and clearness of intellect, and originality of character.” Paley’s 1794 *View of the Evidences of Christianity* gave him his initial fame. Chambers comments on the many subsequent and popular writings of Paley. Chambers notes that Paley’s “perspicacity of intellect and simplicity of style are almost unrivaled.” Paley later became well-known as the formulator in 1802 of the watchmaker argument in favor of God as designer of the universe.

However, William Paley was much more than this. He realized the tension between Christ’s Gospel and the faith alone gospel. Paley decidedly came out in favor of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus in contrast to that of faith alone. There were others to follow in Paley’s footsteps, such as Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer. But Paley was among the loudest voices ever to take on faith alone doctrine despite the possible social repercussions. He argued faith alone was contrary to the doctrine taught by Jesus. Paley offered many substantial proofs. This argument is put forth in Paley’s Sermons in *The Works of William Paley* (1825) volume six at page 201 *et seq.* You can
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download this book from books.google.com for free, and read the entire original text at your leisure. It is linked at my website. Here, for your consideration, is a synopsis.

Paley's Dismantling Of Faith Alone Doctrine

First, Paley disarmed the faith alone doctrine by quoting Paul’s own words that contradict faith alone. From Romans 2:7-8, he quotes: “To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing [lit., “endure in good works”] seek for glory and immortality eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” Again in Galatians 5:21, Paley quotes Paul saying: “Of the which,” namely, certain enumerated sins, “I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they, which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Sermon 209, The Works of William Paley (1825) Vol. 6 at 204.)

Then Paley drives home the point that this proves the “necessity of virtue” and the “danger of vice.” Paley says:

These are amongst many texts of the same effect, and they such as can never be got over. Stronger terms cannot be devised than what are here used. Were the purpose, therefore, simply to prove from Scripture the necessity of virtue, and the danger of vice, so far salvation is concerned, these texts are decisive. Id., at 204.

Paley then admitted that indeed there are many “strong passages” in Paul that stand for faith alone. Paley quotes them at length, thereby fairly presenting the dilemma to “serious persons.” Then he says: “These, no doubt, are strong texts, and...they have led many serious persons to lay such a stress upon them, as to exclude good works from being considered even as a condition of salvation.” Id. at 213.
Paley then concedes if these passages were taken *alone*, then the point of faith alone is established. Yet, this is not the end of the matter. “Scripture is to be compared with Scripture; particular texts with other particular texts; and especially with the main tenor of the whole.” *Id.*, at 214.

Paley then sets forth his thesis on Paul’s writings as not truly endorsing faith alone (or at least that a follower of Christ cannot accept faith alone as a sufficient point):

He [Paul] did not mean to lay it down as an article to be received by his disciples, that a man leading a wicked life, without change and without repentance, *will nevertheless be saved at the last by his belief of the doctrines of the Christian religion*; still less did he mean to encourage any one to go on in a course of sin, expressly and intentionally *comforting and protecting himself by this opinion*. *Id.*, at 214.

Paley’s proof was clear that for Paul to be construed as teaching faith alone would be contrary to all other Scripture (Jesus) and contrary to what Paul himself said in the quotes above (and the other passages Paley will cite below):

He, the Apostle, could not mean to say this; because if he did, he would say what is expressly and *positively contradicted by other texts of at least equal authority with his own*; he would say what is contradicted by the very drift and design of the Christian constitution; and would say, lastly, *what is expressly denied and contradicted by himself*. *Id.* at 214.¹

Paley then provides proof first from Jesus — whom Paley calls “the very highest authority.” Of course, Paul, being a mere man when compared to Jesus, must have his doctrines tested by those of Christ Jesus. As Luther once said if any contradiction exists between a mere man and an unquestionably *inspired* source, the mere man must fall:
“Now [if] [inspired] Scriptures and the doctrines of men are contrary one to the other, the one must lie and the other be true.” (Luther Works, Vol. 35: 153.)

Paley quotes and comments on what the “very highest authority” — Jesus — had to say on salvation:

For instance, what words can be **plainer, more positive, or more decisive of this point** than our Saviour's own? “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.” [Matt. 7:21.]

There can be no doubt but that they who are here introduced as crying out to Jesus Christ 'Lord, Lord,' are supposed to believe in him; yet neither their devotion, nor their faith which prompted it, were sufficient to save them. *Id.*, at 214-215.

As another commentator says: “[In] Matthew 7:21-27...[n]o fault is found with the faith of those that were cast out, but for disobedience they were condemned.”

After discussing Matthew 7:21, Paley next explains how Jesus re-emphasizes the same point in the very next sentence. Jesus speaks unquestionably of those who had faith (i.e., workers of prophecies and miracles in Jesus’ name), but whose faith alone did not suffice:

Nay, farther our Lord, in the same passage, proceeds to tell his hearers, that many will say to

1. Reverend George Horne (1730-1792), later Dean of Oxford, spelled out the same case. After establishing Jesus’ clear doctrine on the necessity of works in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, and Jesus’ assurance of a judgment by works (Matt. 12:36; Rev. 22:12), Horne preached: “Marvellous would it be if, after this, we should find the great apostle of the Gentiles preaching a contrary doctrine. But having made our ground good thus far, we shall easily be able, by a short statement of that case, to show that he doth not, but harmonizeth in every respect with his brother apostle [i.e., Matthew].” (Discourses of the Right Reverend George Horne (London: 1824) III at 185.)
him in that day, “Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?” [Matt. 7:22.] It cannot be questioned but that they who do these things in Christ’s name believe in Christ. Yet what will be their reception? “I will profess unto you I never knew you.” And who are they who shall be thus repulsed and rejected? No others than the workers of iniquity. “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” [Matt. 7:23.]

Paley had copious proofs, and found in John the one we emphasized earlier on those who do good things are resurrected. See page 395. Paley quotes and comments this way:

The difference between doing good and doing evil according to another declaration of our Saviour, is no less than this: “They that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” [John 5:29] Can a greater distinction be made, or expressed in words more plain? Id., at 215.

Paley goes on to say the entire tenor of the Sermon on the Mount is to require obedience to enter into heaven. To deny this is to deny the point of the sermon itself:

2. Free Will Baptist (January 1860) at 78. The hypocrisy which Jesus always condemned was having a belief in Himself or legal principles that was not matched by obedience to Himself or those principles. Jesus asked why do you call Him “Lord, Lord” but do “not keep my commandments?” (Luke 6:46.) The Parable of the Good Samaritan emphasized the hypocrisy of the Levite who taught the Law properly about murder but then when the situation arose to aid a dying assault victim, the Levite continues on his way. Jesus then made the point by exalting, by contrast, the one with somewhat incorrect belief (the Samaritan sect member) who obeyed the Law! Thus, correct belief does not save you if you do not obey. Slightly wrong belief (the Samaritan) does not damn you if you later correctly obey.
All the preceptive part of our Lord’s teaching, especially his whole Sermon upon the Mount, may be alleged on the same side of the argument. And to substitute belief in the place of the duties there enjoined, or as an expiation for the offences there forbidden, even when persevered in, would in effect set aside the authority of the lawgiver. And did our Lord command and forbid these things (or indeed any thing), if he did not require obedience as a condition of salvation? Id., at 215.

Paley then goes into the question of what Jesus meant by repentance, which was Jesus’ repeated theme: repent or perish. Paley said this implied good works as a condition of salvation. If this meaning to repentance is denied, Paley says this denies the mission and message of Jesus:

Again, every thing which we read concerning repentance implies the necessity of good works to salvation, and the inconsistency of bad works with salvation: for repentance is a change from one to the other, and can be required upon no other supposition than this. But of repentance we hear continually in the New Testament, and from the first to the last of the great mission of which it contains the history.

Paley began his proof of this sub-point by citing John the Baptist demanding “works worthy of repentance.” (Matt. 3:8.) Paley then alludes to Jesus’ message to the young rich man and the torah-scholar who asked how to have eternal life. Paley says Jesus’ response to these men was each had to repent from the sins to which they had succumbed, i.e., greed and failure to love everyone:

When particular classes of men come to inquire of their teacher [Jesus] what they should do, his answer was a warning against those particular sins to which persons of
**their class and character were most liable,**
which is his own application of his own principle. *Id.* at 216.

All of which goes to prove that repentance is not in the mind alone, but in deeds too. Paley concludes the point:

All proves that a moral change, *a moral improvement, practical sins, and practical virtues, and a turning from one to the other,* was what he included in the awful admonition which he sounded in the ears of mankind. *Id.*, at 216.

But many faith alone advocates say Jesus’ salvation doctrine only applies to a distinct pre-Ascension dispensation of Law. Jesus’ soteriology was allegedly replaced by faith alone at the Ascension — which ushered in the era of Grace. Paley says in response *no.*

Paley points out that Peter’s first sermon after Jesus’ departure had the same message of repentance in the era of grace that Jesus taught before the Crucifixion. Quoting Peter from Acts, Paley says: “*Repent* and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for *the remission of sins.*” (Acts 2:38.) “*Repent* ye, therefore, and be converted, that *your sins may be blotted out.*” (Acts 3:19.) *Remission of sins* and *blotting out sins* are obvious synonyms for salvation.

Incidentally, forty years after Jesus’ ascension, Apostle John still had the same idea about how repentance (with obedience) blots out sin: “But *if we walk in the light,* as he is in the light [i.e., obey Jesus’ commandments], we have fellowship one with another, and the **blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin**....(9) *If we confess our sins* [i.e., repent from sin], he is faithful and righteous to **forgive us our sins,** and to **cleanse us** [by Jesus’ blood] from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:7,9, ASV.) James too had the same idea thirty years after the Ascension, when he wrote that if a “brother” should “err,” but you “turn back a sinner from the error of his way, [you] will save a soul from death, and will **hide a multitude of sins.**” (James 5:19-20.)
In light of this clear consistency of salvation-messages before and after the Cross, Paley says the Apostle Peter’s meaning and Jesus’ meaning (as well as Apostle John’s and James’ meaning) were identical: repentance unto good works and obedience saves. Nothing changed after the Cross. The same gospel Jesus preached before the Cross was the gospel preached by His true apostles after the Cross:

This is the explicit language the Apostle [Peter] held upon the subject of repentance; which, as hath already been observed, has a precise reference to a good and bad life; and these texts deliver no other judgement concerning the matter than what their great teacher had pronounced before. *Id.*, at 217.

We brought out all such evidences about the meaning of repentance in a prior chapter on “Repent or Perish.” See page 87 *et seq.*

Thus, contrary to what dispensationalism doctrine teaches today, the twelve apostles had the same gospel Jesus preached about repentance from sin after Pentecost in Acts chapter one (and even much later) as Jesus taught prior to the cross. The salvation message of Jesus was not solely for a prior era under a law covenant. Rather, the identical gospel to Jesus’ gospel continued into the so-called era of grace. Paley with great wit and wisdom demolished the popular dispensational argument of our era.

Finally, Paley says Paul must be compared to James — one of at least equal stature to Paul:

By comparing Saint Paul’s words with other Scriptures, we cannot overlook that well-known text of Saint James: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and not works; can faith save him?” [James 2:14.] Saint James doth not here suppose the man hypocritically, and for some sinister purpose, to pretend to believe what he does not believe. The illustration which fol-
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... plains supposes the belief to be real, for he compares it to the case of the devils, who believe and tremble. Now we are to remember that Saint James’s words are Scripture, as well as Saint Paul’s. Here, therefore, is a text, which precisely, and in the most pointed terms, contradicts the sense which the Solifidians put upon Saint Paul’s words. Id., at 217.

Paley’s view of the weight and purpose to give James is in line with Augustine’s historical account in Faith and Works (De Fide et operibus) from 413 A.D. Augustine explained that three letters — the epistles of James, Peter and Jude — were early on written with the “deliberate aim” of refuting the “treacherous” view of those who had “the illusion that faith alone was sufficient for salvation.”

Incidentally, the weight and purpose of the Epistle of James undeniably was to address a perceived claim in the earlier epistles of Paul in favor of faith alone. This fact is highlighted by Reverend Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667)’s comparing and contrasting the two main points of James against Paul’s two points to the contrary:

But that this justification is wrought by faith without works, “to him that worketh not, but believeth,” saith St. Paul: that this is not wrought without works, St. James is as express for his negative as St. Paul was for his affirmative; and how both these should be true, is

3. Quoted in David R. Nienhuis, Not By Paul Alone (Baylor University Press, 2007) at 87. Augustine also says that when faith-alone doctrine arose, the epistles of James, Peter, Jude, etc. “direct their aim chiefly against it, so as with vehemence to maintain that faith without works profits not...” (Augustine, Fide et operibus, trans. Cornish:57.) Augustine explains this is why Second Peter 3:11-18 talks of Paul’s “obscure sentences” which evil men used to argue one can “secure...salvation...[by] faith,” relying on Paul’s passages which are “difficult to understand,” being thus “perverted unto their own destruction. (Id., Augustine, trans. Cornish:58.)
something harder to unriddle. But,... “he that affirms must prove;” and, therefore, St. Paul proves his doctrine by the example of Abraham, to whom faith was imputed for righteousness; and, therefore, not by works. And what can be answered to this? Nothing but this, that St. James uses the very same argument to prove that our justification is by works also “For our father Abraham was justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac.” [James 2:9]

Now which of these says true?4

Thus, the point of Paley and Taylor was that if the higher authority of Jesus’ words needed any corroboration, they come from His brother James. That epistle of James addresses the tension between all of Jesus’ teachings and the faith alone view found sometimes in Paul. James’ epistle, speaking after Paul’s writings, gives a decided nod to Jesus’ doctrines over that of Paul’s sometimes-stated faith alone view.

Where does this tension lead? Paley concludes from these proofs above that Paul’s words, if interpreted to set aside the “obligation and necessity of good works” cannot then “be the true sense of Saint Paul’s words” or otherwise “it is contrary to... Christianity itself.” That is, Paul would be contrary to the Master — “the very highest authority” in the church. And Paul would be contrary to the true twelve apostles who were clearly calling Christians to Christ’s true and unmistakeable doctrine of the necessity of repentance/fruit/works for salvation-sake.

Paley then addresses the counter-argument that he is wrongly rejecting Paul’s plain sense of faith alone. Paley responds by saying the paramount consideration is whether

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faith-alone, if Paul’s true meaning, would contradict even higher authority. This is a dilemma for the faith alone adherent, not Paley, because

such sense [of faith alone] is inconsistent with what is delivered by authority as great as his own, and greater, and inconsistent also with the main drift and purpose of that very institution [founded on Christ’s doctrine]. Id., at 219.

Paley then says the problem is resolved by noting Paul’s self-contradictions require a firm resolution in favor of Jesus’ doctrine. To this end, Paley remarks on how important it is to note these self-contradictions by Paul come in the same epistle where faith alone is apparently endorsed, thereby creating the quandary. (Paul never uses the words “faith alone,” and hence it is always dependent on one’s inference that ‘faith alone’ was Paul’s doctrine.)

It is one thing, Paley says, for Paul to contradict himself on faith alone in two different writings, but it is a wholly different dilemma when the contradiction is in the very same epistle where ‘faith alone’ is deduced. The only solution is then to spare Paul the charge of self-contradiction by construing him consistent with the higher authority (Jesus):

For though a man may advance what is contrary to sound reason, what is contrary to other authority, nay, what is contrary to his own professions at other times, and in other writings, yet surely his words ought not to be interpreted, if there be any fair way of avoiding it, in such a manner as to make him contradict himself in the same discourse. Id., at 219.

Paley then starts by drawing out the conflicting passages on good works in Romans.

Again: though it be true that Saint Paul in this epistle concludes “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” [Romans
3:28], yet in the same epistle he had before told us, that “God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jews first, and also of the Gentiles.” [Rom. 2:6-7.] Therefore, his expression concerning faith, in the third chapter of this epistle, though strong, must not be so construed as to make the author assert the direct contrary of what he had asserted just before in the second chapter.

Paley cites another example of self-contradiction on faith alone in Romans.

Nor is it possible to reconcile with this opinion [of faith alone] the two following texts, taken out of the same epistle: “The wages of sin is death;” chap. vi. verse 23. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;” chap. viii. verse 13.

Death and life in 8:13 obviously speak of damnation and salvation. For even a disciple of Christ must physically die. Thus, this means if you “mortify the deeds of the body,” then you shall have eternal life. If, to the contrary, you “live

5. Paley constrained himself to use the KJV translation of erga as “deeds” in Romans 2:6 rather than works. Yet, erga/ergon is rendered everywhere else in Paul’s epistles as works/work. Paley also suffered to permit the KJV’s rendering in Romans 2:7 of the exchange of eternal life for ergon agathon. The expression means he who endures (hupomeno) in “good work” does so to receive eternal life, in Paul’s own words. Yet, the KJV rendered ergon agathon as “well-doing.” Despite the KJV’s effort to obscure the contradiction of Paul with Paul by means of shifting the translation, Paley brought the contradiction to light.
after the flesh,” you shall be damned. Paul here has a clear echo of Jesus’ heaven-maimed or hell-whole message. (Mark 9:42-47.)

Paley then moves on to Galatians to demonstrate another similar contradiction. Paul appears again to endorse faith alone but then he says salvation is by moral obedience:

The same species of observation applies to the epistle to the Galatians; in which epistle, it is true, that the Apostle hath used concerning faith these **very strong terms**: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” [Gal. 2:16.] Nevertheless, in **another place of this same epistle**, we have the following **plain, clear, and circumstantial denunciation**: “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” [Gal. 5:19-20.] **No words can be more positive than these, and the last words are the most positive of all,** “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Sinners like these may have been justified in a certain sense; they may have been saved in a certain sense; that is, they may have been brought into a state of justification or salvation for the present; **but they shall not be finally happy,** “they shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” *Id.*, at 221.
Then, most ironically of all, in the epistle where Paul endorses ‘faith, not works’ (Eph. 2:8-9), Paul also says you lose salvation for misbehavior. Paley continues:

In the epistle to the Ephesians, we acknowledge the same observation, namely, that [Paul] hath spoken strong things concerning faith; yet hath at the same time, and in the same writing, most absolutely insisted upon a virtuous life, and most positively declared that a life of sin will end in perdition. Concerning faith, he hath said this: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” [Eph. 2:8-9.] Concerning a life of sin, he makes this declaration. After having enumerated certain species of sins, he adds these cautionary words, which show his opinion as manifestly as words can show it: “Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things, even the sinful practices before recited, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” [Eph. 5:6-7.] Id., at 221-22.

John Locke’s Elaboration On Paley’s Argument

To Paley’s list and argument about Paul’s self-contradictions, John Locke (1632-1704) would like to now add his elaboration on Romans 8:13. John Locke was a physician and philosopher as well as the famous author of The Two Treatises on Government (1690). Locke also did commentaries on much of the New Testament in a most serious manner.

To Paley’s case, Locke elaborates on Romans 8:13 to prove salvation is not by faith alone. Locke then goes on to explain the seeming contradiction within Paul’s thought. In Romans 8:13, Paul implies works-of-obedience are needed for eternal life: “for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Rom 8:13 ASV.) The antithesis is clear: the wages of
sin to the flesh is eternal death, but sowing to the spirit reaps eternal life. Paul says this again even more clearly in Galatians 6:8 KJV: “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Thus, salvation in Romans 8:13 (and Galatians 6:8) is correlated directly to disobedience vs. obedience. John Locke saw the apparent contradiction to Paul’s doctrine on works, and proposed a solution. Locke said Romans 8:13 clearly means those who “are actually under the covenant of grace, good works are strictly required, under the penalty of the loss of eternal life.” This was Tyndale’s doctrine of double justification. (See page v.)

Three More Internal Contradictions in Paul’s Doctrine

**Repentance unto Salvation.** I would also like to add three more self-contradictions from Paul to the list. The first is on repentance unto salvation.

Paul contradicts himself by saying repentance from sin is unto salvation. However, this is directly contrary to faith alone to salvation. These problem verses start with Paul in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 (ALT) saying “I now rejoice... because you were caused sorrow to repentance... (10) For the sorrow according to God produces repentance to salvation, free from regret, but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Hence, mere sorrow without repentance is not godly sorrow, and leads to death, but sorrow with repentance leads to salvation. This is precisely what Jesus taught. Mere sorrow or a change in mind about sin does not save. But sorrow that leads to repentance, i.e., a reform of behavior, is unto salvation.

Paul reiterates the centrality of such reform-of-character repentance when he says in Acts 17:30 ALT: “Therefore indeed, [these] times of ignorance having overlooked, God is

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now giving strict orders to all people everywhere to be repenting.” Or as the NLT renders it, God “commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to Him.” Obviously, anything less disobeys God and cannot be the “repentance to salvation” God requires, as expressed in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.

However, Paul in Romans 4:4-5 says upon mere belief God “justifies the ungodly.” All commentators — Robertson, Gill, Clarke, Ryrie, etc. — agree this verse means faith alone justifies you without repentance from sin and any reform of one’s life. See page 481 and “Pisteuo In Romans 4:5a” on page 483. The young Luther relied upon this to say one was justified “regardless of what your contrition might be” because of your faith alone. (Luther, Sermon on Indulgences (1517).)

Consequently, Paul’s view of repentance is another contradiction within Paul’s thought. In one passage, he agrees with Jesus that repentance from sin leads to salvation (2 Corinthians 7:9-10), while in another Paul is in seeming dissent by claiming that faith (alone) leads to salvation without repentance, even for an ungodly (unrepentant) person. (Romans 4:4-5.)

Faith Without Charity Makes You Nothing. A second self-contradiction by Paul I would add to Paley’s list is Paul’s dim view of faith in comparison to the importance of charity. Paul repeated Jesus’ point from the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats that faith alone does not suffice for the goats: “though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” (1 Cor. 13:2.) Consistent with this, Paul says when charity and faith are compared, “the greatest of these [virtues] is charity.” (1 Cor.13:13.)

If Paul’s two statements are true about faith, and you are nothing without charity, then faith alone without charity makes you nothing, and hence profits you nothing, including salvation. Hence, charity is more important than faith because it is indispensable to make you something, and hence capable
of being saved. On the other hand, if instead faith without charity could save, then faith alone would make you at least something. Thus, it must follow, if faith alone makes you nothing, as Paul says, then faith alone cannot save while you are yet nothing.

Moreover, if faith alone saves, then faith always would be the superior virtue to charity. Yet, if charity were indispensable to add to faith to be saved, as Jesus clearly teaches in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, then charity would be the superior virtue to have between faith and charity. But if charity were optional to be saved, faith would always have to be the superior virtue to have. Yet what is Paul’s view? Paul precisely confirms Jesus’ greater emphasis on charity over mere faith. Hence, faith alone cannot be what saves because if true, then Paul could not view faith as a virtue of lesser value than charity. If Paul thought faith alone saves, faith would always have to be of superior value in every respect because it alone imparts justification and salvation which is the supreme good from God among all things which He bestows. Instead, charity, Paul says, is superior in every respect. Hence, Paul cannot possibly believe faith alone saves. At least, not in these passages.

Yet, in Ephesians 2:8-9, the implication is the opposite. It appears, faith not works (evidently including works of charity) is what saves. Thereby we have another self-contradiction in Paul’s reasonings. Paul in one passage (1 Cor. 13:2,13) agrees with Jesus on the essential nature of charity for salvation, just as Jesus teaches in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, but then, in another passage, Paul undermines the Master’s point, making faith, not charity, of exclusive importance.

**Justification Is Uncertain Until Death.** I would note one final cluster of contradictions within Paul’s writings. It is a decisive cluster. Paul speaks about “justification” as even uncertain for himself and something for a believer to fear losing. This passage is rarely taught. This is because the typical
evangelical sermon claims that Paul’s doctrine on *faith alone* is to liberate us from fearing God when we sin if we just have faith and hence assurance. For example, Presbyterian Pastor Huneke, in a classic formula I heard in many sermons during my tutelage in a reformed church, scares non-believers away from ever fearing God. If we fear God about punishing our sin, we supposedly can never be saved. He says: “Guilt keeps us from faith, its fear turns our hearts from Christ, and its shame prevents us from being... disciples of Christ.” This is the same teaching we saw previously from the famous pastor, Max Lucado. (See page 65.)

Yet, Paul encourages *believers* repeatedly to the contrary — to precisely have such fear. In fact, Paul says in Romans 11:20-22 that a fearless attitude about assurance is “high minded.” His words are “be not high-minded, but *fear*: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare you.” Paul is threatening believing Gentiles about being cut off the tree that represents the body of believers. Likewise, in Philippians 2:12-13, Paul says “continue to *work out* your *salvation* with *fear* and trembling to its completion, for it is God who energizes (energeo) you to do and to will according to what pleases Him.” Most telling of all, Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:2-5 says it is wrong to assure anyone of their justification before the day of judgment, including himself! He writes:

> Here, moreover, it is **required** in stewards, that a man be found **faithful** [*pistos*, noun nominative]. (3) But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, **I judge not mine own self**. (4) For **I know nothing against myself**: yet am **I not hereby justified** [*dikaioo*]: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. (5) Wherefore **judge nothing before the time**, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of

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7. His sermon *Guilt and Grace: Cheap or Costly* (May 2002).
darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God. (1Corinthians 4:2-5 ASV.)

Clarke explains Paul means here that while at that moment Paul knows nothing sinful in himself, he is not “hereby justified,” using the same Greek term when Paul speaks of Abraham’s justification. Paul then says before judgment day, no one should judge himself justified, for all secret things will eventually be revealed. Paul says in verse two what will be required is faithfulness (i.e., obedient living) from every servant. Paul actually uses a Greek word which means that every servant must be found to have been a faithful person.

Hence, Paul clearly contradicts the concept deduced from Romans 4:3-5 and Ephesians 2:8-9 that faith justifies without faithfulness to follow. In 1 Corinthians 4:2-4, if words have meaning, Paul in fact says to assure yourself that you will be justified in God’s eyes before the time of judgment is presumptuous and high-minded. It is PRIDE — the number one sin of the devil himself. Thus, a great part of the evangelical church teaches a justification which Paul himself, in effect, said was presumptuous, prideful and of the devil!

Returning Now To Paley’s Argument On Faith Alone

Paley then astutely comments that in light of such clear teachings from Paul on the necessity of obedience and good works, and the salvation-danger of sin to a Christian (to which one must add Paul’s warning against the pride and folly of fearless assurance), we may never know what Paul meant by his faith alone verses. Yet, what we can eliminate

8. There is one more contradiction, at least if Paul is read correctly in places distinguishing “salvation” from “sanctification.” It is a common reading of Paul that obedience is for sanctification, not salvation. Paul contradicts that distinction in 2 Thess. 2:13 when Paul equates sanctification with salvation: “God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”
as a possibility is that Paul meant good works and obedience were optional for salvation. Paley means Paul is just too clear too often in that opposing direction to deny Paul meant good works and obedience were essential for salvation. Paley infers hence that the deduction of faith alone from Paul is necessarily a wrong deduction. As Reverend Jeremy Taylor similarly taught a generation before Paley, “from [Paul]’s mistaken words much noise hath been made in this question” to prove faith alone. (The Whole Works of the Right Reverend Jeremy Taylor, D.D. (London: 1851) at 22.)

9. The young Luther had a different hermeneutical approach, which made Paul the key to Scripture rather than treating Jesus as the SOLE TEACHER. This led to subjective and arbitrary results which marginalized Jesus. In his 1522 Preface to the New Testament, Luther rejected James’ Epistle as canon due to its direct conflict with Paul. Luther also rejected Revelation as canon for obviously the same reason. Luther also expressly minimized the salvation-message in the Synoptic Gospels because they did not speak as clearly about the “glorious” gospel of Paul. (See my prior book, Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 33.)

What of Jesus’ contrary teachings to Paul’s faith-alone verses? The young Luther said if those passages from Jesus are not as clear as Paul’s faith alone view, Paul’s view stands above them. Fisher explains Luther’s logic: “Those Scriptures in which the truth [of faith alone] — considered to be the substance of the gospel — had the central place, furnished the criterion for gauging the relative value and the degree of inspiration to be attributed other sacred writings.” (George Park Fisher, The History of Christian Doctrine (T&T Clark: 1896) at 280.) Yet, as Fisher points out, when you use the doctrine of justification by faith in Paul’s writings to reject other passages (predominantly Jesus’ words in the Synoptics and Revelation), you are relying upon a subjective and arbitrary standard. You have abandoned the objective higher standard — Jesus’ words. You are using a subjective appreciation of Paul’s ideas and arguments to subvert clear passages from Jesus. This is an arbitrary and unprincipled rejection of Christ’s words. What Paley is further doing is showing that Paul’s words on faith alone can never be clearer than Jesus’ words because Paul repeatedly contradicts faith alone, making Paul’s message inherently ambiguous in full context. You can only say Paul is clear if you quote Paul out-of-full context. Yet, Jesus never has such ambiguity, never once endorsing faith alone for salvation. Hence, Paley defeats Luther’s argument over hermeneutics. Paley says Jesus is the “higher authority,” and that is our only objective standard. Paul may edify and teach, but he is not the source of truth.
Paley’s Conclusion

Paley concludes that “although we were not able to settle, to our satisfaction, the first question, namely, what it was he [Paul] did mean [by faith alone passages],” we know “good works could [not] be dispensed with; or that a life of continued unrepented sin would end in salvation.” Id., at 222. The only other alternative is to say if Paul really meant faith alone, then we must suppose, that Saint Paul delivered a doctrine contrary to that of our Saviour and of the other Apostles, destructive of one declared end of the Christian institution itself [and the end and design of any system of laws is to control the interpretation of particular parts]; and lastly, what is most improbable of all, at the same time and in the same manner, directly repugnant to what he himself has solemnly asserted and delivered at other times and in other places. Id., at 222.

In other words, if Paul truly taught faith alone, and we could not refute that, then Paul contradicts Jesus and the twelve apostles. Paley did not have to tell us what that means: Paul would be a false apostle and false prophet. So you have only two choices: either (a) if Paul meant faith alone, then he is a false apostle and false prophet or (b) Paul did not mean faith alone, and instead endorsed Jesus’ gospel of faith, works and obedience. Those are the only two logical choices.

A third option in the early church was to be polite. If one insists Paul is inspired, then as Augustine said because Jesus’ words on the necessity of works and obedience have “no doubtful sense,” then “we must look for another interpretation” of Paul; if we cannot find it, then we must follow Second Peter’s directions on Paul, and simply account the ‘faith without works’ doctrine we perceive in Paul to the fact Paul’s “writings [are] hard to be understood, which men ought not to pervert unto their own destruction.” (Augustine, Fide et operibus [Faith and Works] 413 A.D. trans. Cornish:62.)
Therefore, as Paley says, because Paul often enough teaches salvation turns on good works, obedience, fear-and-trembling, and Paul insists it is pride that assures oneself of justification now,\(^\text{10}\) we cannot selectively quote Paul on faith alone. Paley — with Protestant vigor and Tyndalian outlook, along with unassailable proof — utterly destroyed the faith alone doctrine in 1825.

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**Ezekiel’s Warning About Diluted Standards for Salvation**

Everyone who preached Paul’s sometimes-appearing faith alone gospel who otherwise lived a righteous life unfortunately will pay the consequences of their teachings. *If your elevating Paul’s doctrine above Jesus’ doctrine misled even a single soul to not perceive Jesus’ repetitious warnings were about hell for disobedience (hell-whole), i.e., God’s absolute requirement that everyone enter heaven-maimed based on repentance from sin or not at all, you will pay with your spiritual life for the disobedience of each such misled soul.* God already warned of this through Ezekiel:

In My saying to the wicked, ‘O wicked one — thou dost surely die,’ And thou hast not spokento warn the wicked from his way, He — the wicked — in his iniquity doth die, And his blood from thy hand I require. (9) And thou, when thou hast warned the wicked of his way, to turn back from it, And he hath not turned back from his way, He in his iniquity doth die, And thou thy soul hast delivered. (Ezekiel 33:8-9 YLT.)

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Jesus said this too, when He warned that anyone who causes “a believer in me to become ensnared” would find it better to have “a millstone put around his neck and thrown in the sea” than suffer God’s aggravated wrath. (Mark 9:42.)

Jesus elsewhere spoke of this “greater damnation” wherein some will be singled out to suffer in hell more than others due to the greater and clearer warning they received. (Matt. 23:14.)

Jude (another brother of Jesus) elucidates Mark 9:42, by similarly referring to a group who will suffer God’s aggravated wrath. These teachers seduce Christians by teaching “grace is a license” to sin with no repercussions on salvation. Jude says they will suffer the “blackness of darkness” (Jude 1:4,13). Scholars concur this phrase is meant to identify a place far worse than a normal region in hell. Instead, it represents “the worst darkness one can imagine” where “no light penetrates,” identical to “the outer darkness of eternal night” to which Jesus refers in Matthew 22:13 as the fate of the “unprofitable servant.” (Paul V. Harrison & Robert E. Picirilli, The Randall House Bible Commentary (Randall House: 1992) at 283.)

Jude’s place of ‘blackest darkness’ parallels Jesus’ millstone warning: both Jesus and Jude threaten those who seduce Christians into sin by false assurance as suffering the worst darkness of the deep sea in damnation. Jude says it is caused by a false grace teaching which assures a Christian that God’s grace is irreversible. Jude warns of teachers who say a Christian does not risk “eternal fire” (Jude 7) if we engage in “immorality.” (Jude 4, 7.) To prove his point, Jude gives several examples where sin caused eternal damnation to angels in heaven and God’s people after being saved.12

11.Second Peter 2:17 likewise speaks of the false teachers who draw you from a “steadfastness in Christ” by a belief in a “liberty” to sin; they are destined to suffer the “blackness of darkness.”

12.For more on Jude’s letter, and whose doctrine he was condemning, see my prior work, Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 104 et seq.
‘Faith alone’ was the first heresy. It was long ago refuted by James, Peter, and Jude. Jesus approved their critique in Revelation chapters two and three. Faith alone was revived by Marcion in 144 A.D., and refuted again by Tertullian in 207 A.D. and all the early church commentators, e.g., Origen, Hermas, Hippolytus, Cyprian, and Lanctatius. Then in 410 A.D., Pelagius revived “faith alone” in his Commentary on Romans (410 A.D.).

In reply, Augustine in 413 A.D. refuted faith alone again in his treatise Faith and Works. Augustine noted that the faith-alone movement relied upon “not understanding certain obscure sentences of...Paul.” Augustine then said these false teachers “maintain that he saves himself who only believes in Christ, although he continues in what scandalous sins whosoever he will, even unto the profession of adultery.” Augustine says Jesus explained differently to the torah scholar about how to obtain eternal life. Jesus said it was by obeying two fundamental laws, where the love of God comes first (faith), but the love of your neighbor necessarily comes second, and this implies “moral rules of life and conversation.” Augustine continues: Jesus likewise spoke contrary to

15.See my prior work, Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 443 et seq.
16.Id, at 437. Pelagius’ other heresy was that “man... can easily obey the divine commands if he pleases” without “divine assistance.” (Nænder:583.) By contrast, Jesus said you can do “nothing” without connection to Him. (John 15:5.) This led to Pelagius teaching that man, who begins sinless, “without Christianity...may avoid sin and earn immortal blessedness, and that they have often done so.” (Rainy:470.) Thus, Pelagius heretically taught even though faith alone saves any sinful person, a non-sinful person (of whom many supposedly exist) does not need faith or any connection to Jesus/God to be saved.
those who teach by “believ[ing]...alone [makes] man come to life” when Jesus instructs the rich young man that eternal life is by obeying “commands of morals.” Works alone do not save, but instead “both are connected the one without the other because the love of God cannot exist in a man who does not love his neighbor.” (Augustine, *Fide et operibus*, in *Seventeen Short Treatises of Augustine* (trans.C.L. Cornish)(John H. Parker: 1847) at 48,49,56,57.)

Faith alone doctrine then laid dormant and dead until 1517. Then it revived. Alas! All the efforts of James, Peter, Jude, Tertullian, Augustine and many others were forgotten.

Heresy based on selective quotes from Paul has revived. It is a renewal of the main teachings of the heretic Marcion. Now, Paul, selectively quoted, is emphasized almost universally in evangelical churches to the detriment of Jesus’ doctrine. The discarding of the Lord’s teachings are not given any second-thought by those claiming to love Christ. Believers are assuaged by misleading commentaries and false translations. They are blatantly told to dismiss the Lord’s words as no longer relevant in a dispensation of grace. Yet, every lover of Christ must necessarily be offended by faith alone doctrine, at least if one takes the time to study *Jesus’ Words on Salvation*. We must now more than ever repent from ever teaching the gospel of faith alone. It seduces those coming to Christ away from Him. It leads its deluded adherents to follow a mere man named Paul. Yet Paul never died for anyone’s sins. Nor did he proclaim a gospel as brilliant and as superb as the one delivered by the Lord Jesus.

**Christ or Paul**

As Reverend Vincent Holmes-Gore — also a serious Christian scholar — said in *Christ or Paul* (C.W. Daniel: 1946), the confusing disciple (Paul) has misled many:

Let the reader contrast the true Christian standard with that of Paul and he will see the terrible betrayal of all that the Master taught....
For the surest way to betray a great Teacher is to **misrepresent his message**.... That is what Paul and his followers did, and because the Church has followed Paul in his error it has **failed lamentably to redeem the world**.... The teachings given by the blessed Master Christ, which the disciples John and Peter and James, the brother of the Master, **tried in vain to defend and preserve intact** were as utterly **opposed to the Pauline Gospel** as the **light is opposed to the darkness**.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) spoke likewise. He was a Lutheran and very devout. In the quote below from Kierkegaard, you also hear the clear echo of Bonhoeffer’s statement in *Cost of Discipleship* (1937) that we have developed a “Christianity without Christ.” Kierkegaard wrote in *The Journals*:

> In the teachings of Christ, religion is completely present tense: Jesus is the prototype and our task is to imitate him, become a disciple. But then through Paul came **a basic alteration**. Paul draws **attention away** from imitating Christ and fixes attention on the death of Christ the Atoner. What Martin Luther, in his reformation, failed to realize is that even before Catholicism, **Christianity had become degenerate at the hands of Paul**. Paul made Christianity the religion of Paul, not of Christ. **Paul threw the Christianity of Christ away**, com-

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Faith Alone: The Oldest Heresy From Christ’s Doctrine

pletely turning it upside down, making it just the opposite of the original proclamation of Christ.

The Lutheran William Wrede (1859-1906) in his book *Paul* (1904) spoke likewise. Wrede was a brilliant New Testament scholar and a Lutheran seminary student. He was also later a tutor at a theological college. Wrede wrote in *Paul*—obviously in sincere respect for Jesus—the following quote:

The moral majesty of Jesus, his purity and piety, his ministry among his people, his manner as a prophet, the whole concrete ethical-religious content of his earthly life, signifies for Paul’s Christology nothing whatever.... The name ‘disciple of Jesus’ has little applicability to Paul.... *Jesus or Paul*: this alternative characterizes, at least in part, the religious and theological warfare of the present day.

Regarding our modern era, Wrede then says the deplorable situation is that Paul is in ascendancy over the one whom Paul claimed was his Master:

This second founder of Christianity [i.e., Paul] has even, compared with the first, exercised beyond all doubt the stronger—not the better—influence. True, he has not lorded it everywhere, especially not in the life of simple, practical piety, but.... he has thrust that greater person [i.e., Jesus], whom he meant only to serve, utterly into the background.18

Test Wrede’s claim. Listen to almost any Sunday Sermon. Then count how many times Jesus is quoted or His teachings on salvation are explained. It is rare. Then compare the number of times Paul is quoted. The advantage for Paul’s

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words quoted over Jesus’ words is staggering. Jesus’ doctrine is unquestionably left in the background. Amazingly, this advantage given to Paul can even be maintained when a parable of Jesus is the subject of exposition! Once you are alerted to the issue, you will become sickened at this forced submission of Jesus to Paul.

Wrede clearly sees the irony of holding onto Paul, and trying to fit Jesus into Paul’s doctrine. The teachings of Jesus necessarily must be crushed if you hold onto all of Paul’s doctrines. This is because otherwise they don’t mesh well. Wrede goes on:

The older school is no doubt convinced that with Paul it enters, for the first time, into possession of the whole and genuine Jesus; and it is also able, to a certain extent, to take up the historical Jesus into its Pauline Christ. Still, this Christ must needs for the most part crush out the man Jesus. (Id.)

Wrede’s main thesis has never been refuted.19

19. As John G. Machen recalls for us, the critics of Wrede responded that Jesus had more influence over Paul than Wrede supposed. However, this was not a real answer. The question Wrede posed was whether Paul was a trained disciple of Jesus. The evidence was lacking because rarely do any words of Jesus appear in Paul’s Epistles in even a close paraphrase. Certainly we never find Paul quoting Jesus except a misquote of the Lord’s Supper. Some ideas are similar at times, as we have seen, but only when Paul speaks of a costly grace. Otherwise, no attention is ever given by Paul explicitly to Jesus’ doctrine or deeds. In fact, Paul wanders so far from them, many agree he speaks so different from Jesus that Paul represents an entirely new dispensation of truth from that of Jesus. As John G. Machen explained, many thought “Wrede… is refuted already” because there is more connection between Paul’s thought and Jesus’ thought than Wrede supposed. Yet, the fact is “Wrede was entirely correct” that Paul was no disciple because if Paul had been, then “the Epistles [of Paul] would be full of the words and deeds of Jesus.” (Machen, The Origins of Paul’s Religion (Macmillan: 1921) at 166.) Since Paul’s Epistles are barren of any quotes from Jesus and contain very few arguable paraphrases from Jesus’ teachings, Paul is at best a poor disciple of the Christ we see in the Gospels.
What has happened? The true Christ, just as Bonhoeffer said, is sacrificed anew and crushed by our adherence to a cheap gospel of salvation. We developed a “Christianity without Christ,” as Bonhoeffer lamented.

Bonhoeffer on Justification

Bonhoeffer says there is no such thing as being justified by Christ without following Christ.

The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ. Such a man knows that the call to discipleship is a gift of grace, and that the call is inseparable from the grace. But those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ are simply deceiving themselves. (Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship (1937) at 35-47.)

What prevented us from seeing this? The lying pen of the scribes in Jeremiah’s day were to blame then. (Jer. 8:6-9.) The lying pen obviously has come back by means of misleading commentary and even alteration of God’s word. It teaches you that you can be justified by a grace that dispenses with following Christ. They are incessant in undermining God’s warnings. The aim of Satan is always to dilute the warnings of God. To make you safe and comfortable in the very thing that separates you from God — sin. If Satan can convince you to believe the doctrines about Jesus that his demons already know and make you think you can safely stop there

and still be saved, then Satan keeps you ensnared in his kingdom. If it were otherwise and were correct that belief alone really saves you, why then do “we read in the Gospels that the devils...confessed Christ and were rebuked by Him” for saying “the same thing which obtained praise in the confession of Peter”?21

Thus, Satan suffers no harm if you make solely a sincere statement of belief that Jesus died for your sins without repentance. For the same reason, you gain nothing thereby. You are still under the wrath of God if you do not also repent from your sins and thereafter keep on obeying unto Jesus, including all His teachings, commandments and sayings. (John 3:16,36.) As long as you “walk in the light,” then the “blood of Jesus” keeps you clean; but if you sin, then only when you “confess your sin” does that same blood wash you again anew. (1 John 1:7-9.) John’s point is unmistakable: the atonement (“blood of Jesus”) only keeps you clean when you “confess” (repent of sin) and “walk in the light” (obey). It’s that simple. But it is also that hard. Jesus had a gospel of costly grace, just as Bonhoeffer said.

Kierkegaard On Whether Salvation Is By A Mere Right Opinion About Jesus.

Because true Christianity is the following of the Messiah, salvation can never be by accepting a set of dogmas on how to be saved. When salvation is reduced to having a right opinion about Christ or having the right salvation-formula, it is no longer Christianity. It is a phantom imitation. As Kierkegaard, speaking from a Lutheran experience, wrote in the 1850s:

> What... [modern] theology understands by faith is really what is called having an opinion, or what in everyday language we call ‘to believe.’

Christianity is thus made into a teaching. Then the next stage is to ‘comprehend’ this teaching, and this philosophy and theology are supposed to do. All this would be entirely proper if Christianity were a doctrine. But it’s not. Faith is related to the God-man, not a doctrine. (Kierkegaard, Provocations (2007) at 274.)

Thus, you are not saved by finally reading this book and understanding correctly Jesus’ doctrine on salvation. This is because belief in the right doctrine is not the Way of salvation. Correct knowledge of the path of salvation can help lead you to the Way of salvation. Wrong doctrine on salvation can help lead you from the Way of Salvation. But the belief or mere knowledge of the right path has no intrinsic meaning unless you take the right Path.

Hence, Christian people can be saved who have no idea of what is the right doctrine of salvation. Thank the Good Lord.

One cannot say the following truth more emphatically: you are not saved by right doctrine about how to be saved. You are saved by following Jesus! By obeying Him for His sake! (John 3:16.) By trusting Him because He is worthy. By enduring to the end, you “shall be saved.” (Matt. 10:22.) By denying yourself, counting the cost in advance of what you will lose by following Him, you “shall inherit eternal life.” (Matt. 19:29.) This is a narrow way toward which you must “strive with all your might” — agonize is the word in Greek. (Luke 13:24.)
reformation, as preached by Christ.” Edwards said this necessarily means it is a “salvation to the penitent.” Then Edwards says why not go a step farther and say “salvation by Seneca and Cicero?” For they too “taught the necessity of good morals and reformation.” Thus, if you preach repentance for salvation, this means you are giving “up the whole of it,... return[ing] to the religion of the pagans.” Edwards claims any teaching that salvation is by repentance necessarily gives up the truths of the “divinity of Christ, the trinity, and the atonement.” (“Thoughts on the Atonement,” The Works of Jonathan Edwards (1854) Vol. 1 at 507.)

Edwards’ engaged in an obvious use of the fallacy of the false dilemma. It is a false dichotomy to say salvation is either by works alone (i.e., abandoning belief in the divinity of Christ, etc.) or faith alone. There is always the third possibility that it is by faith and works, just as James said. Or, to be more precise, it can be by a faith or belief in facts which activates one’s repentance from sin and one’s turn toward obedience. As Hebrews 11:6 says, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” The author of Hebrews explains why: “for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a re rewarder of those who seek Him.” The choice in salvation doctrines is thus not the false dilemma of choosing either to preach faith alone or to preach a pagan idea of repentance divorced of any faith in God, Jesus or the efficacy of atonement.

Consequently, even though Jesus teaches belief alone cannot save in many parables (e.g., Parable of the Good Samaritan, the Sheep & the Goats, etc.), Jesus did not say faith plays no role. It is still highly important to use factual details in an invitation to prove Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God, and died for our sins and rose from the dead. One can never please God without faith. But if it ends there, it is no more than the belief that demons share about God, Jesus and the efficacy of the atonement. They know all these things, yet do not turn to God.
In Acts chapter two, Peter uses these factual details in an invitation which were clearly designed to engender the response that Jesus wants, i.e., repentance from sin and turning around to God, and going on the path of obeying Jesus.

Peter used these facts of the crucifixion and the prophecies of the Christ in his first invitation to a large crowd where 3,000 “repented” and “received this word....” See Acts 2:14-41.

How and why are these facts used in an invitation? Jesus told us that these facts about the cross would serve to draw “all” men to Him.

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all [pantas, plural] TOWARDS [Greek, pro] Myself. (John 12:32.)

The story of the crucifixion will draw all peoples. Not some kinds of people. Not certain people. ALL PEOPLE. Thus, the word draw there must mean attract. It is not an irresistible story that causes universal salvation. The point Jesus is making is that this story about the crucifixion has the capacity to attract any and everyone to Christ.

This emphasis on the fact of the atonement, however, does not change the Gospel steps which Jesus wants in response to this message of the Cross. Jesus did not mean everyone is saved who believes in the fact of the crucifixion, its power to atone for sins, or His resurrection, etc. For Jesus taught atonement could not be appropriated without appeasing first anyone you had offended. This reconciliation Jesus said that must come before you appropriate an atoning sacrifice meant not only repenting of sin, but also doing affirmative acts necessary to reconcile with each person you offended.

22. See “Atonement: Be Reconciled First To The One You Sinned Against Or Otherwise No Effect” on page 1 et seq.
Conclusion

Jesus’ Gospel is not faith alone. Paul’s Gospel is sometimes faith alone and sometimes the opposite. What possibly explains Paul’s apparent inconsistency is irrelevant to decide. Such inconsistency makes him inherently ambiguous. Second Peter simply states common sense: you cannot rely upon someone’s teaching that is hard to understand. Here it is incomprehensible. You cannot take Paul out-of-context for faith alone when Paul just as clearly says the opposite.

As Paley says when we are confronted by Paul’s self-contradictions, then we must follow Jesus’ clear directive on His gospel. It is decidedly a gospel of not only faith but also repentance and obedience to His commands as necessary and indispensable to salvation. It is “repent or perish.” It is “heaven-maimed or hell-whole.” It is “every tree without good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire.”

The fact the young Luther gave weight to faith alone does not deter us. Our task is to discover Jesus’ doctrine, not Luther’s. Faith alone doctrine suited Luther’s task in a time of excitement and good purpose. It no longer bears up under a closer scrutiny when examined by Jesus’ doctrines. Nevertheless, what we are recovering in this book does appear to be the evidence in Christ’s words which convinced the earliest reformers in the end to modify their views on salvation. In 1530, Tyndale realized faith alone was incorrect for the Christian. Erasmus too. It even appears Luther starting in 1531 began to realize faith alone was wrong doctrine for the Christian. That explains why Luther wrote the Catechisms the way he did. That’s what explains why Luther’s agents — Melancthon and Bucer — at the 1541 Regensberg Diet adopted Tyndale’s idea of double justification. See “Encouragement From Tyndale: His Stunning Reversal On Faith Alone” on page v et seq.

Thus, if we needed encouragement, it is good to know we are not alone in rejecting faith alone. We have sterling company in Tyndale, Erasmus, and even the mature Luther.