

Beware of “Only”!

Joe Slater

Words like “only” and “alone” appear well over 100 times in the New Testament. Sometimes they indicate something exclusive. Other times they are joined with the word **not**, thereby emphasizing a matter that isn’t exclusive. Jesus, for example, showed exclusiveness when He said, “*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.*” (Matthew 4:10). Just six verses earlier He used “**not**” to show a matter that wasn’t exclusive: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (4:4).

Few have any problem understanding these uses of “alone” and “only.” Worship belongs exclusively to God. But while people eat food, that’s not everything necessary for life, especially eternal life. These easily understood passages illustrate the need to be careful how we use words like “alone” and “only.”

A large religious group in Georgia posted typical Evangelical error on their web site: “There are approximately 160 verses in the New Testament that clearly state that salvation is solely based on a person’s faith, trust, or belief in Jesus Christ as Savior.” They listed numerous passages that affirm salvation by faith, but not a single one that even comes close to saying “**solely**” (i.e. only) by faith. Salvation by faith is eminently Biblical; “faith **alone/only**” is patently false!

New Testament Christians aren’t immune from abusing words like “only” and “alone.” Misguided brethren have added “only” to the New Testament teaching about the church helping needy members. Limiting use of the church treasury to “saints **only**” flies in the face of passages like 2 Corinthians 9:13 where church assistance benefitted **not only** Christians (saints) but “**all**.” “Saints **only**” is every bit as erroneous as the Evangelical “faith **only**” doctrine. Beware of “**only**”!

Get the Word In, Then Live it Out

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus tells of the sowing of the seed, which is the word of God. The seed falls on various types of soil, which are people’s hearts. You can read the parable and Jesus’ explanations in Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20; and Luke 8:4-8, 11-15.

With the exception of the hard soil, all of the soils received the seed and plants started to grow. But only the good soil produced a crop. Combining all three gospel accounts reveals something interesting concerning what should be done after receiving the seed to ensure success:

* “he who hears the word and **understands it**”

(Matthew 13:23)

* “those who hear the word, **accept it**” (Mark 4:20)

* “having heard the word...**keep it**” (Luke 8:15)

Thus, if we are to bear fruit for the Lord, then we must not only hear the word, but we must understand it, accept it, and keep it active in our lives. We must read, comprehend, believe, and obey the word of God. It is then we will grow and be productive in God’s field

--Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)

Listen to These Women of God

Every woman who has walked with God has a story to tell.

Sarah will tell you nothing is too hard for God.

Hagar will tell you God sees you.

Rahab will tell you your past doesn’t define you; God can use anyone.

Hannah will tell you God answers prayer.

Ruth will tell you it’s not over until God says it’s over.

Esther will tell you to trust God; He will exalt you in His timing.

A New Doctrine?

What does it mean when we hear that there is a new or updated doctrine being taught by a certain denominational church? When considering such news, we may first need to know what is meant by the word “doctrine.”

Merriam-Webster defines “doctrine” as a principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief. In many modern translations of the bible, the word doctrine is simply rendered as “teaching”. So now we ask, “Are there new doctrines being revealed or developed by God? Are there special people who receive these new doctrines who then convey them to the rest of the religious community? What does the bible say about new doctrines?”

There are at least two passages that mention the term “new doctrine.” In Mark 1:21-28, the people are amazed at the authoritative teaching and the casting out of evil spirits by Jesus. They ask, “*What is this? What new doctrine is this?*” (v. 27). Then, in Acts 17:16-20, Paul is preaching in Athens and the philosophers are curious to know about “*this new doctrine*” the apostle has been talking about.

During this time of biblical history, the Gospel of Jesus Christ was, indeed, new. The movement from Old Testament law to Christianity was a dynamic event in the carrying out of God’s redemptive plan for mankind. The Bible tells us that after the system of faith “was once delivered” (Jude 3). Now the scriptures make followers of Christ complete and “*thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Yes, there may be new doctrines and religious movements developed by the minds of men, but God has seen fit to reveal His divine and complete will to us through the pages of the Bible.

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)