

# STEWART-PEACOCK DEBATE

A Written Discussion On Salvation By Faith Alone.  
AUGUST 2001 - FEBRUARY 2002

**PROPOSITION:**

*The New Testament teaches that one is saved by faith alone.*

Affirming: Jason J. Peacock  
Denying: William J. Stewart

This material presented by the

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# FIRST AFFIRMATIVE ESSAY - JASON J. PEACOCK

## GREETINGS

Before I begin, I'd very much like to thank Mr. William Stewart for agreeing to this short debate. William and myself have known each other over the Internet now for over a year, and despite some differences we have on some essential Christian doctrines, I do consider Mr. Stewart a friend. He is a minister at the Limestone Church of Christ. William and myself, despite our disagreements ought to be able to openly discuss these differences, which we are doing here in this short debate.

## INITIAL PROPOSITION

What do I mean? I'm sure Mr. Stewart believes I simply mean believing in something, as **John 3:16** says. Of course it is true that we must believe historically in Jesus Christ, whom He said He was, and the resurrection. But merely taking **verse 16** out of that chapter, and applying a doctrine to it is not taking the context of the chapter into account, something vitally important when interpreting any portion of Scripture. So let's do that.

In context, Jesus is discussing the finer points of salvation with Nicodemus, a Jewish Pharisee. Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born again (**John 3:3**), which can be translated "*Born from above.*" So, when saying all we must do is historically believe in Jesus and for that using **John 3:16** as a proof-text, it is incorrect Biblical interpretation. In fact, the Greek word, *pisteuo*, which is translated '**believe**' in **John 3:16**, literally means '*to put in trust with, to entrust, to commit to trust*', and is derived from the word *pistikos*, which translates as '*trustworthy*' or '*genuine*.' In other words, a belief in Christ is placing one's life in His hands and trusting Him to take care of it. This implies much more than intellectual belief and actually is more in line with the rest of Scripture.

Further on in John, we can gain further insights into what belief entails by looking at the ministry of the Spirit: "**When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.**" (**John 16:8-11**)

**Verse 9** puts unbelief and sin in a direct causal relationship; sin identifies unbelief, so that those who continue to sin without remorse or repentance are not given the luxury of saying they believe.

This is what I mean when I say faith/believe.

## AFFIRMATIVE CASE - 'Salvation by faith alone'

From here on out when quoting from the New Testament, I'll use the New King James Version. The New Testament is quite clear in telling how we are to be saved. "**Therefore having been justified by faith; we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**", declares **Romans 5:1**. Justification is the process used by God alone to erase someone's sins and to declare them righteous. **Romans 5:1** is one verse of many stating this, by Him, everyone who believes is justified (**Acts 13:39**), "**Who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.**" (**Romans 4:25**). "**Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**" (**Galatians 3:24**).

What justifies us? Scripture makes it quite clear. Faith does!

In fact, **Romans 4** and **Romans 5** are two excellent faith chapters. This faith is God's gift given to us, apart from anything we do; **Ephesians 2:8** makes this clear, "**For by (past tense) grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**"

This faith is a true saving faith. Therefore, having been (past tense) justified. It's not based on us at all; it's based totally and completely on the finished work of Jesus Christ. "**So when Jesus had received the sour win, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.**" (**John 19:30**). Jesus said it is finished, not almost finished. In the Greek language, the original language of the New Testament, the word '**finished**' is *tetelestai*. That word in the Greek language of the day was a term used by accountants; it means the debt is paid in full. Faith is the thing which justifies us (**Romans 5:1**), it is what saves us (**Ephesians 2:8**); it is not to do with our own works (**Ephesians 2:9**). This faith is able to do this, as it is not based on anything we do, but what Christ did for us.

## ABRAHAM THE FATHER OF FAITH WAS JUSTIFIED BY HIS FAITH

**“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” (Romans 4:1-5).**

**“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham before hand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law of in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’” (Galatians 3:7-12).** Faith alone justifies, apart from works of the law.

## **THE ATONEMENT AND MAN'S CONDITION ISSUES**

I do not want to debate on whether Calvinism is Biblical or not, but William, I'd say it is of paramount importance to have a correct understanding of man's condition to a Holy God before we can fully grasp atonement. I realize that to you, William, I'm considered a Calvinist, a follower of John Calvin, one of the leaders of the reformation which occurred in the 16th century. This is simply not true; I follow Jesus Christ and what the Bible says. Let me define quickly what I mean by *“I go by what the Bible says.”* Simply put, I interpret the Bible, always in context, and I do not apply a *“wooden literal interpretation”* to every single verse. An example of *“wooden literalism”* is taking the parables of Jesus and applying a *“wooden literal”* meaning to them, when they were meant to express spiritual truths.

However, I do lean towards Calvinism over Arminianism, but only as far as Calvinism lines up with Scripture. Am I a T.U.L.I.P. five pointer? To be honest, I don't know, and as of now, I have no desire to delve into investigation.

Now, I also realize you deny being an Arminian, and I'm not assuming that my opponent has done any study in the Arminian perspective, yet I think my opponent has taken Arminianism to its logical conclusion. At least I think the Church of Christ has, and you William, as a preacher for the *“Limestone Church of Christ”* have fully accepted your church teachings. You say the Church of Christ does not have doctrines, they believe 100% the Scripture, yet the Bible contains doctrinal teachings. Nonetheless, you say that the Bible teaches that we are basically good, at least born into perfection, despite **Psalm 51:5**, **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”** And **Romans 3:10**, saying **“...no one is righteous...”**, or **verse 23** of the same chapter, **“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** All, and no one, does not exclude infants friend.

You think we are able to choose God on our own accord, despite **Romans 3:11**, which says, **“no one seeks God.”** And the clear teaching of **John 6:44**, Jesus himself speaking, **“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”**

I don't say humans are born with sinful natures, or that we cannot choose God on our own, Scripture does. A reading of the New Testament will lead one to the conclusion that the state of man is sinful. And it is not me who says that God must draw us, but it is Jesus Christ in **John 6:44**. William, if you truly believe Scripture 100%, you must believe **John 6:44** also.

Therefore, since we do not come to Jesus on our own accord, but by God drawing us initially, and by faith in Jesus Christ, which is a gift given by God (**Ephesians 2:8**), salvation then is all God. It's not like building a bridge, we build 10% of the bridge and God builds the other 90%.

I'll tell you right now William, that any verse you show me from the Bible which says we seek God, I have no conflict with. **Jeremiah 29:13**, **“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”** is a prime example. As I take the entire Bible in context, **Jeremiah 17:9** says, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”** Obviously this verse is referring to an unregenerate heart. Thus, I simply conclude that God must draw us first, prior to us seeking Him, and we must have faith in God to seek God. Well, faith justifies (**Romans 5:1**).

## **DO WORKS HAVE A PLACE IN CHRISTIANITY?**

Definitely, the Scripture makes that clear, but these works do not add to justification; they are not meritorious. **Ephesians 2:10** tells us from where these works come, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His**

**workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**“ **Ephesians 2:8-9** should never be quoted without **verse 10**, but that's exactly how it works; grace through faith saves, not by things which we can do, so we cannot boast. Yes works do play a part, however they are not works of our own, but works which God has planned for us. Furthermore, **1 Timothy 1:4** tells us we can only do God's work by faith. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that we cannot do any works without Christ, **John 15:5**, “**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**” Apart from Christ we do nothing. **1 Corinthians 2:14**, “**But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**” We cannot even know what works we should do without God's Spirit, and we do not get God's Spirit, without faith, which saves (**Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:1**).

### **THE ROLE OF REPENTANCE TO GOD**

Repentance of course is necessary for salvation, I will not deny that, but we cannot repent to God until we are justified by faith. The exact same thing goes for being obedient to Christ, something we cannot do without being justified by faith first. In fact, we can do nothing pleasing to God without faith. “**But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**” (**Hebrews 11:6**). I will use myself as an example. I became born again at age 24, but repentance towards God did not come till I had faith in God and His Son, likewise with obedience. There was just no way I would've repented to God and done works of obedience unless I was justified by faith in Christ. In fact since repentance comes after faith in Christ, and faith is a gift of God (**Ephesians 2:8**), thus it follows that repentance is God's gift to us, and that is what **2 Timothy 2:25** tells us, “**in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.**” And the teaching of **Romans 2**, especially **verse 4**, “**Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**” Yes, we must repent, and those who have saving faith in Christ, the kind Paul refers to in **Romans 5:1**, will repent.

### **HOW ABOUT WHAT THE BOOK OF JAMES SAYS CONCERNING FAITH AND DEEDS?**

I did not forget about James, Mr. Stewart. You might think that James is saying, faith and works together justify, which is not too different than the position held by Roman Catholicism. They believe that faith saves, but that faith is infused with works, which are meritorious. Concerning James though, remember who James is writing to, people who already have faith, or he would not have began his letter with “**My brethren, count it all joy...**” (**James 1:2-3**). But I do not think this fact you will dispute. The real issue is what does James mean by **2:14-26**.

**“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.**

**You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”**

I agree 100% with what James is saying. If we claim the name of Christ, yet do not show it by good works, then that faith is not justifying; not only that, but it is not the faith that Paul describes in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, “**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**”

James is saying the same thing just using different words. The way you, William, likely interpret what James is meaning, logically means he is contradicting what Paul is saying in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, that we are saved by grace through faith. This salvation is a gift of God. It's not due to anything we do. And then after we are justified, if it's real God given faith, it will produce works. God beforehand prepares these works for us.

If you're right William, and James does mean that we combine faith and works for our justification, then James would seem to contradict Paul in **Romans 3:28**, “**Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart**

**from the deeds of the law.”** James is not in contradiction with Paul. Neither are Paul and James debating the issue of how we are really saved as you and I are doing. Carefully examining what James is saying will show that James is drawing the contrast between an empty faith, which simply professes a belief in God, and a living dynamic faith that truly trusts in God.

When James spoke of “*deeds*” he was not speaking of things we do to win God's favour, but rather having a living faith that permeates good deeds, out of a genuine faith in Christ. Faith that does not produce acts of kindness is useless (**verse 14**), neither is simply having correct doctrine (**verse 18-19**), even demons believe correctly (head knowledge), but they don't allow that correct belief to correct their behavior. To illustrate his point further, **verses 20-25**, James refers to Abraham who offered his son, Isaac, to God, and Rahab, the prostitute who hid the Israelite spies, who both made their faith complete by what they did.

### **GRACE THROUGH FAITH**

Throughout the New Testament and the Old Testament as well, the message is clear, we're saved by God's undeserved grace. Something God has given us, as a result of his mercy and kindness, we cannot earn this salvation by works. If this salvation was not gained by God's grace through faith, as God's undeserved gift to humanity, as **Ephesians 2:8** says, then this salvation would cease to be a God given gift, we'd gain it by works, and then we'd be able to boast. But that is not what **Ephesians 2:9** tells us; it is not gained by works, specifically so we cannot boast. Of course works have a place in Christianity, as **Ephesians 2:10** states. The point is, these works are not meritorious, furthermore God prepares these works for us to do beforehand. Moreover without being justified/saved by faith, we are not able to do these works. **“I do not set aside the grace of God; for it righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”** (Galatians 2:21).

### **CONCLUSION**

My conclusion, which is based on Sola-Scriptura (scripture alone), is: salvation is *gained by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone!* To deny what Jesus said on the crucifix, **“It is finished!”** is to play the role of the spirit of the anti-Christ that John wrote about to the church in the area of modern day Turkey, because it is essentially denying that the Messiah has actually come to fulfill all requirements of the law, and that we do not need to add to his finished work. It's not fully trusting and relying on Jesus alone for the salvation of your soul. It's like telling God, *“God, oh Sovereign Lord over all, thank you so much for the gift of your Son...your atonement on the cross, well it almost was enough to remove the filth of sin on me, I just need to do one last thing...”* It's depending on yourself to perform at least part of your salvation, that's not the gospel message.

**“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”** (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).

## STEWART'S QUESTIONS & PEACOCK'S ANSWERS

*Question 1.*

*Can you produce a New Testament passage which states we are saved "by faith alone"?*

**Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."** God's grace a gift we received through faith saves.

*Question 2.*

*If salvation is "by faith alone", are we to understand that the demons are saved, for "...even the demons believe..." (James 2:19)?*

Of course not. Why would James use as example demons? Everyone knows they're not saved. He used it to contrast the difference between a dead faith that merely expresses an historical belief, and a faith that is dynamically real and living that permeates good deeds (**Ephesians 2:10**).

# FIRST NEGATIVE ESSAY - WILLIAM J. STEWART

I am happy for the opportunity to discuss this important topic with Jason. I hope this debate will benefit both participants, as well as those who read the material presented. May our objective always be to see what the Scriptures say, laying aside all doctrines or positions that contradict God's holy word.

In this essay, my responsibility is to illustrate that my opponent's position is contrary to the Bible. I will not be affirming what I believe the Lord requires of man to be saved, but rather answering Mr. Peacock's assertion that we are saved by "*faith alone*".

## JOHN 3:16 AND CONTEXT

I appreciate Jason's desire to clarify what *he* means by faith. We agree that the word "**believes**" in **John 3:16** requires more than mere acknowledgement of an historical Jesus. To the *trust* which Mr. Peacock mentions in defining the term, **Young's Analytical Concordance To The Bible** adds, "*...to adhere to...rely on...*" The term infers much more than simple head knowledge. I thank Jason for his consideration of the context of **John 3:16**. As mentioned, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "**...unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" (**3:3**). Nicodemus demonstrates his lack of spiritual understanding (**3:4**), not knowing what the Lord meant. Thus, Jesus elaborates, "**...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.**" (**3:5**). To be "**born again**" and to be "**born of water and the Spirit**" are one and the same. I am curious what my opponent believes the "**water**" of that statement is. It cannot be our physical birth, for Jesus refers to that as being "**...born of the flesh...**" (**3:6**). It is not the Holy Spirit, for Jesus then said, "*...unless one is born of the Spirit and the Spirit...*" What then is the water in the text? What is the Lord requiring man to adhere to if one is to "**...enter the kingdom of God**"?

## ROMANS 5 AND EPHESIANS 2

In anticipating Mr. Peacock's affirmative essay, I was curious how often he would refer to **Romans 5:1** and **Ephesians 2:8-10**. Jason considers these crucial to his "*faith alone*" doctrine. The count is presently **Romans 5:1** (6 times), **Ephesians 2:8-10** (9 times). Unfortunately, neither text says what Jason believes. His proposition reads, "*The New Testament teaches that one is saved by faith alone.*" Neither text affirms salvation by "*faith alone*". Both affirm the necessity of faith, as do other texts introduced (**Acts 13:39; Galatians 3:24; Romans 4**), but none set faith as an exclusive instrument to the salvation of souls. Jason reasons, "*What justifies us? Scripture makes it quite clear. Faith does!*" Amen! But the Bible also teaches that we are justified by our words (**Matthew 12:37**), humility (**Luke 18:14**), obedience (**Romans 2:13**), God's grace (**Romans 3:24**), Jesus' blood (**Romans 5:9**), and works (**James 2:24**).

## FAITH AND WORKS

I was intrigued by my opponent's statement, "*...faith is God's gift given to us, apart from anything we do. Ephesians 2:8 makes this clear.*" What is the gift, faith or salvation? The Bible teaches that faith is the product of hearing the word of God (**Romans 10:14, 17; Luke 16:29-31; Colossians 1:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13**), not a gift arbitrarily given by God. Yet, upon his false premise, Jason uses the phrase "**It is finished!**" (**John 19:30**) to state, "*...it is not based on us at all; it's based totally and completely on the finished work of Jesus Christ.*" Jason has read into this text! Yes, Jesus paid the debt for our sins, but does the text mean we have no part in salvation?

If so, what did Paul mean when he wrote, "**...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...**" (**Philippians 2:12**)? Why did Solomon write, "**...the labour of the righteous leads to life, the wages of the wicked to sin.**" (**Proverbs 10:16**)? The Lord said, "**Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able**" (**Luke 13:24**). If we have no part in our salvation, why is God's promise "**...eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour and immortality.**" (**Romans 2:7**)? Why did Paul motivate Christians to "**...run in such a way that you may obtain it**" [the prize] (**1 Corinthians 9:24**)? The Hebrew writer cautions us, "**...be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience...**" [Israel's disobedience] (**Hebrews 4:11**). Sufficient space fails us to make mention of every explicit statement of our role in God's plan of salvation.

Citing **1 Corinthians 2:14**, Jason says that "*...we cannot even know what works we should do without God's Spirit...*" In the context, Paul demonstrates that even some who have received God's Spirit cannot understand. Paul says he "**...could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal...**" (**1 Corinthians 3:1-3**). Paul's point in **2:14** is not that we must be Christians to know what God would have us do, but rather that we must look with spiritual eyes, not carnal. The Romans spiritually discerned what God's will was, submitted themselves to it, and thus were "**...set free from**

sin..." (Romans 6:17-18).

### ABRAHAM ON FAITH AND WORKS

Jason uses Abraham (Romans 4:1-5; Galatians 3:7-12) to support his assertion that *"faith alone justifies apart from the works of the law."* Paul wrote, **"...a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."** (Romans 3:28). Note the difference? Paul did not say *"faith alone"*. My friend reads that into the text. Paul excludes the possibility of attaining salvation by keeping the law of Moses perfectly. To the Jews, Paul writes, **"...before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed."** (Galatians 3:23). Now that the faith is revealed, we must be **"...obedient to the faith..."** (Acts 6:7; Romans 6:17; Hebrews 5:9). The deeds of the law (of Moses) are excluded, but certainly not obedience to the faith. [Note, faith is not a gift bestowed individually by God as Jason supposes, but rather a system of divine law which replaced the law of Moses].

In Genesis 15:6, Moses says Abraham **"...believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."** Paul quotes this in Romans 4, stating that Abraham was not justified by works. Again, Paul uses the text in Galatians 3, saying the sons of Abraham are justified by faith, not the works of the law (of Moses).

The text is quoted a third time in James 2. There, James affirms that **"...a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."** (2:24). Do the writers contradict? Not at all. James and Paul look at justification from different perspectives. James does not say *"works only"*. Paul does not say *"faith only"*. Paul focuses on Abraham's faith, James focuses on the works which accompanied and perfected Abraham's faith. Would Abraham have been justified had he not left Ur of the Chaldees, or not offered Isaac on the altar?

James asks, **"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?"** (2:21). Jason must say 'NO', for he is affirming one is saved by *"faith alone"*. Again, James asks, **"Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"** (2:22). Jason must say 'NO', for he is affirming one is saved by *"faith alone"*. James concludes, **"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."** (2:24). Jason must say 'NO', for he is affirming that one is saved by *"faith alone"*. Who has the problem with James? Certainly not Paul or myself.

### CALVINISM AND "FAITH ALONE"

In his affirmative essay, Mr. Peacock explicitly said, *"...I do not want to debate on whether Calvinism is Biblical or not..."*, then proceeded to spend 20 percent of his essay on the doctrine of total hereditary depravity. Perhaps I could interest my friend in a debate on this topic in the future?

It is no wonder that he focussed so much on Calvin's doctrine of depravity. It is the foundation of his *"faith alone"* doctrine. Jason believes we have no part in our salvation because he believes we are entirely depraved and unable to do anything. Calvinism and *"faith alone"* go hand in hand. Jason says he doesn't know if he is a five point Calvinist or not, and presently has *"...no desire to delve into investigation."* Friend, if you want to be consistent, you must choose to be a five-pointer or no Calvinist at all. The five points stand and fall together. However, if you want to be biblically correct, you must disown Calvinism and cling to God's word.

Jason introduces Romans 3:10, 23 as evidence that we are born with *"sinful natures"*. In verse 12, Paul says, **"...they have all turned aside, they have together become unprofitable..."** One cannot **"turn aside"** from that which he never had. It is impossible to **"become unprofitable"** if we are unprofitable to begin with. Verse 23 says that all have sinned (v 13-18 lists some of the ways). Jason wants to apply this to infants. Will you tell us that infants are hell bound? What sin has an infant committed? John tells us **"...sin is lawlessness."** (1 John 3:4). What law of God has an infant violated?

Again, Jason affirms depravity with Psalm 51:5. I suppose if one isolates this text from the whole of Scripture, that conclusion might be drawn. However, I believe that we are reading the poetic writing of a man in deep sorrow for his sin, expressed through hyperbole. Paul declared himself to be the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Was Paul the worst sinner ever? Certainly not! He was a contemporary of Nero, who persecuted Christians, even having his garden lighted in the evenings by burning them alive. Paul expresses his agony for past sins through hyperbole, even as David in Psalm 51. Ezekiel 18 and Romans 5 both express that it is our own sin that results in our spiritual death, not our parents, nor Adam's.

Jason questions whether I believe John 6:44 or not. Yes, with all my heart. However, I wonder if he believes John 6:45? Jesus says the Father must draw us, and then explains, **"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who had heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."**

The Father draws us through His word. Jesus said it, both Paul and Isaiah agree (Romans 1:16; 10:14, 17). Will



you believe **verse 45** as well?

According to Jason, **Jeremiah 29:13** speaks of a regenerated heart, but **Jeremiah 17:9** refers to an unregenerate heart. Friend, look at the context. Of the one you label unregenerate, the Lord says, **“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD.” (17:5)**. How can the unregenerate depart from the Lord -- depravity denies he was ever with the Lord! But the Lord says he was!

Accept one false doctrine and it leads to another. If we believe depravity, we must conclude that we can do nothing to come to God. Accepting this, we must conclude that faith is God's gift to us, not from hearing the word. The cycle goes on and on. Calvinism is a neat package, consistent from start to finish, but contrary to truth throughout.

### LITERALISM AND ARMINIANISM

I stand accused of applying a *“wooden literal interpretation”* to the Bible. I'm not wholly sure what Jason means by this phrase (he used the term to define itself). Perhaps it means to stubbornly take a passage literally, to the exclusion of other texts. If so, it appears that Jason is the one applying a *“wooden literal interpretation”*. When you teach salvation by *“faith alone”* from selected verses, ignoring other texts, is that not perhaps *“wooden literalism”*? When you stand on **Romans 3:10, 23** and **Psalms 51:5** and teach depravity, is that not perhaps a *“wooden literal interpretation”* that excludes the context of the whole Bible?

Mr. Peacock's comments about my full acceptance of Church of Christ teaching illustrates his ignorance with respect to the churches of Christ. There is no governing body as in the denominations where a set of teachings are established for ministers to accept and teach. Each congregation is entirely autonomous. All I have ever been asked to teach is what the Bible teaches. Jason misquotes me as saying that the church of Christ has no doctrines. What I have said to Jason is that the churches of Christ have no creed books, no manuals, no catechisms, or other such works of men. Certainly, the Bible contains doctrines; it is our only source for doctrine, not some humanly devised confession of faith.

So far as the accusation of Arminianism, I am not Arminian, nor Calvinist, nor Methodist, nor Baptist, nor Catholic. I am a Christian. I claim nothing more, and the Scriptures claim nothing more for me, except to be a Christian. Jason is correct, I have not done any study in the Arminian perspective, nor do I desire to do so. I aim to study the Scriptures, for in them are the words of life.

### REPENTANCE, OBEDIENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

Jason acknowledges the necessity of repentance, but says we must be justified before we can repent. Understand the consequences of such a doctrine --- we are forgiven of our sins before we even have a mind to repent of them! The Scriptures place repentance BEFORE the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19**). In **2 Timothy 2:25**, Paul does not say that repentance is a gift from God, as Jason supposes. What he does say is that we are responsible to teach those who are in error, and perhaps God will afford them an opportunity to repent. It is parallel in structure to **Acts 11:18**. We are told that God **“...commands all men every to repent...” (Acts 17:30)**. If repentance is a gift of God, and God commands it of everyone, then we must conclude that either everyone has repented, or God is unjust for commanding many to do something they cannot (because He will not give them repentance). What a monstrous God Jason would have us believe in!

Not only does Jason tell us that we cannot repent before we are justified, but also that it is impossible to obey Christ before we have been justified. The Scriptures declare **“...He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him...” (Hebrews 5:9)**. Which comes first, the salvation or the obedience? If we obey Him, then we have salvation. It is a conditional statement.

Jason uses himself as an example of salvation. Excuse me if I don't accept the example. Let me provide an example all Bible students should find acceptable. Paul identifies the biblical process of salvation, wherein **“...slaves of sin...” “...obeyed from the heart...”** and thus were **“...set free from sin...” (Romans 6:17-18)**. Obedience precedes being set free from sin. Obedience precedes justification (unless Jason is willing to affirm that we can be dead in sin and justified at the same time).

### JAMES ON FAITH AND WORKS

The accusation has been levied, *“Mr. Stewart, you might think that James is saying faith and works together justify...”* Of that portion of Mr. Peacock's statement, I plead guilty. In fact, if James were accused of the same, he would plead guilty along side me. It was James who asked, **“Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?”** Jason claims to agree 100 percent with James. Unless he

is willing to plead guilty to his own accusation, he does not.

My friend has confused the works spoken of in the latter portion of **James 2** with the works of which Paul said, **"...a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."** (**Romans 3:28**). Paul says we cannot be saved by perfectly keeping the law of Moses. James acknowledges, as Paul, that those who try to be justified by the law are a debtor to keep the whole law (**James 2:10-11; Galatians 5:2-4**). However, James is not speaking of the works of the law of Moses in the latter portion of **James 2**, for he says, **"...a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."** (**2:24**). Be careful not to confuse works of obedience to the law of Moses and works of obedience to the law of Christ.

### **GRACE THROUGH FAITH...NOT OF WORKS**

Jason states, **"Ephesians 2:8-9 should never be quoted without verse 10."** AMEN!! The Lord has saved us to do works that He has prepared for us. Can we earn salvation by works? No, for **"...when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"** (**Luke 10:17**).

Is it possible to receive an undeserved gift from someone, and yet have to do something to receive it? Let's suppose that a father purchases a new car for his son. He wraps the keys along with a note and gives the box to his son. Has he got the car yet? No, he must first open the box, take out the keys, and read the note. The note instructs him to pick the car up at a local car dealer's lot. Has he got the car yet? No, he must arrange transportation to the dealer's lot, inquire at the dealer where to locate the car, and go to the car. Finally, he's got the car. The son had to DO several things before he possessed the car. Did the car cease to be a gift from his father? Did he earn the car?

In like manner, God has offered the gift of salvation. We do not deserve the gift. No amount of works will change that. However, God has given us commands which we must obey if we are to receive the gift (**Romans 6:17**). By no means do we nullify the gift through our obedience to God's commands. It remains a gift.

### **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Peacock's doctrine of salvation by *"faith alone"* is not the result of Sola-Scriptura. It is the result of picking and choosing select passages, twisting them (whether knowingly or not), and completely ignoring others. Even as he sums up his essay, we read, *"...salvation is gained by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone."* That is not salvation by *"faith alone"*; that is salvation by grace, by faith and by Jesus Christ. Jason doesn't even believe this doctrine of salvation by *"faith alone"*, for he sums up by saying there are at least three essentials to our salvation. He believes that these three elements alone, together, account for our salvation. If he is willing to go this far, what then is keeping him from accepting the rest of Scripture? Surely we can see that the New Testament does not teach that one is saved by *"faith alone"*.

## SECOND AFFIRMATIVE ESSAY - JASON J. PEACOCK

I too am very happy to be discussing this important issue with William, I also hope that this debate will help both participants in their future walk with the Lord as well as readers to it. I agree with my friend that God's truth must come from His objective word (39 books of the Old Testament & 27 of the New Testament), nowhere else!

### JOHN 3:16 AND CONTEXT

William asked what the water in **verse 5** is. It's not a secret to know what William thinks the water in **John 3:5** is (the water of baptism). He never came right out and said it is baptism, but what else could he mean? Well, the water of **verse 5** could mean baptism. Those who hold to the essentialness of baptism for salvation logically would believe this to be baptism. William said it cannot be physical birth, he's mistaken. I happen to think it is unlikely that Jesus is referring to physical birth, nonetheless He could mean this. Actually, physical birth and water baptism are only two possible interpretations of six. The other four are:

- 1) a synonym for the Holy Spirit (born of water even the Spirit);
- 2) the Word of God;
- 3) John's baptism (repentance); or
- 4) a symbol along with the "wind" for the works of God from above.

The most likely view is position 4, considering the context. Jesus tells Nicodemus, who, being a Jewish teacher ought to be able to recognize the fulfillment of biblical truth (**3:10**). In **3:2**, Nicodemus acknowledges Jesus as a teacher from God. Jesus wanted him to recognize Him as God's Son (**3:15-16**), not just a teacher. Jesus also tells Nicodemus he must be born again / from above, [1] to enter heaven (**3:3**). Nicodemus thinks of natural birth; Jesus corrects his error by contrasting the birth Nicodemus refers to with a birth from God. In His teaching, Jesus picks up on two renewal themes of the Old Testament, the "wind" of **Ezekiel 37:9-10**, and the "water" of **Isaiah 44:3**. Nicodemus should have compared the imagery of this to the riddle in **Proverbs 30:4**, "**Who has ascended into heaven or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?**" Nicodemus, being a Jewish teacher should have known that God gives spiritual renewal from above and that Jesus as God's Son brings this spiritual renewal. This is why Jesus continued in His discourse with Nicodemus to interpret the riddle of **Proverbs 30:4**, "**No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man (Son of Man is used in Judaism as a term for deity, Daniel 7:13; Mark 14:61-64) be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**" (**John 3:13-15**).

### ROMANS 5 AND EPHESIANS 2

I wonder why William felt it necessary to count the number of times I used **Ephesians 2:8-10** and **Romans 5:1**. He said, "*The count is presently Romans 5:1 (6 times), Ephesians 2:8-10 (9 times).*" Frankly, I find it kind of funny; nonetheless William says the two verses do not say we are saved by faith alone. Granted they do not expressly tell us we're saved by faith alone. However, I think William interprets **Romans 5:1** as "...it is by faith (a) you have been justified..." and that little (a) at the bottom of the chapter says "and works", but there is no such a, b, c, d or any other letter or number. It says "**by faith**".

No, there's not a period, but to conclude that because there is none, it means faith and works is an argument from silence. What does the verse say? "**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" (7th time for those counting). What is it that justifies us -- faith does. Justification is God's way to erase someone's sins and declare them righteous; something done by God through or in Christ Jesus. Thus, **Romans 5:1** does say faith saves us. As for **Ephesians 2**, well, does God's grace have a hidden agenda of works? No, God's grace is God's undeserved favour and gift to us as **Ephesians 2:8** says, it is His gift, can a gift be earned? **2:9** makes it clear, no it cannot. Furthermore, **Romans 3:24** says this grace justifies us like **Romans 5:1** says faith justifies us. Obviously grace and faith can be used interchangeably. Again, like **Romans 5:1**, **Ephesians 2:8-10** does not have the word "alone". But it ought to be obvious when the following verse says not by our works. Thus, **Ephesians 2:8-10** does state that grace/faith saves us, not by anything we do, and God prepares our works for us. William gave various verses. Considering the space problem...bottom line, if it is genuine faith, faith that justifies, acts of obedience, humility, generosity, kindness logically follows.

### FAITH AND WORKS

In my first affirmative, I said that faith is God's gift given to us apart from anything we do. By that I simply mean that we do not work for this gift of God, and in fact, that is what **Ephesians 2:8-9** says. I do not disagree with

William's use of **Romans 10:14, 17; Luke 16:29-31; Colossians 1:4-6** and **1 Thessalonians 2:13** to say faith comes about by hearing. Of course, but this fact does not mean that the hearers of the word must work for faith, neither does it mean that faith does not save.

William says that my use of the phrase, **"it is finished!"** in **John 19:30** by Jesus, to say that salvation is not based on our work but based totally and completely on Christ's finished work is reading into the text. How does William refute my stance? He uses **Philippians 2:12**. Well, here is that verse in its context. **"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."** Verse 13 says it all. I do not fully understand why William thinks that the verses he used undermine my position that faith alone saves; scripture spells it out in plain language, works are necessary. But the fact is **"...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."** (**Philippians 2:13**). To will and to do, how then can the sovereignty of God be denied, especially in the act of salvation. God even wills us to do the works which He prepared for us (**Ephesians 2:10**). William says space limits us to show our role in God's plan in our salvation. Amen! I'll accept that we do have a role, but it's according to God's sovereign plan.

In my first statement, I quoted **1 Corinthians 2:14**. Paul writes, **"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** I used it to say that we cannot even know what works we should do without God's Spirit. William says that even with God's Spirit, some still do not understand. I see no problem with that, and to back that interpretation, William appeals to **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**. Granted, but then William says that Paul's point in **2:14** is that we must look through spiritual eyes rather than carnal eyes to know God's will. This does not make sense to me. To begin with the **1 Corinthians 2:14** context consists of **verses 10-16**. The **1 Corinthians 3:1-4** context is not part of it. Secondly, if **2:14** does not mean what I said, then why does **1 Corinthians 2:11-13** say, **"For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."** Matthew Henry, the famous Bible commentator says this regarding the **1 Corinthians 2:10-16** context, *"God has revealed true wisdom to us by his Spirit. Here is a proof of the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, 2 Pe 1:21. In proof of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, observe that he knows all things, and he searches all things, even the deep things of God. No one can know the things of God, but his Holy Spirit, who is one with the Father and the Son, and who makes known Divine mysteries to his church. This is most clear testimony, both to the real Godhead and the distinct person of the Holy Spirit. The apostles were not guided by worldly principles. They had the revelation of these things from the Spirit of God, and the saving impression of them from the same Spirit. These things they declared in plain, simple language, taught by the Holy Spirit, totally different from the affected oratory or enticing words of man's wisdom. The natural man, the wise man of the world, receives not the things of the Spirit of God. The pride of carnal reasoning is really as much opposed to spirituality, as the basest of sensuality. The sanctified mind discerns the real beauties of holiness, but the power of discerning and judging about and natural things is not lost. But the carnal man is a stranger to the principles, and pleasures, and acting's of the Divine life. The spiritual man only, is the person to whom God gives the knowledge of his will. How little have any known of the mind of God by natural power! And the apostles were enabled by his Spirit to make known his mind. In the Holy Scriptures, the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, is fully made known to us. It is the great privilege of Christians, that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit. They experience his sanctifying power in their hearts, and bring forth good fruits in their lives."*

### **ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BY FAITH**

William has mystified me here. He quotes **Romans 3:28**, **"...we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."** But according to William, Paul does not exclude works, despite it saying apart from deeds of the law. Why does William conclude this? Because the word alone is not present. Now, I have to wonder is this a serious debate discussion on a vital issue concerning Christian salvation, or words and arguments from silence and secret meanings? Whether William believes Paul or not, Paul concludes faith justifies us apart from deeds of the law. William says we must be obedient to the faith. Okay. I have no problem with that, but you must have faith before you can be obedient. My point is simple, if we are saved by faith, justified by it, we will be obedient to the faith. I get the impression that my opponent would like to put the cart in front of the horse.

**Genesis 15:6** says, **"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."** Righteousness is being in the right relationship with God, not guilty before God. But Abraham did not offer Isaac till the 22nd chapter of Genesis. So did God lie when He tells Abraham that He accounted his belief to him as righteousness, but does not fulfill that promise for 7 chapters afterward? I kind of prefer to take the Lord on His

word. I also think a question needs to be asked here, did God know what Abraham would do? Well **Philippians 2:13** makes it clear He does.

## THE ATONEMENT AND MAN'S CONDITION TO A HOLY GOD

I told William I did not want to turn this debate into Calvinism vs. Arminianism, but he has turned it into that. I don't want to talk much about Calvinism here, but I'll make one thing clear. William says I must accept all five points that make up Calvinism or reject it for the Bible. Okay, we agree. But if William closely read my first affirmative he'd know I hold to this also. However, I do not agree with William's conclusion that faith alone is essential to Calvinism, and thus depravity. The doctrine of depravity is not limited to Calvinism but also Arminians. Why? Simply because it is not a Calvinistic or Arminian doctrine, but a Biblical one.

The Bible teaches this concept of total depravity in many places. The Lord recognized good people (**Matthew 22:10**), yet He labeled His own disciples as evil men (**Matthew 7:11**). The mind is affected (**Romans 1:28; Ephesians 4:18**), the conscience is unclean (**Hebrews 9:14**), the heart is deceitful (**Jeremiah 17:9**), and by nature mankind is subject to wrath (**Ephesians 2:3**). God sent the flood as a judgment on mankind's depravity (**Genesis 6:5**). Depravity, according to the Lord, is in the inner being and is the root of evil actions (**Mark 7:20-23**). With a string of Old Testament quotations, Paul also shows it is deep-seated, universal and total (**Romans 3:9-18**).

As for Paul using a hyperbole in **1 Timothy 1:15**, referring to himself as the chief of sinners, is he? No, of course not, because from Paul's human perspective he is. The more filth of sin on a person who received Christ, the more obvious sin becomes, and Paul recognized this. A hyperbole is a statement that is excessive. Jesus brought the essence of this command out by saying, "**if you come to me and do not hate your father, mother, wife, children and even life itself or put them before me, you are unfit to follow me.**" (**Luke 14:26**). Not literal hate, this is known as '*hyperbole*'. It contrasts love with hate for emphasis. I won't doubt that Paul used a hyperbole and David also, but William is saying they were using irony, saying something opposite. The hyperbole both used was to contrast their sin before a holy God, His patience, love and faithfulness.

As to the rest of what William says, well my last character count does not give me a lot of space, so they'll have to wait till next time.

## WOODEN LITERALISM & ARMINIANISM

'Wooden literalism' is not the same as literal. 'Wooden literalism' interprets the biblical figures of speech literally. What is meant to be symbolic and what should be taken literally should be based on the biblical context -- such as when Jesus used figurative parables to communicate spiritual truth.

A literal approach to Scripture recognizes that the Bible contains a variety of literary genres, each of which have certain peculiar characteristics that must be recognized in order to interpret the text properly. Biblical genres include the historical (e.g. Acts), the dramatic epic (e.g. Job), poetry (e.g. Psalms), wise sayings (e.g. Proverbs), and apocalyptic writings (e.g. Revelation). William, an incorrect genre judgment will lead one far astray in interpreting Scripture.

One thing that William and I agree on is that we both claim to follow Jesus Christ. Neither am I a Methodist, a Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, a Calvinist nor Arminian, or a member of a building like "*the Church of Christ*", I'm a member of the Church all right, and Christ is the head.

## REPENTANCE, OBEDIENCE & JUSTIFICATION

In my first affirmative, my point was simple, that true genuine faith will produce repentance and lead to obedience. The faith I mean is simply the faith that justifies, it only is logical, people do not repent to God nor are people obedient without faith. That's why it is impossible to please God without faith. This is why I used myself as an example, but I doubt William considers me a Christian. William said Scripture places repentance before the forgiveness of sins, right, but still if it is true genuine saving faith it will produce repentance and obedience. This is common sense, I mean what are we repenting to and obeying without believing and relying and trusting in Christ.

William used **Hebrews 5:9** to show that we must obey for salvation. So if William is right, then we obey Christ without true genuine faith, this does not make sense, and who is willing us? **Philippians 2:13** says God is.

## JAMES ON FAITH & WORKS

Mr. Stewart, all I meant was:

1. James is talking with people who have faith,

2. True justifying faith produces good deeds,
3. No works to show for this faith, then obviously it won't justify, as Jesus said, **“by their fruits you'll know them”**, and
4. Don't forget **Philippians 2:13**, according to that it is not by our own means which we do God's works.

### **GRACE THROUGH FAITH NOT OF WORKS**

Certainly, I agree with William that we do not earn salvation, to illustrate his point he quoted **Luke 10:17**. Simply it means when we do everything we're commanded to do, don't start bragging, as we're only doing that which is our duty. But these works are not ones we prepare, but **Ephesians 2:10** says God has. Furthermore, who does God's good pleasure in us, well **Philippians 2:13** makes it clear that God does.

As for your analogy William, I'd say well God chooses us. **“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” (Ephesians 1:11)**

The next paragraph interests me. William uses his analogy to demonstrate to me how God works out salvation. It is a good analogy, but it has two flaws,

1. Well it is an analogy based on a human perspective, and
2. It does not take into account the sovereignty of God, the right of God to do as He wishes (**Psalms 50:1; Isaiah 40:15; 1 Timothy 6:15**) with His creation. This implies that there is no external influence upon Him and that He also has the ability to exercise His power and control according to His will.

### **CONCLUSION**

I get the impression that it was a mistake on my part to defend the presupposition that faith alone saves, because William is right, I cannot find that word alone, but if I did, then we could conclude that a mere historical belief would save us. Thus, even the demons would be saved, and that's why James used them as an example. Nevertheless, by faith we have been justified and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (**Romans 5:1**).

**“Moreover brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you -- unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).**

#### Endnotes

1. The Greek word *anōthen* has been translated as “again” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, TEV) “anew” (RSV, DARBY), and “above” (NJB, NRSV, Young's, NAB).

## STEWART'S QUESTIONS & PEACOCK'S ANSWERS

### Question 1.

*I had previously asked, "Can you produce a New Testament passage which states we are saved by "faith alone"?" In response, Jason quoted **Ephesians 2:8**. Please note, **Ephesians 2:8** does not state that we are saved by "faith alone". As much as Jason may desire it to say so, it does not. Paul affirms that we are saved "...by grace...through faith..." (Note, the very statement of the text contradicts "faith alone" -- ie. grace & faith). So again, I ask, can you produce a New Testament passage which states we are saved by "faith alone"?*

I answered this question to my satisfaction, evidently though not to the satisfaction of William. No bother, I will attempt it again. Admittedly my answer was short. The grace of God is God's gift to us, a thing we do not deserve, it is His expression of mercy and kindness to us. **Ephesians 2:8** says this grace saves through faith. In another way of saying it; it is because of God's undeserved grace to us that faith can save us. I'd even go so far as saying that grace and faith mean much the same thing, both terms are used interchangeably in Scripture. **Titus 3:7** says His grace has justified us. Or **Romans 3:24** where Paul writes "...justified freely by His grace..." Justification is God's way to erase someone's sin and declaring them righteous, logically in other words, we're saved, and since **Romans 5:1** says, "**Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" I'd conclude it is a second verse William.

### Question 2.

*The word "faith" in **Ephesians 2:8** is translated from the Greek 'pistis'. Likewise, the word "faith" in **James 2:24** is translated from the Greek 'pistis'. If we are saved by faith alone, why does James say "...a man is justified by works and not by faith alone"?*

If I understand exactly what William is implying here, then logically there is a contradiction between the theology of Paul and that of James. This is not necessary. Paul in **Romans 5:1** says, "**Therefore** (past tense) **having been justified** (God's way to erase someone's sin and declaring them righteous) **by faith...**" Faith is void of works, but according to William faith and works, working together justifies. It does say it, and I guess it would be a contradiction if James were talking with unbelievers, but he is not. So are we to think that the same believers in chapter 1 of James who have faith, and according to **Romans 5:1** are justified, then in **James 2:24**, those same believers need to be re-justified, of course not. James simply means, claiming the name of Christ means you have a living and dynamic faith, which produces good deeds. My point was, that is precisely what **Ephesians 2:10** states, which is the result of 'pistis' of **Ephesians 2:8**, and **James 2:24**. Perfect harmonization.

## SECOND NEGATIVE ESSAY - WILLIAM J. STEWART

It is a pleasure to continue in this discussion of salvation, specifically whether or not it is by *“faith alone”*. I thank Mr. Peacock for his participation, and each reader for the kind attention given to the arguments made by both debaters. May our desire in this endeavour be to seek, know and perform nothing by the truth of God's way in our lives, and that, to the salvation of our souls.

After using approximately 3,000 words to affirm his position of *“faith alone”*, Jason concludes his essay by saying, *“...it was a mistake on my part to defend the presupposition that faith alone saves us...”* I appreciate this honest statement. Indeed, the doctrine of salvation by *“faith alone”* is found nowhere in the Bible. With such a conclusion, I am somewhat bewildered at his attempt throughout the essay to maintain the position. Thus, let us turn our attention to answering the affirmative arguments made.

### JOHN 3:16 AND CONTEXT

Jason introduced for us six possible explanations of the water in **John 3:5**. As impressive as it might be to know of six interpretations, all I wanted to know was what the water is. Jason rejects the most obvious explanation, namely that the water means water. Rather, he opts for an obscure explanation, formulated by an appeal to **Ezekiel 37** and **Isaiah 44**. Mr Peacock says that Nicodemus, being a religious leader in Israel should have immediately picked up on this imagery used by Jesus. Will Jason tell the Lord what He meant to say? It is quite likely that **John 3:13** may be in response to the riddle of **Proverbs 30:4** as Jason suggests, however, the Lord made no mention of Ezekiel or Isaiah in this text, directly or indirectly. That is Jason's supposition.

In Jason's theology, water can not mean water, for if it does, then his doctrine of *“faith alone”* is proven false by the Lord. Thus, there must be some alternate explanation -- Jesus couldn't have meant water when He said water. Why not just accept the Lord at His word? The context does not call for some alternate, figurative explanation, unless there is a presupposed doctrine (ie. Faith alone) needing to be supported.

### MR. PEACOCK'S FAVOURITE PASSAGES

I was happy to entertain Jason by totaling his usage of **Ephesians 2:8-10** and **Romans 5:1**. However, aside from the amusement value, there was a definite purpose. He considers these as conclusive 'proof-texts' for his position. And so, not surprisingly, he returns to them time and again. With his second affirmative essay, Mr. Peacock has now added another 'proof-text', **Philippians 2:13**. The two essay count now stands at **Romans 5:1** (10 times), **Ephesians 2:8-10** (13 times), and **Philippians 2:13** (5 times).

Unfortunately, **Romans 5** and **Ephesians 2** do not support Jason's position. Neither say that we are saved by *“faith alone”*. Jason himself acknowledges his dilemma in his second essay, *“...I cannot find that word alone...”* He cannot find it because Paul did not put it there. Paul did not put it there because Christianity does not teach salvation by *“faith alone”*.

Jason expresses concern over what I believe **Romans 5:1** to say. Very simply, I believe it teaches that we are justified by faith. Not *“faith alone”*, nor *“faith plus works”*. All I can assert from the text is that we are saved by faith. However, it is my responsibility as a diligent Bible student to consider and accept what the whole Bible says about man's salvation.

In his analysis of **Ephesians 2:8-10**, Mr. Peacock wrongly declares, *“...obviously grace and faith can be used interchangeably.”* Certainly not. Thayer defines grace as *“...kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved...”* He identifies faith as *“...belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God...”* [1] If the words can be used interchangeably, the Paul wrote, *“...by **grace** you have been saved through **grace**...”* Or *“...by **faith** you have been saved through **faith**...”* To further illustrate that one word cannot be substituted for the other, consider just a few examples:

*“...to him who works, the wages are not counted as **faith** but as debt...”* (Romans 4:5)

*“...we have access by faith into this **faith** in which we stand...”* (Romans 5:2)

*“...have **grace** in God”* (Mark 11:22)

*“...**grace** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* (Hebrews 11:1)

*“...as the body without the spirit is dead, so **grace** without works is dead also.”* (James 2:26)

I commented above on Jason's avid use of **Philippians 2:13**. Four of the five times he used this text, it was intended as a 'catch all' argument. He need not make a point, just simply insert **Philippians 2:13**, and his point is made. However, let us consider what **Philippians 2:13** is saying.



The text came into the discussion as a result of my inquiry “...*what did Paul mean when he wrote, ‘...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...’ (Philippians 2:12)?*” So far as I can tell, Jason did not respond, except by pitting **2:13** against **2:12**. Jason would have us believe that God alone works out our salvation; that we have no part in it. **Verse 13** does not negate the command of **2:12**, but rather stands as the basis upon which we should make an effort. The responsibility to work out salvation is on the individual. God does not act for us, but compels us and supplies us with the wherewithal to act. It is a statement like that of **Romans 2:4**, “...**do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**” God’s good pleasure is that we repent and serve Him (work out our own salvation), however, He will not force us against our will, but beckons us with His goodness.

### FAITH AND WORKS

Mr. Peacock holds to his statement “...*faith is God’s gift given to us, apart from anything we do.*” Yet, he agrees with Paul that “...**faith comes by hearing...**” Either he must maintain that God does the hearing for us, or he has become inconsistent. The simple fact is, we receive neither faith nor salvation without doing something ourselves. However, Jason believes that if we do something to affect our own salvation, we negate the sovereignty of God. I fully accept the sovereignty of God; what I deny is the puppetry of man.

Jason makes the “**natural man**” of **1 Corinthians 2:14** an unregenerate (non-Christian). He does not accept that the “**natural man**” is one who looks through carnal eyes rather than spiritual. He rejects that Paul’s statement “...**I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal...**” (**3:1**) has any relationship, saying it is not part of the context. Two verses separate the two statements. If that is not contextual, I don’t know what is! The comparison in **2:14** is “**natural man**” to “**spiritual**”. Paul’s assessment of the Corinthians was that they were not “**spiritual people but...carnal**”. Again, Paul’s point in **2:14** is not that we must be Christians to know what God would have us do, but rather that we must look with spiritual eyes, not carnal.

### ABRAHAM ON FAITH AND WORKS

My friend is unsettled over my focus on words. For that, I do not apologize. If he can show me the passage that says salvation is by “*faith alone*”, then show it. If not, then get rid of the word ‘*alone*’. Paul says that “...**a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.**” (**Romans 3:28**). Jason would have us believe that this means “*faith alone*”. Paul’s statement excludes justification by obedience to the law of Moses (**3:21**); it does not exclude justification by obedience to the faith. The law of Moses served as the tutor for the Jews, but now, the faith has been revealed (**Galatians 3:23**). My opponent and I agree that we must believe before we can be obedient to the faith, however, he desires to put the cart before the horse; teaching that people are saved by faith (alone), before they have obeyed the faith (**Acts 6:7; Romans 6:17; Hebrews 5:9**).

Jason is correct, Abraham’s faith was accounted to him for righteousness (**Genesis 15:6**) before he offered Isaac to the Lord (**Genesis 22**). In fact, it was before he was circumcised (**Romans 4:10-12**). Let me ask, was Abraham’s faith accounted to him for righteousness before or after he had obeyed the Lord? The Hebrew writer tells us, “**By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.**” (**Hebrews 11:8; cf. Genesis 12:1-5**).

### CALVINISM AND “FAITH ALONE”

Mr. Peacock charges me with “...*turning this debate into Calvinism vs. Arminianism...*” Being neither a Calvinist nor an Arminian, I would have no interest in such a discussion. Further, may I remind Jason that he, being in the affirmative, devoted 20 percent of his first essay to total hereditary depravity rather than “*faith alone*”. In return, I focussed 20 percent of my first essay to answering his false Calvinistic doctrine.

Jason agrees that one must accept or reject, as a package, the five points of Calvinism. Since he proceeds to give ‘proof’ for total depravity, I’ll assume he accepts all five points. Therefore, rather than employing any more time on Calvinism in this present debate, I would be happy to discuss the points of Calvinism, one by one, with Mr. Peacock in a series of written debates.

### REPENTANCE, OBEDIENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

Jason continues to place the cart before the horse, affirming that we are justified before we either repent of our sins or obey the Lord’s command to be saved. He supports his position, not with Scripture, but by saying, “...*it only is logical...*” and again, “...*this is common sense...*” Mr. Peacock’s logic eludes me.

My friend’s problem is that he wants to place salvation at the point of faith. We have no disagreement on the necessity of faith. The Bible clearly tells us it is needed (**Hebrews 11:6**). However, what Jason has been unable to show us from the Bible is that justification results from “*faith alone*”, preceding repentance and obedience. If he

will show me from the Bible that justification precedes repentance and obedience, I will believe it.

Jason makes the statement, "...if it is true genuine saving faith it will produce repentance and obedience..." Indeed, genuine faith will produce repentance and obedience, however, salvation is not realized until after repentance and obedience (**Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Hebrews 5:9**). Someone cannot stand justified before God while still dead in sin (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). It is necessary that we repent (**2 Corinthians 7:10**) and be obedient to the gospel (**1 Peter 4:17**), that we might be forgiven of our sins and thus stand justified before the Lord.

## JAMES ON FAITH AND WORKS

In response to Jason's brief comments:

1. We agree that James is talking with people who have faith;
2. We agree that true justifying faith produces good deeds;
3. We agree that a faith without works will not justify;
4. Comments on **Philippians 2:13** under **MR. PEACOCK'S FAVOURITE PASSAGES**.

In his first essay, Jason wrote, "*Mr. Stewart, you might think that James is saying faith and works together justify...*" As I said before, I say again, I plead guilty. Will you likewise agree with the Bible writer and plead guilty to your own charge? James asked the question, "**What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?**" (**2:14**). Throughout the text, emphasis is placed upon the answer:

- "...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (**2:17**)
- "...do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (**2:20**)
- "...a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (**2:24**)
- "...as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (**2:26**)

The only instance where my friend will find the phrase "*faith alone*" (actually "**faith only**") in the Bible is in **James 2:24**. However, James does not support Jason's proposition, but negates it. James says, "**...not by faith only...**"

## GRACE THROUGH FAITH...NOT OF WORKS

In response to the analogy in my first essay, Jason says "...God chooses us...", providing **Ephesians 1:11** as support. I thought Jason didn't want this to turn into a discussion of Calvinism. Yet HE brought up Total Hereditary Depravity, and now introduces Unconditional Election into the discussion. Perhaps we can address that topic in a future discussion?

Oddly, Mr. Peacock's statement has absolutely nothing to do with my analogy. The analogy dealt with a free gift, not predestination. I asked if it is possible to receive an undeserved gift, and yet have to DO something to receive it. The illustration presented a man giving his son the gift wrapped keys to a new car. Note, the young man must:

1. Unwrap the keys;
2. Read the enclosed note to determine where the car is located;
3. Secure transportation to the car dealer's lot;
4. Inquire at the dealership where the car is parked;
5. Go to the car.

Did the car cease to be a gift? Did he earn the car by the things he DID? Jason avoided these questions, choosing rather to point out some 'flaws' in my application of the analogy. He contends that the analogy fails to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. As I have said, I fully accept the sovereignty of God; what I reject is the puppetry of man. Jason rejects man's free will (**Deuteronomy 30:19**) and God's desire that all men be saved (**2 Peter 3:9**), calling it sovereignty. The Bible speaks of God's sovereignty, but does not turn God into a puppet master as Jason does. His position is nothing more than Calvinism creeping back into his affirmative argument on "*faith alone*".

Again, God has offered the gift of salvation. We do not deserve it. By no amount of works can we earn it. However, God demands our obedience in order that we might receive it (**Romans 6:17**). Our obedience does not nullify God's gift, it secures it for us.

## CONCLUSION

I was delighted to see Jason confess in his closing remarks, "...it was a mistake on my part to defend the presupposition that faith alone saves us..." I appreciate his honesty in this regard, and hope that he will set aside this false doctrine in exchange for God's plan to save man. Indeed, faith is essential for salvation, but not exclusive. The Bible reveals many things that work together for our salvation; several provided by God to make

salvation possible, others are man's response to God's wonderful gift. Surely we can see that the New Testament does not teach that one is saved by *"faith alone"*.

#### Endnotes

1. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pp 513, 666.

## THIRD AFFIRMATIVE ESSAY - JASON J. PEACOCK

It is a pleasure to debate this issue of Christian salvation. I thank Mr. Stewart for his participation and I know his schedule is very demanding. I also thank the reader for his/her patience in reading these essays. I must admit, I began to debate William for the same reason I debate any Christian issue, I love to debate, plain and simple. This one issue however is of utmost importance, because if William is correct, and we are only justified in God's sight by accepting Christ's finished work (**John 19:30**) plus what we do, then I, as well as the majority of Christian thinkers are not truly saved, and as the Lord said in **Matthew 7:13**, we are not entering through the narrow gate, but the wide gate, and going to hell in a hand basket, just like those who reject Christ. However, if I'm correct, then William is depending on his own works to complete the Lord's finished work.

At the conclusion of my 2nd affirmative I said, "...it was a mistake on my part to defend the presupposition that faith alone saves us..." True enough, but what is not true is William's statement that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone is found nowhere in Scripture. True, the words "salvation by faith alone" are not found in the Bible, but this fact does not mean it is not a doctrine (teaching) of the Bible. The words "trinity, triunity of God, or God in three persons" are also found nowhere in the Bible. Does this then mean we can conclude that the doctrine of the trinity is not real? Of course not, the logical outcome of William's reasoning is a denial of the triunity of God. After all, since the word trinity is found nowhere in Scripture, it cannot be a doctrine. I also think William should ask himself a question, if salvation by faith alone is not a Biblical doctrine, then what were the 3,000 words affirming in my 2nd affirmative?

### JOHN 3:16 AND CONTEXT

I see Mr. Stewart also has his own false assumptions of what I say. I specifically said, "Well, the water of verse 5 could mean baptism. Those who hold to the essentialness of baptism for salvation logically would believe this to be baptism. William said it cannot be physical birth, he's mistaken. I happen to think it is unlikely that Jesus is referring to physical birth, nonetheless he could mean this. Actually, physical birth and water baptism are only two possible interpretations of six." The fact is Jesus was talking with a Jewish Pharisee, who should have recognized that Jesus as God's Son brings this spiritual birth. William can deny this all he wants, but this is why Jesus continued with this Jewish teacher, and by the way William, **John 3:15-16** tells us belief in Jesus as God's Son gives eternal life, not water.

I could say it's because of William's lack of theology that the water in **verse 5** must mean water, which is used in baptism, but what did I say? Just that Jesus could have meant baptism, and also five other interpretations. I did not say the water is not water, please do not make me say things I have not William. I also offered good reasons why position 4 should be accepted. William has not refuted me here, just simply interpreted what I said concerning **John 3:16** and its context through his subjective filter.

### ROMANS 5 & EPHESIANS 2

Actually, I did not find it all that funny that Mr. Stewart felt it necessary to count the number of times I used **Romans 5:1, Ephesians 2:8-10**, and now **Philippians 2:13**. To me it seems like reverting to name calling when your arguments do not succeed. And I wonder why William does not apply the same standard to himself, with his usage of his baptismal proof-texts? I'm not trying to pull a fast one when I say the word "alone" is not found, and then use fancy talk to cover up this admission. I grant that William, but this does not mean that it is not a doctrine of the Scripture. Many very real concepts are taught in Scripture, but never expressly mentioned, for example the doctrine of the trinity, the doctrine of the hypostatic union (two-natures of Christ), the teaching that all mankind was created in God's spiritual image, not His physical (yes, I know God is not physical). The point is simple, the Scriptures expressly says faith saves us, and not faith plus works. And as I said in my initial statement, true saving faith is not a mere historical accent (**James 2:17**). I affirmed that good works, deeds, actions, call it what you want, play a major role in our walk with the Lord and God prepares these works as **Ephesians 2:10** says, and **Philippians 2:13** tells us who works out these works. As said in my second affirmative, how in the world can the sovereignty of God be denied, especially when it comes to salvation?

And I do not for a moment, assert that grace and faith can be used interchangeably every single place in the New Testament, obviously how it is to be understood properly is dependant on its context.

It would seem that William believes **Philippians 2:12** is best interpreted without its immediate context of **verse 13**. It's easy to see why, without **verse 13**, then William is correct, and we must work out our own salvation with our own works and our own effort. William said, "The responsibility to work out salvation is on the individual. God does not act for us, but compels us and supplies us with the wherewithal to act." It seems that **Romans 9:16**, contradicts Williams above statement "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who

runs, but on God who has mercy.”

## FAITH & WORKS

I certainly do hold to my supposition that true saving faith is a gift from God. However Mr. Stewart falsely assumes that my supposition contradicts Paul, who said, “**No one can have faith without hearing the message about Christ.**” (**Romans 10:17**). Of course I believe it with all my heart, the God inspired Apostle Paul wrote it. Perhaps William can answer my question, why is it that when I heard the message of Christ, I received Christ, but yet when an atheist hears the exact same message it is dismissed as myth? It’s my view, God granted me the faith to believe, and why the message of the cross makes all the sense in the world to me, but to the atheist it is foolishness. I wonder if William excludes people who cannot hear the message from salvation? The logical outcomes of what Mr. Stewart believe frightens me.

William, you're misrepresenting what I said, I did not say that we must be a Christian to know what God wants of us. After all, as Mr. Stewart rightly said, even some Christians do not always do what God wants, but God’s Spirit reveals to us what to do. After all **1 Corinthians 2:13-14** says this, “**For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**”

## ABRAHAM ON FAITH & WORKS

William would have us believe that obedience to the faith is how we become justified before God, two problems with that.

1. If we do not receive justification till after we do all the stuff required of us to be obedient to the faith, when Christ said, “**It is finished**”, if William is correct, then Christ must of not meant what He said. William likes to throw doubt on what I say by asking the question, “*who should we believe, Jason or the Lord / Paul / Peter / James / John...*” Well William apply the same standard to yourself, who should we believe William or Jesus Christ?
2. Likely the most important thing, Paul does not say we are justified by being obedient to the faith, he said, “**By faith we have been justified...**” (**Romans 5:1**).

It would seem Mr. Stewart must add to what Paul says, for his view to be correct.

William you asked, “*Was Abraham's faith accounted to him for righteousness before or after he had obeyed the Lord?*” And **Hebrew 11:8**, “**By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.**” (**Cf. Genesis 12:1-5**), so it was by faith that he was considered righteous, and by that faith he obeyed the Lord. Let me ask you a question Mr. Stewart, did God know if Abraham would obey his faith? If you believe in the sovereignty of God, as you said you did, then He must have.

## THE ATONEMENT AND MAN'S CONDITION

William I wish you would stop twisting my words. I only mentioned Calvinism, not because I am a Calvinist, or because I think that total depravity is specifically a Calvinistic doctrine. I brought it up for one reason, because I knew you would accuse me of being Calvinistic as soon as I brought up this doctrine. That’s why I provided those verses in the 2nd affirmative, which show total depravity is neither Calvinistic nor Arminian, but Biblical. Now the reason why I used the doctrine of total depravity, I told you in the first affirmative, “*I do not want to debate on whether Calvinism is Biblical or not, but William I'd say it is of paramount importance to have a correct understanding of mans condition to a Holy God, before we can fully grasp atonement.*” Mr. Stewart must I remind you, you’re the one who continually changes the title of this argument to “*Calvinism vs. Armenianism.*” Now William instead of discrediting this argument, “*the Atonement and man's Condition,*” by applying to me the “*Church of Christ*”, false cultic understanding of depravity, please deal with the verses I provided in my 2nd affirmative, in your 3rd negative. The Bible teaches this concept of total depravity in many places.

The Lord recognized good people (**Matthew 22:10**), yet He labeled His own disciples as evil men (**Matthew 7:11**). The mind is affected (**Romans 1:28; Ephesians 4:18**), the conscience is unclean (**Hebrews 9:14**), the heart is deceitful (**Jeremiah 17:9**), and by nature mankind is subject to wrath (**Ephesians 2:3**). God sent the flood as a judgment on mankind’s depravity (**Genesis 6:5**). Depravity, according to the Lord, is in the inner being and is the root of evil actions (**Mark 7:20-23**). With a string of Old Testament quotations Paul also shows it is deep-seated, universal, and total (**Romans 3:9-18**).

## REPENTANCE, OBEDIENCE RELATING TO JUSTIFICATION

William would have us believe that we repent to God and are obedient prior to having saving faith, I'm simply saying that faith that I'm talking about and Paul in **Romans 5:1**, the faith, which justifies, and gives us peace with God, not a cease fire. This faith will lead us to repentance and obedience. William accuses me of putting the cart before the horse. The logic of that assertion escapes me, I'm not excluding repentance or obedience, I'm just saying neither of the two justify us. Faith justifies and this faith will lead us to repent and become obedient. Another way to look at it, faith must come first, and repentance and obedience naturally will follow, if this is the faith, which justifies. I'm not for a second implying that a faith, which is void of repentance or obedience is a saving faith, James said it is not, and it would not be the faith talked about in **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

William said this in his 2nd negative, "*Someone cannot stand justified before God while still dead in sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). It is necessary that we repent (2 Corinthians 7:10) and be obedient to the gospel (1 Peter 4:17), that we might be forgiven of our sins and thus stand justified before the Lord.*" I have no problem with that, I agree 100%, all that I affirm is, we cannot receive forgiveness of sin, without genuine faith. I affirm we cannot repent without genuine faith. I affirm we cannot be obedient to the gospel without genuine faith, and I affirm that this genuine faith justifies.

## JAMES ON FAITH AND WORKS

I wonder what I must do to get it through to William that I'm in full agreement with James? James is talking to believer's concerning how to live the Christian life, **James 2:17** is talking about an empty faith, which is evidenced by no good deeds, thus, this faith cannot save us. William, James is not saying we earn salvation through faith plus works, James is talking to believer's who have faith already telling them how to live as those who claim the name of Christ.

James and Paul are not face to face debating whether faith or faith plus works save one? A more accurate analogy is that they're standing back to back, debating opposite foes. James is not talking about works, which you do to earn favor with God, but a "said faith," a simple profession of Christ, in other words. I'll use an illustration to show what I mean. The story is told that the Devil had a meeting with his demons to decide how to persuade men that God was nonexistent. Since they themselves believed in His existence, they wondered just how to do it. One demon suggested that they tell people Jesus Christ never really existed and that men should not believe such fiction. Another demon suggested that they persuade men that death ends all and there is no need to worry about life after death. Finally, the most intelligent demon suggested that they tell everyone that there is a God, that there is Jesus Christ, and that believing in Him saves, but all you have to do is profess faith in Christ and then go on living in sin as you used to. They decided to use this tactic, and it is the tactic the Devil uses even today.

Paul and James are in perfect harmony in their teaching. When Paul speaks of works, it is *works of the Law*. He says in **Romans 3:20**, "**Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**" He is saying in effect, "*Yes, the Law is a mirror—it reveals you are a sinner—but it cannot save you; the works of the Law cannot save you at all.*" James also says that you have to have something more than just the works of the Law. He wrote, "**For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.**" (v 10). As someone has put it, "*Man cannot be saved by perfect obedience, for he cannot render it. He cannot be saved by imperfect obedience because God will not accept it.*" The only solution to this dilemma is the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and both James and Paul emphasize that. [1]

## GRACE THROUGH FAITH...NOT OF WORKS

Hmmm, William did not refute my usage of **Ephesians 1:11**, all he did was call it Calvinistic. Well William **Ephesians 1:11** was around some 1600 hundred years prior to the U of T.U.L.I.P, and no thank you William I do not feel any motivation to debate with you whether your interpretation of Calvinism is biblical or not. I just fail to understand William, he objects to me saying grace is through faith and nothing we do can earn this grace, I wonder what he thinks, this is not a concept of Jason Peacock, but the exact wording of **Ephesians 2:8-10**. "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**" Who should we believe William who affirms salvation is faith plus works, or the God inspired Apostle Paul who specifically in verse nine excludes works? Of course William will say something like, "*The works Paul refers to in verse nine, are works of the Law. Not of obedience.*" Even if his interpretation is correct, it does not mean the grace that save us through faith has a secret hidden agenda of works. Certainly not works of obedience, as **verse 10** covers them.

Mr. Stewart's analogy of the car to the boy as a gift breaks down on a fundamental level; this debate is not about

giving cars away. I also deny that were puppets of the most high. God could use us as a puppet if He so willed to, after all He is omnipotent, but God in His love chose to give us freewill. However I do affirm the complete sovereignty of our Lord when it comes to our salvation. I also affirm we cannot work for our salvation, **Romans 4:5** makes that clear, **“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”** Works are clearly ruled out here. Contrary to what William believes faith plus works is responsible for our salvation.

William, I did not say that God has not given men free will, and it does explain how I chose to receive the gospel message, but when the hard-boiled atheist is presented with the same message, it means nothing. It makes no logical sense for me to reject the fact of free will, after all Mr. Stewart, if there was none, we would not be having this debate. As for God desiring everyone to be saved, I do not doubt that, but William is looking at it from a human perspective, obviously everyone is not saved, or has been, or will be, remember the words of Christ, **Matthew 7:13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it, because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”**

I spoke too soon by saying I wish I did not affirm faith alone, I still hold to it. But I'd rather say faith alone justifies. Faith plus good fruits or deeds, works prepared for us by God, sanctifies. One equals salvation, the other does not.

#### Endnotes

1. J. Vernon McGee *True the Bible Commentator* 1981.

## STEWART'S QUESTIONS & PEACOCK'S ANSWERS

Question 1.

Organize the following according to the order in which they occur:

- \* *Baptism for remission of sins*
- \* *Saved and added to the Lord's church*
- \* *Faith in Christ*
- \* *Hear the gospel*
- \* *Repentance of sins*

I fail to see how this is even a question, William has merely given me five options to arrange in order. If I do not order them in the way William sees fit, then he'll pluck verses from scripture to make me look as a heretic. So I wont fall into that snare. If people want to know how I deal with such verses as **Acts 2:38**... feel free to read the other facet of this debate.

I will say saving faith involves personally depending on the finished work of Christ's sacrifice as the only basis for forgiveness of sin and entrance into heaven. But saving faith is also a personal commitment of one's life to following Christ in obedience to His commands: **"I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."** (2 Timothy 1:12).

Question # 2

*Having concluded in his second affirmative essay, "...I cannot find that word alone...", will Jason renounce his false doctrine of salvation by "faith alone", and accept the whole counsel of God on the salvation of souls?*

No William I will not renounce my, and I quote you, *"false doctrine of salvation by "faith alone".* I do accept all of Gods word, but I have my doubts that you do William. It is true that the words *"salvation is by faith alone"*, are not found in the New Testament. However it is a very real doctrine and that is why I have been able to affirm *"salvation is by faith alone"*. I do think it is the height of arrogance William, to label what I believe as a false doctrine. In the other part of this debate, where you are affirming that one must be baptized to be saved, I have not labeled it a false doctrine; after all I did admit that it can be argued for. I simply showed that the verses you use as proof-text to say we must be baptized do not require your interpretation. However I do thank you William for this opportunity to defend my position.



## THIRD NEGATIVE ESSAY - WILLIAM J. STEWART

I thank Mr. Peacock for his participation and each reader for giving attention to the essays presented. I pray that much good will come from this effort.

I consider Jason to be a friend, and have enjoyed conversing with him, but I am convinced that his doctrine of salvation by *"faith alone"* is foreign to the Bible. Jason admits that if his doctrine is not true, *"...the majority of Christian thinkers are not truly saved..."* Therefore, I call our earnest attention to this important topic, that we might know and carefully do God's will.

Jason asks, *"...if salvation by faith alone is not a Biblical doctrine, then what were the 3000 words affirming in the 2nd affirmative?"* In each essay my friend has affirmed *"faith alone"*, but that does not make it Biblical. Some affirm that homosexuality is acceptable in the sight of God. Others place church traditions on par with the Bible. Just because someone affirms something to be Biblical does not make it so. I fervently deny *"faith alone"*, as I would any other teaching that opposes sound doctrine.

### JOHN 3:16 AND CONTEXT

Jason corrects me, *"...I did not say that the water is not water, please do not make me say things I have not..."* Indeed, he acknowledges water as one of six possible interpretations. However, the nature of truth requires that one understanding be correct, to the exclusion of all others. Rather than answer my question about the new birth, Mr. Peacock danced around it. If his doctrine of *"faith alone"* is to stand, he must reject that water means water. So, he opts for an obscure position.

Jason believes he *"...offered good reasons..."* why his position should be accepted. He takes **John 3:5** with **3:8**, and tells us that Jesus combined *"...the 'wind' of Ezekiel 37:9-10 and the 'water' of Isaiah 44:3..."* to explain the riddle of **Proverbs 30:4**. An interesting theory to mold a custom-made explanation of **John 3:5**. Using that type of convoluted reasoning, why not take **Genesis 8:1** (*"...God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided."*) and force it into **John 3:5** and pretend Jesus was referring to the Flood?

Jesus did not say *"...unless one is born of water, wind, and the Spirit..."* nor did He say *"...unless one is born of water and the wind..."* Sounds more like a *'nature'* birth than a *'spiritual'* birth to me. In his desperation, Jason must change **John 3:5**, for he cannot deal with Jesus' plain statement. Mr. Peacock insisted on the importance of the context of **John 3:16**, yet he has not dealt correctly with the verse nor its context.

### MR. PEACOCK'S FAVOURITE PASSAGES

Throughout the debate, I have kept track of how often my friend has used **Romans 5:1**, **Ephesians 2:8-10** and **Philippians 2:13**. These are supposed proof-texts, yet none say or even imply *"faith alone"*. Mr. Peacock reads that into the text. In his second essay, Jason thought the count was *"...kind of funny..."* Now, he tells us *"...I did not find it all that funny..."* Whether he is amused or not, we continue the count in this final essay. His total use (misuse) over the three essays is **Romans 5:1** (12 times), **Ephesians 2:8-10** (16 times) and **Philippians 2:13** (7 times).

He says my count is *"...like reverting to name calling when your arguments do not succeed..."* Not at all. I am simply pointing out his heavy use of these texts, and noting with the reader that none of them support his proposition. If counting the number of times he used specific passages is like name calling, what shall we consider his slanderous words, as he commented on *"...the 'Church of Christ' false cultic understanding of Depravity..."*?

Jason tells us that many real concepts are taught in the Scriptures without being expressly stated. For instance, the *'trinity'*. Indeed, the plurality of the Godhead is taught in Scripture. No one verse speaks of all three persons of the Godhead as being God, but each is called God in the Bible. However, Mr. Peacock is in error, trying to compare *"faith alone"* to the Godhead. No Scripture specifically rejects the three persons in the Godhead. The New Testament specifically condemns justification by *"faith alone"*. No Bible text affirms there to be only one Person in the Godhead. However, many Bible passages teach that a saving faith is a working faith. My friend has had three essays to illustrate that *"faith alone"* is a Biblical doctrine. He has not done so. He has introduced passages that speak about faith. I believe faith is essential to salvation. However, he has failed to account for numerous texts which speak of other elements that justify (**Matthew 12:37; Luke 18:14; Romans 2:13; Romans 3:24; Romans 5:9; James 2:24**).

Jason keeps coming back to the sovereignty of God. That is not at issue, I believe in the sovereignty of God; I

reject the puppetry of man. Jason attributes salvation to *"faith alone"*, and then, by his corrupt understanding of **Ephesians 2:8**, he affirms that this faith is God's gift to us. By this, he rejects Paul's statement that *"...faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God..."* (**Romans 10:17**). If faith results from hearing the word of God, then it is not a gift God gives to us, but our responsible reaction to hearing His word (**Luke 16:29-31**; **1 Thessalonians 2:13**). Jason, by his insistence that faith is God's gift to us rejects the clear teaching of Scripture and makes God a puppet master over men. Salvation is God's gift to man, not faith, otherwise the free will my friend declares to believe in does not exist.

I am charged with believing that *"...Philippians 2:12 is best interpreted without its immediate context..."* It is not I who has avoided the context. In my previous essay, I said it is our responsibility to work out our own salvation (**v 12**). God does not act on our behalf, but compels us and supplies us with the wherewithal to do so (**v 13**). Mr. Peacock has not told us what Paul meant in **verse 12**. He has avoided it like a plague. What kept him from dealing with **verse 12**?

What about **Romans 9:16** Jason inquires? Paul said, *"...it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."* We might will with all our being, and run with all our might; salvation still depends upon *"...God who shows mercy."* However, our will for and our doing of God's will are not excluded. Neither does the text teach that God arbitrarily gives and withholds mercy. Those who seek righteousness by faith will receive God's mercy, those who do not will not (**Romans 9:30-33**).

### FAITH AND WORKS

Clearing up a *'misrepresentation'*, Jason claims, *"...I did not say that we must be a Christian to know what God wants of us."* Let me refresh my friend's memory. In his first essay, he said, *"...we cannot even know what works we should do without God's Spirit..."* Either he believes that we must be a Christian to know what God wants of us, or he believes that some who are not Christians have received God's Spirit.

The context of **1 Corinthians 2:14** does not say we must be saved to understand what God's will is. It does teach that we must be of a spiritual mind. The context refers to the Corinthian Christians as carnal, and for this reason, they could not understand the things of God (**1 Corinthians 3:1-4**).

### ABRAHAM ON FAITH AND WORKS

Jason cannot accept that we are justified by obedience to the faith for two reasons. Let us alleviate his hesitation to accept God's will:

- 1 - He holds that if we do anything prior to salvation, Jesus could not have meant it when He said, **"It is finished!"** The question is, did the Lord mean what Jason thinks He meant? His suffering was finished. The Father's plan to make Him a sacrifice for our sin was finished. His obedience to the Father's will was finished. The prophecies made concerning him (note **John 19:28**, cf. **Psalms 22:15**; **69:21**) had been finished. Truth be told, Jason's attempt to base his false doctrine on this text is incredibly feeble.
- 2 - Jason states, *"Paul does not say we are justified by being obedient to the faith."* Several times the Bible speaks of obeying God's word, in view of salvation. Jesus is **"...the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him..."** (**Hebrews 5:9**). In **Acts 6:7**, we are told that **"...many of the priests were obedient to the faith."** And that we might appease Jason's concern, Paul himself wrote, **"...God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered."** (**Romans 6:17**). Before they obeyed the form of doctrine (the gospel of Christ), they were **"slaves of sin"**. Is a slave of sin justified? Is there any doubt that obedience is necessary to be justified before the Lord?

I asked Jason twice whether Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness before or after he had obeyed the Lord. He has not responded. I am curious why not. The Lord told Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees, so **"...he went out, not knowing where he was going."** (**Hebrews 11:8**; cf. **Genesis 12:1-5**). Had he not done so, he would not have stood justified before God. When the Lord commanded him to sacrifice Isaac, he would not have stood justified before the Lord unless he heeded the command. As James says, **"Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' and he was called the friend of God."** (**James 2:22-23**).

### CALVINISM AND "FAITH ALONE"

Mr. Peacock is correct, I keep changing the title of this section in the debate, and I admit it has been deliberate.

Jason has tried to camouflage his Calvinistic arguments under the title *"The Atonement and Man's Condition"*. He has been speaking pure Calvinism, so I'll label it for what it is. Of total hereditary depravity, he says *"...I knew you would accuse me of being Calvinistic as soon as I brought up this doctrine."* Why bring it up then? Our discussion is on *"faith alone"* not depravity. He tells us that *"...it is of paramount importance to have a correct understanding of man's condition to a holy God before we can fully grasp atonement."* Amen! But Calvinism will only muddy the waters. Fact is, *"faith alone"* is based upon his false assumption of depravity.

So far as Jason's depravity proof-texts, I will not deal with them in this debate. I responded to them in part in my first essay, and was rebuked by Mr. Peacock for turning the debate into a discussion of Calvinism when it was *he* who brought it up in the first place. I have extended a challenge to my friend to debate the topic of depravity at another time, but he has refused.

### REPENTANCE, OBEDIENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

Jason accuses me of saying *"...we repent to God and are obedient prior to having saving faith..."* I have not said that. I did say that we repent and are obedient before we are justified. One who has faith in God must repent and obey the Lord's will. Then, the faith which is present becomes a saving faith (ie. a faith that has heard and responded to God's word). Jason says, *"...faith must come first, and repentance and obedience naturally follow, if this is the faith which justifies."* AMEN! Faith must come first. Faith ought to lead us to repent and obey the Lord's commands. What determines whether it is *"saving faith"* or not? Repentance and obedience. When does it become a *"saving faith"*? After repentance and obedience.

In my second essay, I said one must repent and be obedient to the gospel, in order to be forgiven of sin and thus stand justified before God. Jason said he agrees 100%. However, his argument throughout this debate says he does not. He believes we must be justified before we can obey, repent or receive the forgiveness of our sins. Mr. Peacock's doctrine has saved people still dead in their sins!

### JAMES ON FAITH AND WORKS

Jason tells us that James was writing to Christians about living Christian lives. James says the topic is salvation, **"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"** (James 2:14). Notice, he shows that both the long standing child of God (Abraham) and the alien sinner (Rahab) are justified by works. In answer to his own question, James concludes:

**"Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."** (2:17)

**"...do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"** (2:20)

**"...a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."** (2:24)

**"...as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."** (2:26)

### GRACE THROUGH FAITH...NOT OF WORKS

Jason was bothered that I called his use of **Ephesians 1:11**, 'Calvinism'. The Bible doctrine of election is simply that those who will come to Christ by faith will be saved. Those who are predestined are not randomly selected by the Lord, but those who are found in Christ. Notice through the context Paul's emphasis on being in Christ (**v 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13**). Paul reveals how we might be in Christ, and thus the sons of God (**Galatians 3:26-27**).

Jason wrote, *"...William...objects to me saying grace is through faith and nothing we do can earn this grace..."* Where have I said this? I agree fully with that statement. Paul said **"...by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."** I do not believe we can be saved by works of merit, nor that we can ever earn God's grace. However, it is still required that we do the things commanded by God (**Luke 10:17**). God's grace does not exclude obedience. It simply removes any ability of boasting in our obedience.

What I do oppose is salvation by *"faith alone"*. Jason took exception to my car analogy. Whether he likes it or not, the illustration drives home the point that in order to receive a gift, one may have to do something. However, these *'works'* are not to earn the gift. God has provided the gift of eternal life. We must DO something to receive it. The Bible evidence for this is overwhelming (**Proverbs 10:16; Matthew 7:21; Luke 10:17; 13:24; Acts 6:7; Romans 2:7; 6:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:24; Phillipians 2:12; Hebrews 4:11; 5:9; James 2:14, 17, 20, 24, 26** and much more).

With his wayward concept of God's sovereignty, Jason rejects God's desire for all to be saved. He tells us, *"...as for God desiring everyone to be saved, I do not doubt that, but William is looking at it from a human perspective..."* Actually, I was looking at it from God's perspective. The apostle Peter said that God **"...is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."** (2 Peter 3:9). Jason tells us

"...everyone is not saved, or has been, or will be..." Correct, but that is not because God is the puppet master Mr. Peacock makes Him out to be. Calvinism and "faith alone" turn God into a monster. According to my friend's doctrine, God will condemn those who do not come to Him, though they are unable to, because He has withheld faith from them. He calls this sovereignty. It is unjust and cruel and far from the God of the Bible.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through this discussion, Mr. Peacock has realized in part the trouble with his doctrine. In his second essay, he acknowledged his mistake "...to defend the presupposition that faith alone saves us..." Now, he says he would rather have said "...faith alone justifies." Distinguishing between justification and sanctification, he tells us "...faith alone justifies" and that "...faith plus good fruits or deeds, works prepared for us by God, sanctifies." I agree with my friend that justification and sanctification are not the same. Justification is to be declared righteous, free of guilt. Sanctification is to be separated, or set apart to God. However, the only passage in the Bible which mentions both together reads, "**...but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified...**" (**1 Corinthians 6:11**). Shall we believe Jason, who tells us we are justified first, and sanctified afterward? Or shall we believe the apostle Paul, who speaks of being washed, sanctified and justified in concert?

I asked my friend two questions to be answered with his third essay. He refused to organize the list of things related to salvation. In order, according to the Bible, they are:

- 1) Hear the gospel (**Romans 10:17**)
- 2) Faith in Christ (**John 8:24**)
- 3) Repentance of sins (**Acts 2:38**)
- 4) Baptism for remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**)
- 5) Saved and added to the Lord's church (**Acts 2:41, 47**)

Not sure why my friend found that too difficult to deal with, but nonetheless, there is what the Bible reveals.

I also asked Mr. Peacock if he would renounce his false doctrine and accept the whole counsel of God regarding the salvation of souls. Sadly, he said no. If he accepted all of God's word, he would reject the doctrine of "faith alone". Not only is it not in the Bible, but it stands contrary to many Bible passages. He takes exception to the phrase "false doctrine", calling such a statement "...the height of arrogance..." If I did not believe that "faith alone" was a false doctrine, I would not have entered into this debate. Likewise, if I believed the doctrine was wrong, but that it was of no eternal consequence to the souls of men, I would not have involved myself in this discussion. I believe with all my heart that salvation by "faith alone" is a false doctrine, and those who attempt to enter heaven by means of this teaching will hear the Lord say "**...I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.**" (**Matthew 7:23**). Lawlessness is to act without or outside of the law. Salvation by "faith alone" is no part of the law of God.

Throughout this discussion, Mr. Peacock has had one responsibility; to show us that the Bible teaches faith as the exclusive element of salvation. He has failed in this task, and predictably so, for the Bible does not teach salvation by "faith alone". Rather than support his proposition, my friend has attacked it, stating that "...salvation is gained by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone." In that very statement, Jason admitted there to be at least three elements which combine for man's salvation. I appreciate his honesty, but I am puzzled that he refuses to accept the remainder of Scripture. Surely we can see that the New Testament does not teach that one is saved by "faith alone".