

The Doctrine of Inclusion Why it Appeals, How it Misleads

Paul Ellis

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Part 1 of a 3-part series of FAQs:

1. The Doctrine of Inclusion: Why it Appeals, How it Misleads
2. Was Humanity Raised With Christ?
3. Last Adam's Greater Work

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What is the Doctrine of Inclusion?

There are two variants:

- (1) Universalist inclusion – God will save everyone (ultimate reconciliation)
- (2) Trinitarian inclusion – God has saved everyone (historical reconciliation)

The following FAQs will address the second version only – the idea that the human race was saved, raised, and placed in union with God 2000 years ago at the cross. This view can be summarized as follows: “All humanity is loved, forgiven, reconciled, righteous, and saved. All died and were raised together with Christ and are now in union with the Father, Son and Spirit.” Sometimes the word adoption is used in place of inclusion/union, as in “God has adopted the human race into Himself.”

Are those who preach historical reconciliation really universalists in disguise?

No. Although there are such things as Trinitarian universalists, most Trinitarians that I know preach the need for faith. “Everyone is saved but not everyone knows it. To persist in unbelief is to risk getting yourself ejected from the party on the last day.” Dismissing a Trinitarian as a universalist reveals that you are uninformed on the issues which they hold dear.

Trinitarians and grace-folk have much in common; they both preach the finished work of the cross, they both preach the need to repent and believe the good news, and they both love Jesus. The key point of difference is that those who hold to the doctrine of inclusion believe that all are now saved, raised, and seated with Christ. This inevitably affects how they think of faith, as we will see below.

What is appealing about the doctrine of inclusion?

God loves everyone! Jesus came to save the entire world – Jews and Greeks, male and female, slave and free. God is not willing that any should perish. We are all first-class in Christ. Everyone is on His A-list. Robert Capon's *inclusion-before-*

exclusion theme is essentially correct. All are invited to the wedding feast; no one is left outside except those who choose to stay out. However, to say that “All are *saved* except those who will later become unsaved” is a back-to-front and unbiblical, as I will explain below.

Why does the doctrine of inclusion particularly appeal to grace folk?

Those who preach grace already know that the gospel is 100% good news. They already know that God loves the whole world and has forgiven everyone. So if He has already forgiven everyone, why not go one step further and say He has also *saved* everyone? It doesn't seem too much to ask.

Many grace-folk know what it is to be surprised and delighted by the surpassing goodness of God. So if someone tells them, “God is even better than you thought,” they respond positively. Tell them that the gospel is the astonishing news that something has happened to the human race – that all have been saved, raised, and seated with Christ in accordance with God's eternal plan – and they will be inclined to believe it. “Sure, why not. That sounds like something God would do.” Grace-folk ought to know better.

How does the doctrine of inclusion mislead?

Consider the following typical statement: “All are forgiven, reconciled, and saved.” To these three points I respond: (1) it's true (we are forgiven), (2) it's sort of true (God has reconciled the world but you still need to be reconciled), and (3) it's not true (not all are saved).

The reason why forgiveness is a done deal and salvation is not, is because forgiveness is a game that requires only one player. God doesn't need your permission to forgive you. He has forgiven you in accordance with the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7).

Reconciliation, however, is a two-player game. Both sides need to play. If the husband comes to the table of reconciliation declaring his unconditional love and forgiveness but the estranged wife stays away, they are not reconciled. He may see no reason for irreconciliation – no offense, no hurt than hasn't been forgiven. But unless she chooses to be reconciled, there is no reconciliation *in fact*. More on this below.

Salvation is not a game but a gift; God has given it, we must receive it. If a benefactor came to your door bearing a large check with your name on it but you refused to take it, you would not be a beneficiary. All the generosity of the benefactor counts for nothing unless you receive it. More on this below.

Are we reconciled or aren't we?

Paul says “Yes and no,” and so must we. From God's side, the reconciliation is a done-deal. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ...” (2 Co 5:18). God has come to us with open arms. He holds nothing against us – not our sins, not our past, not anything. “While we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5:8). Glory to God!

However, there is no reconciliation *in fact* unless we respond to His overtures. Hence Paul's exhortation, “We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20).

Those who preach inclusion argue that our reconciliation is objectively true, but we will never experience it until we believe it. It is certainly true that man's estrangement is based on a lie. Men fear God needlessly. And it is not wrong to preach that God has reconciled us to himself through Christ. This is what Paul preached. But we must also preach the other side, as Paul also did: *Be reconciled*.

When were we reconciled?

Those who preach inclusion answer: “Before the foundation of the world. The cross was merely the expression of God’s eternal desire to reconcile us.” This is not wrong – God didn’t come up with the cross-solution halfway through the Old Testament – but it is a different emphasis from Paul. Paul consistently preached reconciliation *through the cross*:

Rom 5:10 For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

2Co 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

Col 1:20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Col 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

If we are to preach Paul’s gospel, then we should center our message on “Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). On what basis are we forgiven? *Christ and Him crucified*. On what basis are we reconciled? *Christ and Him crucified*. On what basis do we now enjoy peace with God? *Christ and Him crucified*.

So what?

Those who preach inclusion like to say, “Jesus has established a relationship with all of us.” This is simply not true. Although He surely desires it, Jesus has no relationship with those who are “darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18). The light of men has come into the world but some men prefer the darkness.

If Jesus had a relationship with everyone, why would Paul exhort us to preach the message of reconciliation? Why would John proclaim “what we have seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us and the Father and the Son”? What kind of husband are we portraying when we tell sinners that Jesus married them without their knowledge or permission? He does not have a relationship with every man, woman or child but He wants one. He stands outside waiting to be invited in.

Punch-line: God has reconciled the whole world to Himself, but not everyone is reconciled. We implore you on His behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Why preach “the whole world is saved”?

The hallmark of the doctrine of inclusion is the view that Jesus saved the entire world 2000 years ago. Salvation is a done-deal whether you believe it or not. Why say this? Because Jesus is the Savior of the world. He’s not the Savior of just some, but all. The premise is true – Jesus *is* the Savior of the world – but the conclusion is flawed: not everyone is saved.

The first people to identify Jesus as the savior of the world were a group of awestruck Samaritans:

Joh 4:42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

Why did these believing foreigners identify Jesus as Savior of the world before He had gone to the cross? Jesus hadn’t yet saved anyone. He had not yet offered His life as an atoning sacrifice. Yet when they saw Him they recognized Him as Savior of the world. They said it because they had realized that the Jewish Messiah was also their Messiah. Jesus hadn’t come just to save the Jews but Samaritans too and everyone else, just as Isaiah had prophesied.

Isa 49:6 He says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

That Jesus came to save everyone and not just the Jews was a profound revelation. Paul, Peter and John were all struck by it. We've already seen how John first recorded the label "Savior of the world" in his gospel. He also said it again in his first epistle:

1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

What does it mean to be Savior of the world? This is how John explains it:

1Jn 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

The label "Savior of the world" can be interpreted as "atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world." Of all those who laid eyes on Jesus the Man, John the Baptist was the first to recognize that He was indeed Savior of the world:

Joh 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

The inclusionists interpret the title "the Savior of the world" as meaning "all are saved." But the New Testament writers interpret it as follows: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Act 4:12). Jesus is the Savior of the world, as Peter declared to the Sanhedrin, *we still must be saved*.

Joh 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
Tit 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

God sent His Son to save the world and that salvation was provided for all men. As the gospel declares, the power of God for salvation is not just for the Jews but is for everyone who believes.

What are some scriptures used to support the view that the whole world is already saved?

In addition to those scriptures identifying Jesus as *Savior of the World*, the following scriptures are sometimes cited.

2 Tim. 1:9 (God) who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Who is the "us" in this passage? Is it the whole world? No. The previous verse indicates that the "us" is Paul and Timothy. The verses before that suggest that "us" might also include Timothy's mother and grandmother. It's either two people or four people but it certainly is not all people. Yes, God's grace and redemptive purposes were in His heart before Adam fell. But if Paul is here saying the whole is saved, then he is contradicting what he wrote in Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 2:16, and many other places.

1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Again, who is the "us" who have been born again? Verse 1 tells us: "To God's elect, strangers in the world." Peter is addressing the church. He is speaking of those who have not seen him but believe in him (v.8).

And that's it! Just two scriptures where the word "us" is taken out of context to build a theology of universal salvation!¹

¹ Scriptures used to suggest that all have been resurrected to new life are examined in Part 2: Was Humanity Raised with Christ?

So is the whole world saved or isn't it?

No. Numerous scriptures indicate that God wants us to *be* saved (1 Tim 2:4) and that He commands people everywhere to *repent* (Acts 17:30) and *believe* in the name of His Son (1 Joh 3:23) in order to *be* saved (Mk 16:16), etc. By my count there more than two dozen scriptures specifically exhorting people to be saved and literally hundreds more exhorting them to repent, believe, receive, have faith, trust in God, etc. (An indicative list is included in the Appendix.) But for our purposes, the words of Jesus will suffice:

Joh 3:15-18 "...that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Those who preach historical reconciliation will read these verses and say "I agree – we must believe to have eternal life." But they will disagree with verse 18. The unbeliever is not "condemned already" but "saved already." Only if he dies in his unbelief will he lose his salvation.

As far as I can tell, there is not one verse in the Bible that categorically says all humanity was saved at the cross. Certainly, Jesus has provided for our salvation – His is a finished work. Certainly it is the Father's will that all are saved. But the New Testament writers repeatedly say that all are *not* saved.

Is it a bad idea to tell a sinner that they are saved?

Whether it is a good or bad idea, it is certainly unbiblical:

Act 11:14 He will bring you a message through which you and all your household *will be saved*.

Act 16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you *will be saved*—you and your household.

Rom 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they *may be saved*.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you *will be saved*.

1Co 1:21 ...God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached *to save those who believe*.

1Ti 2:4 (God) who wants all men *to be saved* and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

This is just a small sample of the many scriptures exhorting the unsaved to get saved. My problem with telling the unsaved that they are saved, is that it sends a message that is different from the one they will get from Jesus, Paul, Peter, James and John. Consider the following question:

What is an unbeliever?²

Doctrine of Inclusion preacher: "Saved, reconciled, and seated with Christ."

Jesus: "evildoers," "wicked and adulterous," "condemned," "condemned already," "dead," "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked"

Paul: "unworthy of eternal life," "wicked" "sinner," the "people of this world," "slaves," "dead," "blind," "evil," "lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious," "foolish," "those who shrink back and are destroyed"

Peter: "ungodly, sinner," "unrighteous," "slaves of corruption"

James: "sinners"

John: someone who calls God a liar, "wicked"

² Sources: for Jesus: Mt 7:23, 12:39, Mk 16:16, Joh 3:18, Rev 3:1,17; Paul: Acts 13:46, Rom 4:5, 1 Cor 5:9, 14:24-26, Gal 4:8, Eph 2:1, 2 Cor 4:4, 2 Th 3:2, 1 Ti 1:9-10, Tit 2:3, Heb 10:39; for Peter: 1 Pet 4:18, 2 Pet 2:9,19; for James: Jas 4:8; for John: 1 Jn 5:10, 2 Jn 1:11.

Telling the unsaved that they are saved is a lot like telling the sick that they are healed. And Peter sort of does this! “By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet 2:24). Sickness is a lie opposed to the truth of the cross. But that doesn’t make sickness any less real for those afflicted. Peter’s point is that Jesus has already provided for our complete healing. But you still have to believe it to receive it.

In the New Testament there is no shame in calling a sick person “sick”. “Is any one of you sick? Then put your hand up and we’ll pray for you. By his wounds you have been healed.” Our job is not to say “You’re not really sick.” Our job is to heal them! Similarly, we don’t tell the unsaved that they are saved. Our mission is to represent the One who came to seek and save the lost.

What is all this emphasis on objective vs. subjective realities?

Those who preach inclusion rely heavily on the distinction between objective realities and the subjective experience of those realities. Again, there is a measure of truth in this. God is good whether we believe it or not. His goodness is an objective truth that not everyone experiences. It is also true that our faith does not move God; our faith does not compel God to forgive us (He already did), reconcile us (He already did), or save us (look to Savior). But you can only take these distinctions so far. When you end up with two non-compatible “truths” being true at the same time, you start to sound a little foolish. Consider this example that comes from the website of a leading organization within the inclusion-movement:

Here is a truth that applies objectively to everyone—all are already reconciled to God through Jesus.... How can all be “reconciled” already and yet the invitation go out to “be reconciled”—suggesting a reconciliation yet to occur? The answer is that both are true—these are two aspects of one truth. All are already reconciled in Christ—this is the universal and objective truth—but not all yet embrace and therefore experience their reconciliation with God.

Two aspects of one truth?! This is starting to sound like some of the Eastern philosophies I learned about in Asia. You cannot be reconciled and unreconciled at the same time any more than you can be in fellowship and out of fellowship at the same time. The objective/subjective distinction is not the proper way to frame this issue. This is all about perspective. From God’s side we are reconciled. He holds nothing against us. From our side we may still need to be reconciled. We may be hostile towards God and reluctant to draw near. If so, the objective and subjective truth is that we are not reconciled at all. To be reconciled, *both* parties have to come together.

The message of reconciliation is not, “You are reconciled, you just need to open your eyes and see it.” The message is, “Be reconciled.” The inclusionists don’t like this interpretation because it sounds like a work. It sounds like there is something we must do to be reconciled. Well there is! We have to respond to the Father’s overtures of love. We have to stop resisting the Holy Spirit and hug Him back.

The gospel is true whether we believe it or not. But – and this is an enormous but – the absolute truth of the gospel is worthless unless it is received through faith:

Heb 4:2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.

Grace that is not combined or mixed with faith is value-less. This is not to glorify faith but to acknowledge that grace comes to us only through faith. An objectively true gospel that is not believed is a gospel of no value. An unbelieved gospel is as worthless as an unbanked check.

You were healed?

The closest the Bible comes to drawing a line between objective and subjective realities is this verse:

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

There is an interesting mix of tenses here. “He bore” (past tense), “so that we might die” (present tense), “and live for righteousness” (future tense) and “by His wounds you have been healed” (past tense). Either Peter was really bad at grammar or he understood that in His long-past death Jesus provided everything we need for our lives here and now. We don’t need to ask Jesus to come and die for our sins that we might be forgiven. He already did that. And according to Isaiah 53:4 we don’t need to ask Him to carry our infirmities and sicknesses. He did that too. Jesus provided everything we need for our healing 2000 years ago. As far as God is concerned, the grace that we need to be healed today has already been provided. We just need to receive it by faith.

It would be daft to take this verse, walk into a hospital, declare everyone “healed” and then not heal the sick. I would not point to an AIDS patient and say “You are healed but you’re ignorant.” I would much rather just heal them! An “objective” truth that has no bearing on our subjective reality is a useless truth. If we tell a sick person “those are lying symptoms, they stand opposed to the truth of the cross” but don’t follow this up by ministering healing, what good have we done? Lying symptoms generate real pain. Their sickness may be a false reality, an illusion, but it’s the only reality they’ve got.

And this is why I have a problem with inclusionist theology. Even if it is true, it’s useless. At the end of the day what difference does it make to an unbeliever who has no relationship with the living God? One person says they’re unsaved, another says they were saved, but the fact is they are lost and without hope. They do not know the love of God and they are separated from the life that is in Him. The inclusionist would say “the separation is all in their minds, it’s a false reality.” That may be so, but it’s the only reality they’ve got. The gospel has been of no value to them because it has not been combined with faith. My view is that if an unbeliever walks like a lost person, talks like a lost person, and has no relationship with their heavenly Father like a lost person, then they are lost. The shepherd of their souls longs for them to return to Him and this is why He has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation: “God loves you. Be reconciled.”

Is the whole world righteous? Justified?

Romans 5 talks about being justified “by His blood” (v.9) and being reconciled “while we were sinners” (v.18). A highlight of this chapter is the greater work of Last Adam, which I will address in Part 3, “Last Adam’s Greater Work”. Those who preach inclusion interpret these scriptures as meaning the whole world has been justified and made righteous by Last Adam. The problem with this interpretation is that it says we are righteous apart from faith. This contradicts Paul:

Rom 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Rom 3:21-2 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith of Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

Rom 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Rom 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone that believes.

Paul makes the exact same point about justification – it is a gift that must be received:

Rom 3:25-30 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law... there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

In this one short passage, Paul says the same thing three times: *We are justified by faith*. This was Paul's consistent message:

Act 13:39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Rom 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Gal 2:16 having known also that a man is not declared righteous by works of law, if not through the faith of Jesus Christ, also we in Christ Jesus did believe, that we might be declared righteous by the faith of Christ, and not by works of law, wherefore declared righteous by works of law shall be no flesh.' (YLT)

Gal 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

The inclusionist tells the unrighteous that he is already righteous in the hope of stirring a discovery. Paul, in contrast, would tell the unrighteous that his righteousness is as filthy rags but the gospel reveals another kind of righteousness from God that is received by faith. It is a huge mistake to tell a sinner that they are righteous, justified and saved. Paul never did: "There is no one righteous" and "all have sinned" (Rom 3:10,23). Sinners won't appreciate the good news until they have heard the bad news.

How important is faith?

According to one prominent writer: "Faith is not something we do that gets us connected to God... Faith is not something that we do that moves us from the unforgiven column to the forgiven column... Faith is not something we do that gets us reconciled, justified, included, adopted, redeemed, saved. Jesus Christ has already done all of that." Never mind that Jesus and Paul said things like, "You are saved by faith" (Lk 7:40) and "You are justified by faith" (Rom 3:28) and that we are "heirs by faith" (Rom 4:13-16).

A common theme that you detect in the writings of those who preach inclusion is that faith comes a distant second to grace: It's all about Jesus and His work; it's not about you and your faith. There is an element of truth here: Faith doesn't save us, Jesus saves us. Yet Jesus often said, "Be it according to your faith." As we have seen, the value of the gospel can only be realized through faith. Grace unmixed with faith is worthless.

It is true that faith does not change God. Faith is a positive response to something God has done. But faith changes just about everything else. "The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well: The Lord will raise him up" (Jas 5:15).

Is faith merely a "discovery"?

The prominent writer I mentioned above notes that "the fundamental character of Christian faith is that of discovery." We learn something amazing about God and it takes our breath away leaving us with "hope and peace and assurance." All true! But when we "sell" faith as a discovery or a cure for existential anxiety, we are short-changing our customers. A discovery won't move mountains and dead Lazarus didn't have an anxiety problem. The woman with the issue of blood didn't come to Jesus because she wanted hope, peace and assurance – she wanted *healing*. And she got it! Jesus turned to her and said, "Your faith has healed you" (Mt 9:22). Faith works because Jesus wrote big checks! Faith is not about discovering these checks and saying, "Look how good and generous God is." That's insulting to the One who wrote them. Faith is cashing the checks that Jesus wrote and changing the world.

Zechariah prophesied that mighty mountains would move to the shouts of "Grace! Grace!" But since grace only comes to us through faith (Eph 2:8), you still need faith to move mountains. Thankfully Jesus provides the faith as well. It's there for all who believe.

Discovery sounds passive to me. It sounds an awful lot like faith without works. Paul told the Romans that their faith was being reported all over the world (Rom 1:8). How so? Things were happening in Rome because the believers *believed*. They weren't merely discovering and being filled with peace; they were turning their world right-side up for Jesus. If we

are to live out our faith biblically, then there needs to be the danger that others mistake us for rioters and troublemakers (see Acts 24:5). How are we to heal the sick, drive out demons, and raise the dead if all we're selling are anxiety cures?

Another passive word in the inclusionist lexicon is *receive*. I used to think of receiving in terms of receiving a gift – you hand me a big check and I'll receive it. But to an inclusionist, this sort of receiving looks too much like hard work. Opening the door to Jesus or entering through the narrow gate just smacks of works-based salvation and we can't have that. For them, receiving means to accept or understand something that was already true. "You were already saved. When you realized this you received it." So receiving is simply a change of mind. It's repentance. I'm a big believer in resting so I don't have a problem with this. But the inclusionists are just getting warmed up. They like receiving to be more passive still. I was told it is like "receiving a bullet." You don't even have to do anything to get shot – not even think. On the cross, humanity received the bullet of salvation so to speak. I have to confess, I quite like the image of Jesus with a Tommy-gun with bullets of salvation. But it's not in the Bible. True, Jesus did *forgive* everyone. But there are plenty of forgiven sinners who have rejection salvation.

My problem with the inclusionist take on passive receiving is that it eliminates faith. This becomes clear whenever the subject of the Holy Spirit comes up. Even though Jesus told us to ask for the Holy Spirit (Luk 11:13) and the apostles went around laying hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15, 19:6), the inclusionists teach that all humanity received the Holy Spirit when Jesus did – in the River Jordan. (This sort of makes you wonder what the Holy Spirit was doing inside Herod, Pontius Pilate and the Pharisees while they were plotting to kill the Lord of life.) Apparently you received the Holy Spirit the same way you received that bullet of salvation – with absolutely no faith at all. Or at least no faith on your part. But now here comes a twist. Since most people don't know they received the Holy Spirit 2000 years ago, they need to receive Him again – but this time in a different, more comprehending way. So the inclusionist approach would actually have you receive everything twice. You objectively received the Holy Spirit 2000 years ago, but then you subjectively received the Holy Spirit when you finally discovered Him. What the Holy Spirit was doing inside you for 2000 years waiting to be discovered is anyone's guess.

Are we saved by our faith or His?

This is the \$64,000 question! The inclusionist says, "It is all Jesus from start to finish. Standing on behalf of the human race, it is His faith that saves us all." Again, there is something in this. Under the old covenant you banked on your own faith; under the new we are the beneficiaries of *His* faith. Think about it. God has entrusted us with the Great Commission which shows He has confidence *in us!* This is remarkable! So many Christians are waiting for God to do His thing but He has already given us everything we need through the cross. He, along with creation, waits in earnest expectation for us to be revealed as His mature sons.

Paul said he lived by the "faith of the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). We see Jesus' faith displayed on the cross in that moment when he became sin and lost sight of His loving Father. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The truth is God hadn't forsaken Him, but Jesus was experiencing the alienation of fallen man. In this perceived separation He gave us a most profound display of faith: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." In the natural Jesus felt as though God had forsaken Him. His natural senses told Him that God was not there. But Jesus didn't walk by sight. By faith He committed His spirit into the hands of the Father He couldn't see trusting that God would raise Him up. He bet His life that God would save Him and He did.

Paul desired to be found "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ (Php 3:9, KJV). God doesn't give us His righteousness because we are faithful, but because Jesus is faithful. The New Covenant is anchored on the promises of God the Father to God the Son. Even the faith that we need to access God's grace is *His* faith:

Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

Not only did grace and truth come through Jesus, but so did faith. He is grace personified *and* the author and finisher of our faith. Paul said that His faith is His gift to us (Eph 2:8). So who gets this wonderful gift? Those who believe:

Rom 3:21-2 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith of Jesus Christ to all who believe.

If you don't believe that Christ has made everything available to you, from grace to faith, then you will not benefit from His generosity. Not only will His grace be worthless, but so will His faith. The inclusionist says that all are saved on account of His faith, but faith, like grace, has to be received to be effective. Peter addressed his second epistle to those "who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours" (2 Pet 1:1). Not everyone believes so not everyone receives. When you stand on Jesus you stand on His faith. But reject Jesus through unbelief, and His faith will be as worthless as His grace.

Is faith (on our part) a pre-requisite for salvation?

Not if you believe in the doctrine of inclusion. Since a hallmark of inclusionist thinking is that we were all saved 2000 years ago, faith is seen as a fruit of salvation. How could it be otherwise? How could our faith now precede something that happened before we were born? Thus the idea that we might need faith to get saved is dismissed. But how would an inclusionist account for this verse?

Rom 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

This verse seems to say that faith and confession are prerequisites for salvation. The inclusionist has a big problem with this for it looks like works – we have to confess and believe for God to give us salvation. But the truth is God has already given us salvation at the cross. Faith and confession don't compel Him to give, they enable us to receive. Grace comes through faith. Whatever you think of faith – whether a fruit or a prerequisite – I guarantee that you will not experience grace without it.

Rom 5:1-2 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

How do we gain access or admission into the grace of God? By faith. No faith, no access. Faith is important!

Incidentally, the word "confess" in Romans 10 is sometimes misinterpreted and turned into a confessing work. The word confess (*homologeō*) literally means "to agree with" or "say the same thing as". If you don't agree that Jesus is Lord, then Jesus is not your Lord. If you don't agree that He saved you, then you are not saved. This is not to diminish the work of the cross but to put faith in its proper and important place. As Wommack says in his commentary on Ephesians 2:8, "Without faith, God's grace is wasted and without grace, faith is powerless."³

So is faith a pre-requisite or a fruit of salvation?

According to Jesus, it is both:

John 6:40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (NKJV)

We believe when we have seen (a fruit) and when we believe we have everlasting life (a prerequisite). What is the take-away from all this? *Preach the gospel!* Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ. No matter what you think of faith, no one can believe unless they have heard the good news:

³ http://www.awmi.net/bible/eph_02_08

Rom 10:14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

How do we abuse faith?

There are two ways to get this wrong: First, preach faith as a work and you'll have people worrying, "What if I don't trust God enough? What if my faith is not strong enough?" If this is you, then you need a revelation of the finished work of the cross. You need to be set free from the lie that says we stand on account of our faith. We stand on His grace (Rom 5:2)! Jesus is our Savior! As we have seen, it is actually *His* faith that makes believers righteous (Gal 2:16). Faith from our side does not compel God to act; it merely responds to what He has done and He has done it all.

But the other way to abuse faith is to say that we are saved without it. This is simply unbiblical.

Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

The gospel cannot be both the "power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" and an announcement that you were saved 2000 years ago. The gospel is an announcement that Jesus died to save you and to give you new life.

The remedy to both abuses is the same: Preach the gospel of grace! This gospel and no other is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.⁴

How do grace and faith cooperate?

The grace of God is like a 200GW power station; your faith is like a tiny light switch. Flip the switch and the light goes on. Who made the light? Not you – the power comes from an outside source. If there was no power station you could flip that switch all night long and it would make no difference. This is why faith alone cannot save you. Faith apart from grace leaves you lost and groping in the dark. But the gospel reveals that there is ample power for everyone who chooses to flip the switch. God not only generates the power, He is the one who gave you the switch. He is the one encouraging you to flip it.

The inclusionist will tell you that the light is on whether you flip the switch or not (you are saved), but Paul said grace comes through faith. You've got to believe it to receive it.

Are we "potentially" saved?

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Some look at this and conclude, "We all have the potential to be saved." This is like a red rag to inclusionist bulls. "How can you preach a *potential* gospel? It is a pure and finished gospel." I agree. Paul called it "the gospel of your salvation" not the gospel of potential salvation (Eph 1:13).

We must preach the *finished* work, not the potential work of the cross. To say the gospel reveals a potential salvation is like saying "work remains to be done." The good news is that Jesus did it all! He sat down at the right hand of God because there is nothing left to be done. His saving work is perfectly perfect and completely complete in every respect. But although Jesus' saving work is complete, not everyone is saved (as we have seen).

⁴ The gospel of grace that Paul preached is also known as the gospel of salvation, the gospel of peace, and the gospel of the kingdom. Paul used many labels to describe what he referred to as "my gospel" (2 Cor 11:4, Rom 2:16, 2 Tim 2:8).

“Jesus came to save the entire world. Did He fail?”

Not at all. Jesus has provided for the salvation of the entire world. Since the Greek word for save (*sozo*) includes healing, one might just as easily ask, “Jesus came to heal the entire world – did He fail?” The answer to the second question is identical to the first.

Joh 1:29 Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus took away all sin. It’s all gone.

Heb 10:12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

There is no further sacrifice for sins. Jesus will not come and die again. Once was enough.

Jesus was sent by God on a mission to save the world (Joh 3:17). Was His mission a success? Absolutely! Everyone who wants to be saved can now be saved. You may be the worst sinner on earth but nothing can hinder you from coming to Jesus to receive free grace. But only those who believe in the success of His saving mission will be saved. Jesus bracketed His mission statement with no less than three exhortations to trust Him: “Whoever believes may have eternal life... whoever believes shall not perish... whoever believes in him is not condemned” (Joh 3:15-18). Who is saved? Whoever believes.

What is salvation, really?

The doctrine of inclusion is a deceptively appealing but unbiblical message that minimizes the lostness of the lost and, as a result, diminishes the saving work of the cross. Telling unbelievers that they are already saved, righteous, and in relationship robs the gospel of its power to save those who believe. It does this by promoting a cerebral faith that is little more than an intellectual acceptance of an insurance policy whose main benefit is a ticket to heaven. But the most damaging aspect of this doctrine is that it stymies love. Instead of being invited into union with Christ, unbelievers learn that they are the unwitting participants in an arranged marriage. Jesus is not on the outside waiting to be invited in; He has already entered against their will and married them! It’s a *fait accompli* that you had just better get used to. If unbelievers then exercise their freedom in the only direction left open to them – refusing to participate through unbelief – their husband might yet pursue the eternal equivalent of an honor killing.

Happily, the gospel of grace that Paul *et al.* preached is nothing like this! Jesus has not violated anyone’s will but stands at the door knocking and waiting to be invited in. He will dine with anyone and everyone who accepts Him. For God so loved the world that He sent His Son Jesus to save everyone. He then sent the Holy Spirit to point people to Jesus. Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but enjoy eternal life in union with the Triune God. The life He offers is nothing like the one you were born with for it is *His* life. Jesus wants to live His life of unconditional love, divine favor, and supernatural power through you. To live like this is to experience heaven on earth here and now. It is knowing God – His love, His will, His joy and pleasure – today. And this life is available to all who would say, “Yes, Jesus!” Salvation is not an historical event. It is the present reality of Christ living in me. Now is the time of God’s favor. Today is the day of salvation.

APPENDIX: Indicative list of imperative statements in the New Testament

Accept

- Mar 4:20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."
Joh 5:43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me...
Joh 14:17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.
Joh 17:8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.
Act 2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.
Act 8:14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.
Rom 10:16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"
Rom 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.
1Co 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
2Co 11:4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.
Gal 1:9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!
1Th 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.
1Ti 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.
Jas 1:21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Be baptized

- Mar 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
Act 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
Act 10:48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.
Act 19:5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.
Rom 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
1Co 12:13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
Gal 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
Col 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead
1Pe 3:21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Be born again

- Joh 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
Joh 3:7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'

Believe

- Mar 1:15 The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
Mar 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
Luk 8:12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.
Luk 24:25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
Joh 1:7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.
Joh 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—
Joh 3:15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.
Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life..
Joh 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
Joh 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."
Joh 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.
Joh 6:29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."
Joh 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.
Joh 6:36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.
Joh 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."
Joh 6:47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.
Joh 7:38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."
Joh 9:35 "...Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
Joh 10:26 "...you do not believe because you are not my sheep."
Joh 10:42 And in that place many believed in Jesus.
Joh 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;
Joh 11:26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"
Joh 11:40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"
Joh 12:37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.
Joh 12:42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue;
Joh 12:44 Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.
Joh 12:46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.
Joh 13:19 "...believe that I am He.
Joh 16:8-9 When he 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;
Joh 16:27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.
Joh 16:30-31 "...This makes us believe that you came from God." "You believe at last!" Jesus answered.
Joh 17:8 They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

The Doctrine of Inclusion: Why it Appeals, How it Misleads

- Joh 17:20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,
Joh 17:21 ...May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
Joh 19:35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.
Joh 20:27 ...Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."
Joh 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
Joh 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
Act 4:4 But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.
Act 5:14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.
Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
Act 9:42 This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.
Act 10:43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."
Act 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.
Act 13:39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.
Act 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.
Act 15:7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.
Act 15:11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."
Act 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."
Act 16:34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.
Act 17:12 Many of the Jews believed...
Act 17:34 A few men became followers of Paul and believed...
Act 18:8 Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.
Act 19:4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."
Act 19:9 But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them.
Act 21:20 ...You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed
Act 28:24 Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.
Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
Rom 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,
Rom 4:11 ...He is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.
Rom 4:24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.
Rom 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.
Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
Rom 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.
Rom 10:14 ...how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?
Rom 10:16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"
Rom 13:11 ...our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.
Rom 16:26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—
1Co 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.
Gal 3:5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?
Gal 3:7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.
Gal 3:22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.
Eph 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,
Eph 1:19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.
1Th 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.
2Th 1:10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.
2Th 2:12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.
1Ti 1:16 ...believe on him and receive eternal life.
1Ti 4:10 (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.
2Ti 1:12 ...I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.
Tit 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure...
Heb 4:3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.
Heb 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.
Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
1Pe 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
1Pe 1:21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.
1Pe 2:7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,"
1Jn 3:23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.
1Jn 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.
1Jn 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.
1Jn 5:10 Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.
1Jn 5:12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Confess/call on the name of the Lord

- Act 2:21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'
Act 9:21 All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name?"
Act 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'
Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Rom 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Rom 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Rom 10:14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

1Co 1:2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

Php 2:11 and every tongue may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (YLT)

2Ti 2:19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

Heb 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Eat the living bread

Joh 6:50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.

Joh 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Faith, Have it

Luk 7:50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Rom 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Rom 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Rom 3:26 "...the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

Rom 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Rom 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Rom 4:13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

Rom 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rom 5:2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Rom 9:30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith;

Rom 10:6 But the righteousness that is by faith says...

Gal 2:16 know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Gal 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Gal 5:5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

Php 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Heb 4:2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Obeys the Word

Mat 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Joh 17:6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

Rom 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

1Jn 2:4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Receive Him

Joh 1:11-12 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

Act 26:17-18 I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Rom 1:5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace...

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

1Th 5:9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,

1Pe 1:9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1Jn 2:27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you...

Reconciled, Be

2Co 5:20 ...We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Repent/Turn to God

Mat 3:2 Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Mat 4:17 Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Mat 13:15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

Mat 21:32 ... even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Mar 1:15 The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mar 4:12 ... turn and be forgiven!"

Mar 6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent.

Luk 13:3,5 ... unless you repent, you too will all perish.

The Doctrine of Inclusion: Why it Appeals, How it Misleads

Acts 2:38-39: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Act 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,
Act 9:35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.
Act 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.
Act 14:15 ... We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.
Act 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.
Act 20:21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.
Act 26:17-18 I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'
Act 26:20 ... I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.
Act 28:27 ...turn, and I would heal them.'
2Co 3:16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
1Th 1:9 ...They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,
Jas 5:20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.
1Pe 3:11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.
Rev 2:5 Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.
Rev 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent...
Rev 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.
Rev 16:9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

Submit to God (don't resist Him)

Act 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!
Rom 10:3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.
Heb 3:15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."
Heb 12:9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!
Jas 4:7-8 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you...

Trust in Him

Joh 12:36 Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light...
Joh 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.
Act 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.
Rom 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.
Rom 9:33 As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
Rom 10:11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
Rom 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
1Pe 2:6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
