



# THE SEVIERVILLE SOWER

*Sowing the seed (Luke 8:11) into the hearts of mankind.*

Sevierville Church of Christ | 208 Hicks Drive | Sevierville, TN 37862 | (865) 453-8009 | [seviervillecoc.org](http://seviervillecoc.org)

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## Martin Luther Speaks on “Faith Only” and Baptism

Kyle Butt

One popular belief in many protestant denominations is the idea that God supplies salvation to each and every person based solely on the faith of that person, apart from any action taken by that individual. This idea, often called *sola fide*, says, that a person is saved by faith alone. Any number of quotations demonstrating this doctrine can be cited. In a debate with Thomas Warren in 1953, L.S. Ballard affirmed the position that “the alien sinner is saved the very moment he/she believes that Jesus Christ is the son of God” (Warren and Ballard, 1953). This particular belief is commonly worded like this: “People are saved through Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.”

According to the modern-day advocates of “faith alone” salvation, water baptism cannot be a requisite to salvation, because it is something “more than” faith. While space limitations prevent a thorough investigation of the biblical doctrine of baptism (see Lyons, 2003), it is interesting to note how far the “faith alone” doctrine has drifted from its original form.

The idea of being saved by faith alone is often attributed to Martin Luther. Indeed, he and the other reformers challenged the Catholic Church that sold indulgences and offered a “works-based” type of salvation. Martin Luther often taught that salvation was based on faith alone, and not received based upon a person’s meritorious works. Martin Luther did not, however, take faith alone to mean that mere mental assent to Christ’s deity was sufficient to obtain salvation. In fact, Luther’s idea of faith alone does not conform to the modern-day idea that baptism cannot be required for salvation.

While it is understood that the opinions of men are in no way authoritative when it comes to God’s plan for salvation, it is nonetheless interesting to note that Martin Luther believed wholeheartedly in the necessity of baptism as a requisite for salvation. In his *Large Catechism*, Luther wrote:

[I] affirm that Baptism is no human trifle, but that it was established by God Himself. Moreover, He earnestly and solemnly commanded that we must be baptized or we shall not be saved. No one is to think that it is an optional matter like putting on a red coat. It is of greatest importance that we hold Baptism in high esteem as something splendid and glorious. The reason why we are striving and battling so strenuously for this view of Baptism is that the world nowadays is full of sects that loudly proclaim that Baptism is merely an external form and that external forms are useless.... Although Baptism is indeed performed by human hands, yet it is truly God’s own action (1978, pp. 98-99).

From Luther’s comments about baptism, it is obvious that he viewed water baptism as essential for salvation. Many of the protestant denominations that attribute their ideas about “faith only” to Martin Luther have not been taught that Luther’s concept of faith alone was not in opposition to works of God (like baptism

and repentance), but in opposition to meritorious works by which a person believes that he or she “earns” salvation.

What, then, would Martin Luther say to those today who teach that “faith alone” excludes baptism? Listen to his words pertaining to this teaching:

But our know-it-alls, the new spirit people, claim that faith alone saves and that human works and outward forms contribute nothing to this. We answer: It is of course true that nothing in us does it except faith, as we shall hear later. But these blind leaders of the blind refuse to see that faith must have something in which it believes, that is, something it clings to, something on which to plant its feet and into which to sink its roots. Thus faith clings to the water and believes Baptism to be something in which there is pure salvation and life, not through the water, as I have emphasized often enough, but because God’s name is joined to it.... If follows from this that whoever rejects Baptism rejects God’s word, faith, and the Christ who directs us to Baptism and binds us to it (1978, pp. 101-102).

Martin Luther was a man. He made many mistakes and believed things about the Bible that were not true. It should be noted, however, that the “faith only” doctrine attributed so often to him has been misrepresented on a grand scale. Martin Luther’s words are unambiguous and clear. His “faith only” doctrine did not exclude baptism as necessary for salvation. Could it be the case that those who loudly tout the “faith only” mantra have not thoroughly investigated the works of the man to whom the doctrine is so often attributed?

The Bible does teach that those who are being saved are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). It does not, however, teach that a person is saved “by faith alone” without any further acts of obedience. Even Martin Luther recognized that water baptism is not a meritorious work that earns a person salvation. On the other hand, it is an obedient act required by God in order for people to obtain salvation.

### REFERENCES

Luther, Martin (1978), *Luther’s Large Catechism*, (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia).

Lyons, Eric (2003), “The Bible’s Teaching on Baptism: Contradictory or Complimentary,” [On-line], URL: <https://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/617>.

Warren, Thomas B. and L.S. Ballard (1953), *The Warren-Ballard Debate*, (Moore, OK: National Christian Press).

Article published by Apologetics Press at:

<https://apologeticspress.org/martin-luther-speaks-on-faith-only-and-baptism-958/>

## Prayer Requests & Announcements

Please pray for brother Dave Barber who has recently fallen numerous times, struck his head, and has received stitches.

Remember in prayer Betty Simms, Scott's mother, who is recovering from back surgery.

Penny Douglas, John and Helen Carr's niece, is recovering from a recent stroke.

Crissy Chambers recently met with her surgeon and is scheduled to have her gall bladder removed on March 30 at LeConte.

Remember our sister Dawn Sutton in prayer as she has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She had an MRI and will meet with her doctor regarding results.

Andy Butts continues his recovery from double knee replacement surgery. He is receiving physical therapy three days per week and is coping with the pain and challenges of recovery.

Lyn Morris has been having problems with significant drops in her blood sugar. Also, her brother, Jim Cochran, fell recently and broke his hip and the socket.

Remember in prayer our sister Chris Bender who has been having health issues lately. She had a biopsy recently and saw a surgeon to have tumors removed. She is still awaiting results.

Continue to pray for the Christians in Ukraine.

### Continue to Remember...

Chris Bender, John and Helen Carr, Connie Duncan, Dennis and Marty Danilchuk, Lindsey Johnson, Shirley McKnight, Sue Moore, Lyn Morris, Paul and Ellen Ostrander, Joanne Roark, Shirley Yeager, Becky Duncan (Joe and Connie's daughter-in-law), Belinda Lang (Kevin's aunt), Adam Lane (son-in-law of Vickie Price), Harlie McClung (John and Helen Carr's 12 year-old great-granddaughter), Anita Ogle (Sherry Simms' friend), Casie Rains (friend of the Hansens), Paul Rolan (Mary Kate's brother), Frankie Simms (Scott Simms' father), Wayne Tart (Tammie Fish's brother).

**Ladies' class Thursdays at 6:15 at the Hansen's house**

**Monthly afternoon song service: Today**

**Fellowship lunch: April 3**

**Fellowship night: April 15, 6:30**

## Evangelism Materials

Extra supplies for our evangelism work are freely available in the supply room to our members. Instructional books, DVDs, and Bible study materials are available. We also have a variety of cards for our Compassion Card work.

## Weekly Assemblies

**Sunday:** Bible Study ..... 9 a.m.  
Worship ..... 10 a.m.  
Worship ..... 1 p.m.  
**Wednesday:** Bible Class ..... 7 p.m.

## If I Could Just Start Over!

*Gary C. Hampton*

Most people have wished for a "do-over," but once the mistake is made, we have to learn to live with it. Those reaching the point of knowing the difference between right and wrong will choose to do wrong at times (Romans 3:10, 23).

The good news is that Jesus made it possible for us to be delivered from eternal death (Romans 7:24-25). Anyone can be a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). His blood was shed for man's redemption (Ephesians 1:7). He shed it in His death on the cross (John 19:31-35).

Paul explained how one can reach Christ's death and the cleansing blood found there. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

Those baptized into Christ have been cleansed from their past sins (Acts 2:38), but they still need to be on guard against temptation (James 1:13-15). Denying that we have any problem with sin is really not an option. John said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Thankfully, the Father has provided the solution. "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Do not waste your time claiming to be perfect. Turn to Jesus, be washed in His blood and have all of your old sins removed (Acts 2:38). Stay on guard against sin, knowing that you can confess your sins in the assurance that God is faithful to forgive (1 John 1:9). He has lovingly provided the means for starting over.

### Elders

Randy Hansen, Robert Moore, Kevin Ruiz, and Jerry Sutton

### Deacon

Lenwood Johnson (finance)

### Preacher

Kevin Ruiz