

Salvation: Confusing the Root with the Fruit -C.H. Mackintosh

C. H. Mackintosh was a Brethren writer who lived in the 1800s. He had remarkable insight into the Word of God. However, the language of his day can be a bit challenging for modern readers to follow. The following is a quote from Mackintosh that has been reworded for a contemporary audience.

Contrasting the Fruit and the Root.

“The believer’s daily walk should flow naturally from the privilege of their position in Christ, not from pressure to keep vows, rules, or resolutions. Our conduct is the proper fruit of knowing and enjoying our standing in Him by faith, not the result of striving to earn or maintain that standing by works. Every true believer is part of the Bride of Christ, and therefore owes Him the love and devotion fitting for that relationship. Yet the relationship itself is not earned by our affections; rather, our affections grow out of the relationship that is already ours in Christ.” – C.H. Mackintosh

Confusing the Fruit with the Root

Commitment Salvation teaches that saving faith must include personal allegiance, surrender, or obedience, making salvation dependent on the believer’s dedication. By contrast, God’s Word affirms that salvation is the free gift of God, received by faith alone in Christ alone. Obedience and allegiance are the fruits of salvation, not conditions for it.

Contrasting Faith Alone and Commitment Salvation

Faith Alone (sola fide) stands in direct contrast to *Commitment Salvation*, which ties salvation to personal surrender or ongoing dedication:

1. Basis of Relationship

- *Faith Alone*: Union with Christ is established by grace through faith alone. Works and affections flow from this union.
- *Commitment Salvation*: Suggests that surrender, obedience, or perseverance are required to secure or validate salvation.

2. Fruit vs. Root

- *Faith Alone*: Good works and devotion are the **fruit** of salvation.
- *Commitment Salvation*: Often treats works as part of the **root** of salvation—evidence required to prove one’s standing.

3. Motivation for Obedience

- *Faith Alone*: Obedience springs from joy and realized privilege.
- *Commitment Salvation*: Obedience is pressured by the fear that without it, salvation might not be genuine.

Faith Alone presents a gospel where relationship comes first, and fruit follows naturally. *Commitment Salvation* reverses that order by demanding fruit not only as proof of the relationship, but also as a prerequisite for entering it in the first place.

Illustration

Picture a fruit tree. Its roots go deep into the soil, drawing life and nourishment. The fruit on the branches doesn't make the tree alive—it simply shows that the tree already has life in it. That's the way grace works. Our relationship with Christ is the root; obedience is the fruit. Mackintosh reminds us that when the root is secure, the fruit normally follows in time. But *Commitment Salvation* flips it around. It demands fruit first, as if apples could somehow create roots. That isn't grace—that's gardening in reverse.