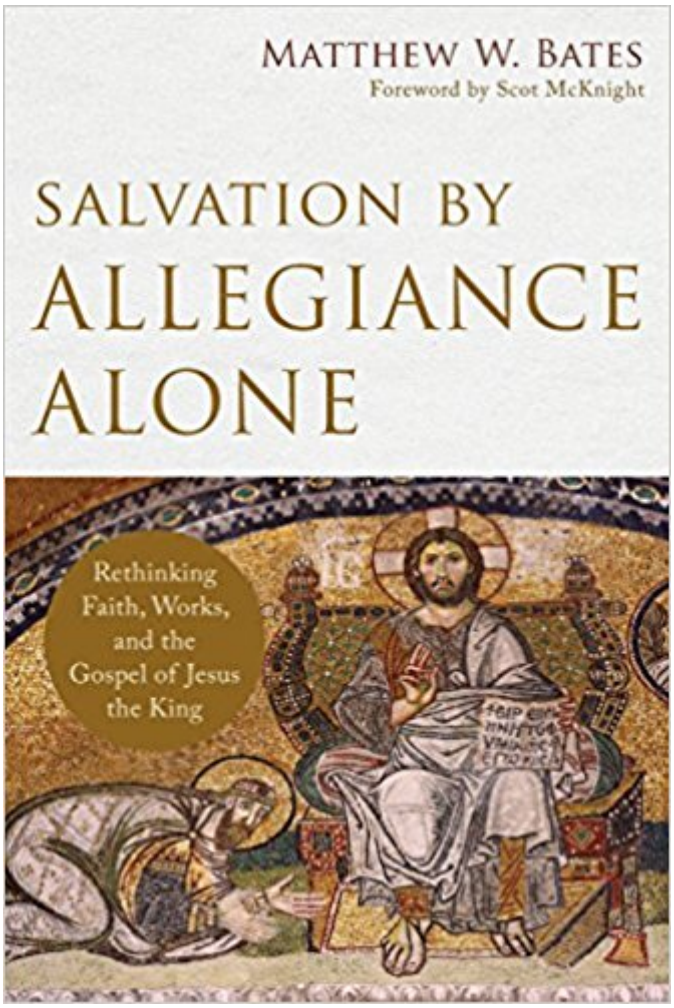
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Salvation By Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, And The Gospel Of Jesus The King



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Synopsis

We are saved by faith when we trust that Jesus died for our sins. This is the gospel, or so we are taught. But what is faith? And does this accurately summarize the gospel? Because faith is frequently misunderstood and the climax of the gospel misidentified, the gospel's full power remains untapped. While offering a fresh proposal for what faith means within a biblical theology of salvation, Matthew Bates presses the church toward a new precision: we are saved solely by allegiance to Jesus the king. Instead of faith alone, Christians must speak about salvation by allegiance alone. The book includes discussion questions for students, pastors, and church groups and a foreword by Scot McKnight.

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Customer Reviews

A "bold, provocative book""In this well-argued book, Matthew Bates recovers a deeper sense of what the act of faith consists of as it is depicted in Scripture.Ã Â He wisely observes that the story of the rich young ruler in the Synoptic Gospels presumes that salvation depends on certain human actions.Ã Â How those actions are related to salvation by faith alone is a central question raised by this book and elegantly answered."--Gary Anderson, University of Notre Dame"In this bold, provocative book, Matthew Bates challenges Christians of all traditions to reexamine basic assumptions about the gospel, grace, the nature of salvation, and the meaning of 'faith.' His argument for saving faith as embodied, enacted allegiance is rooted in solid scholarship and presented with both zeal for the kingdom and concern for the church. This is a much-needed

corrective to many misunderstandings."--MichaelÃ Â J. Gorman, St. Mary's Seminary and University"Matthew Bates argues that faith or believing is not mere assent, not easy believism, but covenantal loyalty to the God who saves his people through the Lord Jesus Christ. Bates forces us to rethink the meaning of faith, the gospel, and works with a view to demonstrating their significance for true Christian discipleship. This will be a controversial book, but perhaps it is the controversy we need!"--MichaelÃ Â F. Bird, Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia"Bates makes a powerful argument that the New Testament writings find their climax in their portrait of Christ as the enthroned king. The right response to this king is not simply trust or intellectual assent but rather wholehearted allegiance. Bates's reframing of faith, works, and the gospel is a necessary correction to prevalent distortions of Jesus's gospel. This is an important argument written by a creative, careful, and trustworthy biblical interpreter."--Joshua Jipp, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School"[An] outstanding book. . . . The superficiality of American evangelicalism's gospel-obsession with security and assurance has led me at times to wonder if we should not teach justification by discipleship. Or justification by faithfulness. But Matthew Bates has landed on a beautiful and biblically sound term: allegiance."--Scot McKnight, Northern Seminary (from the foreword)

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They say you can't judge a book by its cover. And I suppose that's usually true. But there are moments when a book's title seems to leap out at you. Seeing 'Salvation by Allegiance Alone' on 's 'Recommended Reads' list was one of those moments.I immediately knew, by the title and subtitle alone (Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King), that this would not only be a book that I'd enjoy - it would be a book I could have written. And after finishing it, I can only confirm my initial thoughts. Matthew Bates' message here is exactly what the Church needs.For too long, we've been satisfied with a gospel that is less than gospel. We've assumed that scripture was written to us rather than for us. We've demanded answers to questions the Bible doesn't even address. And we have been left with a nice story that fits perfectly in our individualistic culture: Jesus died on the cross so my sins can be forgiven and I can go to heaven when I die. And all I have to do is agree with the statement, 'Jesus died for my sins.'We've traded bold, public confessions of 'Jesus is Lord!' for a hand quietly raised when all eyes are closed and all heads are bowed.May that gospel-that-is-no-gospel die a speedy death!And may it be replaced with

the robust, world-transforming, Kingdom-proclaiming, Jesus-Is-Lord-Gospel that Scripture reveals and Matthew Bates sketches in Salvation by Allegiance Alone.If you're unfamiliar with Bates (as I was), you may be interested in knowing a little more about him. He doesn't accept any particular theological label (neither Calvinist nor Arminian, Catholic nor Orthodox). And he draws from a variety of scholars and sources (both N.T. Wright and John Piper are referenced, with agreement, in the footnotes). And though there are places where he sounds New-Perspectives-On-Paulish, he doesn't adhere to everything that people associate with that group (but who does, right? It's really too broad a label to be of much use). For example, he disagrees with Wright's interpretation of 'the righteousness of God' as 'covenant faithfulness.'Bates also reaches his hands out - full of olive branches - everywhere he can, by noting areas of agreement with traditional Protestant and Catholic theology. This is something I have a great deal of respect for. Error is seldom pure. It usually comes, like a poison, mixed with truth. Too often, we see an error and then assume that the opposite must be true rather than teasing out any truth that may lie under the surface.Bates is careful to tease out truth wherever he finds it.With that said, those Christians who are committed to a traditional reading of the text will have a hard time with what Bates writes here. He shakes things up. But even if you know you're going to disagree, I'd encourage you to read it anyway. If nothing else, he'll force you to think through more clearly what you believe - as well as why.So, what is Bates' argument?He begins, like Inigo Montoya in the Princess Bride, by telling us that though we keep using that word, faith, he doesn't think it means what we think it means. We have, in Bates' view, reduced the idea of faith down to mere mental assent. As if nodding my head after someone asks, "Do you believe Jesus died for your sins?" is all Paul had in mind when he said, "If you...believe in your heart that God raised Him out from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). This is, in my opinion, one of the strongest parts of the book.Bates marshals all of the ancient evidence available - Scripture and secular sources alike - to paint a more robust picture of faith. Faith isn't the opposite of good works. It isn't mere intellectual agreement. It isn't a positive attitude. Faith - especially in its saving form - is more akin to our modern idea of allegiance. One of the most powerful evidence of this, in my mind, is a story Bates quotes from Josephus' autobiography. Josephus, a general at the time, encountered a rebel leader whom he told "repent and believe in me" - using almost identical language to Jesus. And this isn't the only example of 'belief' or 'faith' referring to fidelity. There are dozens of others.Bates argues that the idea of pistis, the Greek word normally translated 'faith', includes three aspects: "intellectual agreement", a "confession of loyalty", and "embodied fidelity." This understanding is desperately needed in churches where faith has been simplified down to 'agreement.' Honestly, I felt like this part of the book alone is worth the price. If

we’re going to overcome the idea of ’cheap grace’ that has pervaded the church over the past century, we’re going to have to seek a fuller picture of faith.Bates also spends a sizable amount of time dealing with the question: what is the gospel?Here, he follows very much in line with N.T. Wright. The gospel is the story of Jesus’ incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and enthronement. In other words, the gospel is a cosmic story that God calls us to enter. It isn’t three-steps-to-salvation or the Romans Road. It’s all about Jesus.Just as contemporary Christianity has flattened its understanding of faith, it’s done the same thing to the Gospel. It’s simplified and personalized it to the point that it barely reflects the truth behind it. Bates does an admirable job at arguing that Jesus’ enthronement as King is central to the gospel - from Matthew through Revelation. Sadly, this central aspect has been largely left behind for many modern Christians. Today, it’s all about Jesus’ death on the cross.Don’t get me (or Bates) wrong, Jesus’ death is hugely important. But it would be just another death without his resurrection and enthronement. If we’re going to accurately proclaim the Gospel, we must proclaim the whole Gospel.I was also happy to see that Bates included a whole chapter of common questions he gets when explaining his understanding of faith as allegiance. Unfortunately, some of his explanations only made me want to ask him more questions. Especially when discussing assurance and the place of works in the Christian life. Nevertheless, it’s a good start.Though again, if you’ve been reared in traditional Protestant theology, you’ll find plenty to disagree with here. Bates argues that we are judged based on our works (though to be fair, so does Paul - see Romans 2:5-8). He adeptly argues that Paul was not against works per se, but works as a system of salvation. I agree with Bates here. You may or may not.The idea of faith as allegiance is everywhere in the first five chapters. The next two, one focusing on ’heaven’ and the other on ’the image of God’, seem less directly involved in the allegiance discussion - though they are nonetheless excellent. Basically, Bates argues that our eternal home will be the new heaven and new earth; and the image of God is not something we have but something we are. If these ideas seem new to you, all I can say is read these two chapters. They’re a great summary of a needed theological course-correction within much of evangelicalism.The eighth chapter focuses on how ’faith as allegiance’ fits into the Biblical understanding of justification. I love the way he argues that trying to force scripture to give us an ’order of salvation’ is an absurd endeavor. I happen to agree. The New Testament authors (and the Old Testament authors for that matter) were not systematic theologians. They were writing practical documents, not theoretical ones. Again, this is something that modern Christians - especially more theologically inclined ones - need to hear.For Bates, justification is rooted firmly in the idea of union-with-Christ. He deviates from the Calvinistic view of individual predestination (though he leaves the door open for its possibility) and instead points to a

corporate view of election. God chose those who are in Christ - though they can enter or leave that union as an employee might join or leave a particular company. As long as one is in union with Christ, he is justified. In this, he commends both Catholics and Protestants for important contributions to a biblical understanding of justification. Though he also critiques both groups.He ends the book with a chapter on making the idea of 'faith as allegiance' practical. This is something that more theological books need to include. Though Bates doesn't expand nearly as much as I would have liked. He basically argues that we need to proclaim the Gospel as the full story it is and call people to discipleship - not just a sinner's prayer. Finally, he closes with a recommendation that I wholeheartedly endorse: making the Apostle's Creed a regular part of worship.I could say so much more about this book. I loved it.With that said, I feel like the chapters were a little out-of-order. They didn't flow as naturally into each other as they could have. For example, chapter eight should have been chapter five and everything else should have been pushed back.Likewise, his view of assurance felt flimsy to me though I think my disagreement has more to do with his wording than anything else.Ultimately, this is a book you'll either love or hate. If you believe we need to proclaim a more robust, Biblical Gospel - if you believe faith includes more than merely saying "I do" - if you believe Jesus is calling us to faith and faithfulness - if you like the phrase 'King Jesus' - you'll find much to love about this book.But...if your feet are firmly planted in the concrete of Reformed (or any other) tradition, you'll probably want to throw the book down and scream from time to time. But that's okay. Use it as an opportunity to return to scripture and judge your views - and Bates's - by God's revelation.May we all seek THE Gospel. And accept no imitations.

Perhaps there is no other word tossed around in Christian circles more than the term "faith." This is especially true when discussing matters of salvation - what is saving "faith"? Every Christian has a working definition, whether they've reflected on it or not.In this book, Matthew Bates presses readers to understand that the Greek terms "pistis" and "pisteuo" in the New Testament are best understood within the contemporary English concept of "allegiance." This is because the traditional term "faith" has come to be misconstrued by most Christians. In fact, he goes so far as to drop this bombshell in the opening pages: "English-speaking Christian leaders should entirely cease to speak of 'salvation by faith' or of 'faith in Jesus' or 'believing in Christ' when summarizing Christian salvation. For the sake of the gospel we need to revise our vocabulary" (p. 3).What follows is a tour de force in the arena of biblical theology. Bates devotes most of his energy to examining Paul's letters, although he also musters evidence from the remainder of the New Testament. The first half of the book deconstructs inadequate understandings of faith and then reconstructs a firmer

understanding. Bates contends that saving faith/allegiance includes three dimensions: 1) intellectual agreement with the content of the gospel, the culmination of which is Jesus' enthronement as king; 2) confession of loyalty to Jesus in recognition of his reign; and 3) embodied fidelity as a citizen of Jesus' realm (i.e., actually living in a way that reflects loyalty to Jesus). Bates also tackles many of the potential objections that some might make against his proposal. The second half of the book explores the implications of "allegiance" in four related areas: eschatology, humans as the "image of God," justification/righteousness, and Christian living.While I might take issue with some of Bates' minor claims, I find his overall thesis about "allegiance" to be utterly compelling. It has the potential to re-orient the church in a direction that is truer to the message of Scripture. Highly recommended to pastors, students, and any Christian who wants a better understanding of the New Testament's teaching on what is entailed by "faith" in Jesus.

Excellent book. Dr. Bates does a masterful job bring together the role of "faith" and "works" in the life of the believer. The interplay of faith and works have divided theologians and laymen for centuries leading some to conveniently ignore some texts altogether and others to contrive silly exegesis. Bates's synthesis goes a long way in understanding how God's grace and human response work together under the banner of "allegiance."I've found myself again and again saying, "Allegiance just makes sense! Of course!" I strongly urge students of biblical theology to read this important book.

Thoroughly enjoyed this book! Bates has convinced me of his thesis that the Greek words usually translated as 'faith' and 'belief' are often better understood as meaning loyalty/allegiance (esp. in salvation contexts). He does a good job of addressing some of the challenges this raises, especially questions around faith and works. I'll definitely be re-reading that section!I love how he emphasises Christ's enthronement as being a key (and often forgotten) part of the gospel and it makes a lot of sense that the natural response to the gospel is allegiance to King Jesus.I also highly recommend Michael Bird's interview with Bates on the Euangelion blog for a taste of what you can expect in this book.

This is by far the most biblically supported view of how salvation is imputed to humanity and what is required to be in right standing with God. Matthew paints a beautiful Mosaic of how biblical "faith" is to be understood and how "works" should be understood in relation to the salvation topic.

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