

91. GOOD WORKS or KEEPING THE LAW DOES NOT SAVE US

There are basically only two religions in the world today. These represent two different ideas as to how we gain acceptance with God and how we get into heaven. One is right. The other is wrong. These are:

I. GOOD WORKS. The idea that if I am **good enough then God will accept me into heaven**(wrong).

The problems with this view are that:

1. How good do I have to be? Where is the cut off point that determines entry to heaven?
2. If I can get into heaven by my good works, then **why did Christ die?**
3. How do you judge **how much salvation** each good work buys you?
4. If we have to earn our salvation, there is always that feeling of **guilt**, because maybe we haven't done enough good works to earn salvation.
5. If we are hoping to be saved by our good works, **then we could lose our salvation** by not keeping up the good works. This leads to **uncertainty**. We can never be sure of going to heaven as long as we trust in our good works.
6. Trusting in our good works leads to **fear** of missing heaven.
7. It leads to a wrong comparison. People say "I am a good person." They are comparing themselves with sinful man. We should compare ourselves with God. Then we appear as big sinners.
8. If we could be saved by our good works then, **we could boast**. Do you think God would devise a system of salvation that allowed man to boast?
9. It causes some people to **give up trying to be good**, so they sin as much as they want.
10. Does "man save man" or does "God save man"?
11. It leads to a religion of **self denial** to earn salvation. God has given us richly in all things to enjoy.

Religious man likes to think that his good works can save him because:

1. It keeps people under the control of religious leaders, because people fear that if they stop coming to church, they will go to hell.
2. People like to feel that they have worked for their salvation and that they deserve it. They think "I earn everything else in life by hard work, why not my salvation?"
3. Man likes to make the rules himself, and does not like God telling him what to do. Sinful man does not want God to get the glory for saving him.

99% of the world's religions are religions of good works to earn salvation. Examples include: Roman Catholicism, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Hinduism to name a few.

II. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS MY SIN PAYMENT. (The right way).

This begins with the idea that I am a sinner, that I have broken God's laws, and that compared to God I am not a good person, but a self centred sinner.

God's law that I have broken condemns me to hell. The good news is that Jesus Christ on the cross had all my sins laid on him, so that Jesus Christ took the full punishment for all my past, present and future sins that I deserved in hell forever. He thus became the Saviour of all people. We are now responsible to receive or call on Christ to be our Saviour from sin. When we do this Christ saves us and gives us the free gift of eternal life.

The benefits of Christ saving us instead of our works saving us are:

1. We can be **100% sure** of going to heaven because Christ is 100% responsible for saving us and for keeping us saved.

2. We can concentrate on **servicing God in joy**, rather than in fear of trying to earn our entrance ticket to heaven.
3. We know that we will **meet** our saved **loved ones** in heaven.
4. We **rest** in God's **acceptance** of us because of Christ.
5. It releases us from the **bondage of fear** of trusting a man made organization to get us into heaven.
6. It leads us to **develop a loving relationship** with Christ as our Saviour, Friend and God, rather than Mary.
7. It leads us to base our beliefs for living on the **Bible**, not on some man made organization.

Let us study some Bible passages teaching that "good works don't save us".

1. Knowing that a man is:
 - a) not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ;
 - b) even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law;
 - c) for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Galatians 2:16.
2. If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is **dead in vain**. Galatians 2:21.
3. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of **faith**? Galatians 3:2.
4. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Galatians 3:6.
5. Know ye therefore that they which are of **faith**, the same are the **children of Abraham**. Gal. 3:7.
6. The scripture foreseeing that God would **justify the heathen through faith**. Galatians 3:8.
7. So then they which be **of faith** are **blessed** with faithful Abraham. Galatians 3:9.
8. For as many as are of the **works of the law** are under the curse. Galatians 3:10.
9. For it is written, **Cursed is everyone** that **continues not** in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Galatians 3:10.
10. But that **no man** is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident. Galatians 3:11.
11. The just shall live by faith. Galatians 3:11.
12. Christ has **redeemed us** from the **curse of the law**, being made a curse for us. Galatians 3:13.
13. That we might receive the **promise of the Spirit through faith**. Galatians 3:14.
14. If there had been a **law** given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. This teaches that no law gave eternal life. Galatians 3:21.
15. The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the **promise by faith of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that **believe**. Galatians 3:22.
16. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, **shut up** into the **faith** which should afterwards be revealed. Galatians 3:23.
This means that we were shut up in the prison of the law until salvation by faith in Christ came.
17. The **law** was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that **we** might be **justified by faith**. Galatians 3:24.
18. But after that faith is come, **we are no longer under a schoolmaster**. Galatians 3:25.
We are not under the schoolmaster of the Mosaic law.
19. For ye are **all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus**. Galatians 3:26.
20. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? Galatians 4:21.
21. If ye be **circumcised**, Christ shall profit you nothing. Galatians 5:2.

This means that if you are trusting your circumcision to save you, or your good works, or your baptism, or your sacraments, or your church to save you, then Christ has not saved you. You are still lost and going to hell.

22. I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Galatians 5:3
This means that if you trust your works to save you, then you can only be saved by always keeping all the whole law, which no one can do. Therefore, those trusting their works are heading to hell.
23. Christ is become of **no effect unto you**, whosoever of you are justified by the law. Galatians 5:4.
24. the hope of **righteousness by faith**. Galatians 5:5.
25. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision: **but faith** which worketh by love. Galatians 6:15; 5:6.
26. In whom also after that **ye believed, ye were sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise. Ephesians 1:13
27. For **by grace** are ye saved **through faith**;
i) and that **not of yourselves**;
ii) it is the **gift of God**:
iii) **not of works**, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8,9.

Four times we are told here that we are not saved by works, but by faith.

Question: Where then do good works come in?

Answer: Good works come **after salvation** to show our gratitude to God in love for saving us.

"For we are his workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10.



28. That Christ may dwell in your hearts **by faith**. Ephesians 3:17.
29. And be found in Christ, **not having mine own righteousness**, which is of the **law**, but that which is of the **faith of Christ**, the **righteousness** which is **of God by faith**. Philippians 3:9.
30. **Not by works** of righteousness which **we have done**, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Titus 3:5.
31. Therefore **by the deeds of the law** there shall **no flesh be justified** in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20.
32. The righteousness of God **without the law** is manifested. Romans 3:21. (Romans 3:22.)
33. The righteousness of God which is **by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe.
34. Being **justified freely** by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ...a **propitiation** (forgiveness and favour) **through faith** in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins. Romans 3:24,25.
35. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? **of works? NO:** but by the law of **faith**. Romans 3:27.
36. Therefore, we conclude that a man is **justified by faith without the deeds of the law**. Romans 3:28
37. One God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through **faith**. Rom. 3:30

Question: Does salvation by faith and not by works mean that we can go out and sin as we wish?

A: Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. Rom. 3:31

The law is now written on the believer's heart, so that we obey the law of the Spirit of life from an inward motivation.

38. If Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. Romans 4:2.
39. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Romans 4:3.
40. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his **faith** is counted for righteousness. Romans 4:5.
41. David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes righteousness without works. Romans 4:6.
42. **Faith** was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in **uncircumcision**. Romans 4:9,10.
- Note:** Abraham was saved by faith before he was circumcised. This teaches us that we are saved by faith before baptism, good works, sacraments or any human work.
43. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 5:1
- Note:** Peace with God comes by faith in Christ, not by good works.
44. The Gentiles have attained to righteousness which is of **faith**. But Israel has not attained to righteousness. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, butby the works of the law. Romans 9:30-32.
45. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace. Romans 11:6.
- Note:** If you think you are saved by your own works, then you miss God's grace.
46. Who hath saved us not according to our works. 11 Timothy 1:9.
47. Q: What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?
A: Jesus this is the work of God, that ye **believe** on him whom he hath sent. John 6:28,29.
48. i) He said to the woman, Thy **faith** hath saved thee; go in peace. Luke 7:50.
ii) When he saw their **faith**, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. Luke 5:20.
iii) Purifying their hearts by **faith**. Acts 15:9.
iv) That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by **faith** that is in me. Acts 26:18.
v) Jesus said unto him (Bartimaeus), Receive thy sight: thy **faith** hath saved thee. Luke 18:42.
vi) Daughter, thy **faith** hath made thee whole; go in peace. Mark 5:34.
vii) To a repentant leper: "thy **faith** hath made thee whole." Luke 17:19.
49. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever **believeth in him** shall receive remission of sins. Acts 10:43.
50. By him **all that believe** are **justified from all things**, from **which ye could not be justified** by the **law of Moses**. Acts 13:39.
- Note:** If the law of Moses could not justify anybody, how can keeping the laws of the Catholic Church, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Baptism, sacraments, or good works justify you?

OBJECTION: Question: "But doesn't James 2:14-26 teach that works save us?" **Ans:** No, because:

1. James in 2:10,11 says that even if we have kept the whole law always showing good works every day, except in one act of sin, we are guilty of

breaking all the law. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

2. Wherever you have true believers, you have counterfeit believers. Eg: Neither the priest or the Levite who had religious training, helped the dying man. Matt.7:21, Luke 10:25-37
3. A poor believer, hungry and without proper clothing entered a church. A person with dead faith saw the visitor in need, yet did nothing to meet his needs. He just said a few pious words: "Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled". James 2:1-5,16.

Note: Each of these four people had dead faith. Each would defend the idea that he had faith, yet neither demonstrated that faith in loving works.

To help a needy person is an expression of love, and faith works by love. Galatians 5:6.

The question in James 2:14: "Can faith save him?" is alternatively translated: "Can that kind of faith save him?" What kind of faith? The faith that is never shown by practical works. The answer is "NO". Any declaration of faith that does not result in a changed life and good works is a false declaration. That kind of faith is dead faith.

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:17.

True saving faith always produces works. God sees our faith in Christ as Saviour, then he saves us.

Man cannot see faith. Man can only see our works as the fruit of salvation.

<p>Faith is the Godward condition of salvation. Works is the manward evidence of salvation.</p>

James illustrates his point with two Old Testament characters:

1. **Abraham.** "Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" James 2:21.
 - a) Abraham was justified **before God** by age 85. "He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15:6; 16:16.
 - b) Abraham was justified **before man** by age 137, when he offered up Isaac upon the altar. Genesis 22:1-14.
2. **Rahab.** "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" James 2:25.
 - a) Rahab was justified **before God** (salvation) when she confessed with her mouth Jehovah to be God.
"For the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." Joshua 2:11,1-14
 - b) Rahab was justified **before man** (service) when she received and sent the messengers out another way. "Then she let them down by a cord through the window." Joshua 2:15,16.

Conclusion:

1. Forsake trusting your works to save you, and receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour from sin today.
2. Leave any church that teaches a gospel of good works for salvation. God's curse is on such a church or religion. Galatians 1:6-9.