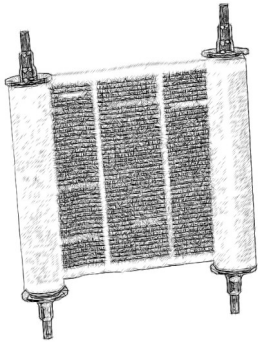


Only Faith

Bill Brinkworth

To early believers, obeying the Old Testament laws was part of their life and upbringing. If they were Jews, the commandments were drilled into them much of their life. Those laws were even a part of the gentile's upbringing. The morality of those laws had done what God introduced them for, to teach many what was right and wrong (Gal. 3:24). Even today, with few even attending church or reading their Bible, the law has still done its work in many hearts. It still convicts many to know what is right and what is not.

When Christianity started spreading, its message was different. Instead of the strict enforcement of the law, its message had much to do with "faith." The people had to believe something that was not written at the time, was talked negatively about in their temples, and could not be seen or proven. It was an "invisible" trust on their part.



Faith was an old concept, but many never realized it was part of Old Testament lives. When it was emphasized in the early church teachings, there were some questions and doubts. The Jews did not quite realize that much of what Abraham (Gal. 3:9), Moses, and other Old Testament figures did was done by faith on their part. Those saints had to step out and follow God without clear direction or signs. Their faith that the Almighty would deliver or help them allowed them to get closer to God and to be used by Him.

The early Christians had to step out and trust what Jesus said and commanded them to do. They had to believe that His words were also God's commandments. With the pull of what they used to do for hundreds of years, by sight and obedience to the law, they now had to understand that it was more important to trust Jesus' finished work on the cross (Gal. 3:26).

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"It is either grace or works. The Bible says it is only God's grace that saves anyone."

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The Bible View

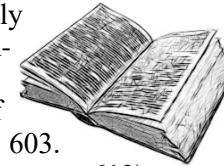


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The Law Cannot Save

Bill Brinkworth

The laws of the Old Testament were more than the commonly known Ten Commandments. There are hundreds of them (Some say 603. Others claim there are 613) covering morality, proper worship, social behavior, punishments for violations, and dietary restrictions. No one could ever go to Heaven by obeying the laws. No one could ever keep them all.



There was a reason God gave us those laws, though They :

1. showed man what sin is,
2. helped man see he is guilty of sin, and
3. because of sin, man cannot justify himself.

God's law is our teacher (Galatians 3:24) to show us that we are not only sinners, but we cannot please God by "perfection." When Jesus came, He was the one-time sacrifice that paid for all man's sins.

Trusting Christ's payment for our sins (Gal 2:16) is the only way anyone can be pardoned from sin

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. 3:24
"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, 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: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 2:16

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Not By Good Deeds

Bill Brinkworth

In Ephesians 2, Paul addresses converted gentiles (Eph. 2:11), and he reminds them of the most important points of how they became Christians. This crucial step has eluded many religions, even some "Christian" denominations. The distinctions that separate a lost, even though religious, person from a saved

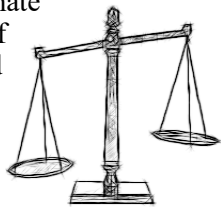
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The Law Cannot Save

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No one can be justified by keeping the works of the law! The laws help us better understand God's mind, but just keeping them will get no one into Heaven. In the early church, Paul had to battle that false belief, which is also faced today.

It is natural for man to want to earn God's favor. This feeling is behind false religions and worship. People are always trying to do something to reach Heaven. Their works include: "being good," performing some religious ceremony, abiding by church ordinances, trying not to sin, and the list goes on. Most have an innate feeling that if their good deeds outweigh their wrongdoings, God will let them into Heaven.



The law came to show man that there was no way to please God. However, there was a wonderful day when the impossible became possible. That day was when Jesus died on the cross and paid for ALL men's sins. When they accept His sacrifice by faith as payment, they can then be justified. By accepting Christ as Saviour, one can have God's promise of Heaven.

Not By Good Deeds

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person are that:

☞ A person is saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) because Jesus died on the cross and paid for their sins. Grace is "free, unmerited love" from God. A person is saved not because one is good-looking, worthy of salvation because of superior intelligence, or an exceptional person. All are saved because God is good, He loves us, and it has nothing to do with who we are.

If we make the first step in believing Jesus died for our sins, God's love will do the rest. We have to go first, not wait to have proof but do as a child does when he believes what his parents tell him. The child simply believes and obeys, so must we do and trust what God has told us.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"
Ephesians 2:8

☞ We are saved because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. There is nothing we can do to earn God's approval (Eph. 2:9) other than trusting Christ as Saviour. No amount of good works, kindness, or religious mumbo-jumbo will get us higher than the coffin lid. We cannot earn our way because the ticket has already been paid. Trying to do something to earn salvation

negates the trusting by faith we must do.

"Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:9

However, doing deeds according to what Scripture commands, doing what we can do for the cause of Christ, or bringing honor to God after we are saved is the right thing to do (Eph. 2:10). A born-again person is to serve Him, not just to sit and soak up God's goodness.

Many nod their head in agreement with Ephesians 2:8-9 but do not connect what it says to what they may be doing or believing. The whole point of the two verses is there is nothing we can do to earn Heaven. We must only trust what God has already done for us.

Even biblical doctrines have been turned into good works people hope will make them worthy of Heaven. Countless people and religious leaders have clarified their salvation as "Of course, I am going to Heaven, I have been baptized," "I tithe," "help the poor," "live a good life," or "I obey the rules of my church." They are good works that will please God after one is saved, not good works to get one saved and to Heaven. Those deeds become conditions added to what God said to do in Eph. 2:8-9. It is only faith that will get one God's promise of Heaven. You cannot add anything to it.

Only Faith

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I imagine their feelings were much like those of one saved from an unbiblical religion today. Those people may have been used to lighting candles, reciting prayers, telling their sins to a man in a confessional, and following other church teachings. After they got saved, they realized that those practices were not scriptural, and that they were not to do them anymore. They had to step out by faith, believe Jesus' words, trust Him, and forget what they had done in the past.

Faith in Christ can be difficult for some to trust alone. Laws seem more secure for many to follow. That is why so many try to hang on to both sides. They try to follow the rules they learned previously and try to live by faith. It cannot be both. Trusting in something other than faith is not faith (Gal. 3:12). We can only be justified ("pardoned or cleared of sin's guilt") by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:27).

**"Faith
without following
is folly."**

—Barbara Brinkworth