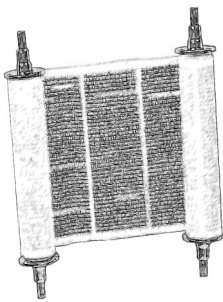


## Only Faith

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 down 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 the 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 when there was no evident direction or sign. Their faith that the Almighty would deliver or help them was what allowed them to get closer to God and to be used by Him.

Now 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 for them to trust Jesus' finished work on the cross (Gal. 3:26).

*Continued on Page 3*

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

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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, another claims there are 613) covering not only morality and proper worship, but also 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. The purpose of the law was to:

- I. show man what sin is,
- II. to help man see that he is guilty of sin, and
- III. that because of his sin, man cannot justify himself.

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

payment for all our sins, by faith (Gal 2:16), is the only way anyone can be pardoned from sin.

*"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

*Continued on Page 2*

## 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 person are that:

*Continued on Page 2*

## The Law Cannot Save

*Continued from Page 1*

No one can be justified by keeping the works of the law (Gal. 2:16)! The laws help us better understand the mind of God, but just keeping them will not get anyone to heaven. Paul, in the early church, had to battle this, and today it is also faced.

It is natural for man to want to do something to earn God's favor. This feeling is behind false religions and worship. People are always trying to do something to get to 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 wrong-doings, God will let them into heaven.



The law came to show man that there was no way to please God; there was no price he could pay to be perfect. 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 sin. 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

*Continued from Page 1*

A saved person is saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) in the fact that 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 due to superior intelligence, or an exceptional person. All are saved because God is good, and He loves us; and it has nothing to do with who we are.

If we will 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 some kind of 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 is negating 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 for Him (Eph. 2:10). A born-again person is saved to serve, not to just sit and soak in God's goodness.

Many nod their head in agreement to 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. Yet, 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 or to heaven. Those deeds become conditions added to what God

said to do in Eph. 2:8-9. It is faith only that will get one God's promise of heaven. You cannot add anything to it.

## Only Faith

*Continued from Page 4*

I imagine their feelings were much like the feelings 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 teachings of their church. 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 and believe Jesus' words and trust him, and forget what they had done in the past.

Faith in Christ can be difficult for some to trust alone. Laws are easier and more secure for many to follow. That is why so many try to hang on to both sides. They try to follow the laws they learned previously and also 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).

**"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."**

*Galatians 3:24*

**"Faith without follow is folly"** — Barbara Brinkworth