



FAITH AND WORKS

By George Lujack

'Faith and Works' has been debated among Christianity for millennia. Scripture even appears to have some seemingly contradictory verses on the subject. Are we saved by faith alone? Are works necessary for salvation? What are the works of the law? Is faith without works dead? What are the different kinds of works? This article will address the contentious topic of faith and works.

WE ARE JUSTIFIED AND SAVED BY GOD'S GRACE THROUGH FAITH, NOT BY WORKS OR THE WORKS OF THE LAW

ACTS 26:17-18:

"I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified BY FAITH IN ME."

ROMANS 3:27-28, 5:1:

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is JUSTIFIED BY FAITH apart from the deeds of the law...

Therefore, having been JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, we have peace with God through our Lord Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ).

GALATIANS 2:16,21, 3:11:

A man is NOT JUSTIFIED BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW BUT BY FAITH in Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ), even we have believed in Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus), that we might be JUSTIFIED BY FAITH in Messiah (Christ) and NOT BY WORKS OF THE LAW; FOR BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW NO FLESH SHALL BE JUSTIFIED...

I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Messiah (Christ) died in vain...

But that NO ONE IS JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW in the sight of God is evident, for "*THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.*"

EPHESIANS 2:8-9:

FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, NOT OF WORKS, lest anyone should boast.

ATTAINING SALVATION CANNOT BE ACHIEVED THROUGH OBEDIENTLY DOING THE WORKS OF THE TORAH (LAW)

ROMANS 9:30-32:

Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of belief; but Israel, pursuing the Torah (law) of righteousness, has not attained to the Torah (law) of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the Torah (law).

GALATIANS 3:10-13:

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” Messiah (Christ) has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us...

We have attained salvation through faith in the sacrifice of Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ) to atone for our sins, and could not have attained salvation in any other way. Works or works of the law cannot save us, for if they could, Yeshua (Jesus) died in vain. Yeshua (Jesus) prayed to the Father, before His crucifixion, asking that if it was possible [TO SAVE MANKIND WITHOUT HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH] to let the cup pass from Him (Matthew 26:39). It was NOT possible, and Yeshua (Jesus) suffered, shed His blood, and died to atone for the sins of man (Matthew 26:42).

ARE WE SAVED BY FAITH ALONE?

Scripture has seemingly contradictory statements of faith and works. Romans 3:28 says, “We conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” James 2:24 states, “a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” Romans 3:28 and James 2:24 are speaking of two different types of works. Romans 3:28 explains that a man is only justified by faith; his obedience to the Torah (law) cannot save him. James 2:24 is commentary of the actions of Abraham and Rahab, who were driven to do works because of their faith. Their faith was working together with their works and by these works, faith was made perfect (James 2:22). So THIS FAITH, *working together* with their works, justified them.

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

JAMES 2:14,20,24,26:

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also FAITH BY ITSELF, IF IT DOES NOT HAVE WORKS, IS DEAD.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD? ...

You see then that A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY...

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD also.

Works of the law demonstrate faith. Faith without works would equate to someone who believes in Yeshua (Jesus), but refuses to obey His commandments or help his or her neighbor. Someone who has faith without works is an unworthy, unprofitable servant as illustrated in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. In that parable, the king cast the lazy and wicked servant into the outer darkness, or hell (Matthew 25:30).

The parable of the talents is a reflection of how Yeshua (Jesus) views lazy, unprofitable, “lukewarm” believers. According to Revelation 3:15-16, He will say to many in the various churches that He knows their works (or more accurately their evil works or lack of good works), and that these believers are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, and because they are lukewarm, He will figuratively vomit them out of His mouth.

God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them out of His kingdom (2 Peter 2:4). Demons believe (have faith), yet are not saved (James 2:19). Mere faith that Yeshua (Jesus) exists is insufficient for salvation.

Many Christian theologians have needlessly argued over ‘Faith vs. Works,’ and/or ‘Faith or Works?’ for salvation. The proper approach is to understand that faith and works compliment each other. Faith saves us, but if you do not do the works of the law (obey the commandments), then your faith is dead.

1 JOHN 2:3-6:

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Who can claim to have faith, yet not do the works of the law (obey His commandments) and live lawlessly? Anyone can merely profess to believe, but if a person lives lawlessly and just merely states belief, there is no demonstration of faith exhibited at all. This type of ‘faith’ IS DEAD.

ROMANS 3:31:

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

And even if someone does have faith, but *believes* he or she can live lawlessly, this faith is dead also. There will be many believers, who lawlessly lived ‘*by faith alone,*’ who will be turned away from the kingdom of heaven...

MATTHEW 7:21-23:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

CHARITABLE WORKS

Apart from the works of the law (obeying the commandments), charitable deeds are another type of works. As with works of the law (obeying the commandments), no amount of charitable works can save a person; only faith in Yeshua (Jesus) saves. Doing charitable work is not done for attaining salvation, but is fitting for the saints to demonstrate faith.

MATTHEW 6:1-4:

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

LUKE 12:32-34:

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

OCCUPATIONAL WORKS OF THE HANDS

Scripture commands and encourages believers to do occupational work. We are commanded to work six-days of the week (Exodus 16:26, 20:9, 23:12, 34:21, 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:13). The Apostle Paul was a tentmaker by occupation, who continued making tents during his ministry.

ACTS 18:1-4:

After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; *for by occupation they were tentmakers*. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

EPHESIANS 4:28:

Let him who stole steal no longer, *but rather let him labor, working with his hands* what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:10-12:

But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, *and to work with your own hands*, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

WE WILL BE GRADED AND JUDGED BY OUR WORKS

MATTHEW 5:18-19:

For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, SHALL BE CALLED LEAST in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, HE SHALL BE CALLED GREAT in the kingdom of heaven.

REVELATION 20:12-13:

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were **JUDGED ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS**, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were **JUDGED, EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS**.

GOOD WORKS WILL FOLLOW THE RIGHTEOUS INTO GOD'S KINGDOM

REVELATION 14:12-13:

Here is the patience of the saints; here are **THOSE WHO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND THE FAITH** of Yeshua (Jesus).

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, **AND THEIR WORKS FOLLOW THEM.**"

SALVATION

Salvation is attained through faith in Messiah (Christ) who was sacrificed in our place as atonement for the sins of mankind, so that we may receive eternal life. Without Messiah's (Christ's) sacrifice and had He not risen, then neither faith, nor good works, nor faith and good works could save us (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Salvation is through faith in the atonement sacrifice of Messiah (Christ). Salvation is attained through an unmerited gift of grace from God and no one can earn it through works. Faith in Yeshua (Jesus) brings forth fruit, which brings forth repentance, obedience, and good works. Faith without works is dead. Works, as a sole means to attain salvation while rejecting Messiah (Christ), are in vain. Faith and works go hand and hand together.