



WORKS-BASED SALVATION: IS BEING OBEDIENT TO GOD’S COMMANDMENTS AN ATTEMPT TO EARN SALVATION THROUGH THE LAW?

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This article will address the topic of works-based salvation, of which many people incorrectly imply that obeying God’s commandments is an act of futility and anyone who keeps His laws is trying to earn his or her salvation through the law.

GALATIANS 3:3-4:

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

When read alone and out of context, Paul’s admonishment to the Galatians can seem like an indictment of the law itself; that anyone who keeps the law is foolish and does not have faith. That is not exactly what Paul said.

The whole context [WITH INTERPRETATION]:

GALATIANS 3:1-14:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ) was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? [THE TRUTH BEING THAT SALVATION COMES THROUGH MESSIAH (CHRIST) NOT THROUGH KEEPING THE LAW].

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? [THE HOLY SPIRIT IS RECEIVED IN BELIEVERS BY FAITH, NOT BY KEEPING THE LAW]. Are you so foolish?

Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?
[HAVING BEGUN IN REALIZING THAT SALVATION COMES THROUGH YESHUA (JESUS), ARE YOU NOW FORGETTING THAT FACT AND NOW SEEKING PERFECTION THROUGH YOURSELVES?]. Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? [HAVE YOU SUFFERED SO MANY THINGS FOR MESSIAH (CHRIST) IN VAIN, WAS IT IN VAIN - HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HIM?]

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? [DOES YESHUA (JESUS), WHO HAS PERFORMED MIRACLES BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH YOU, DO THEM BY THE LAW, OR BY FAITH IN HIM?] - just as Abraham *“believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, *“In you all the nations shall be blessed.”* So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

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 [NO ONE CAN BE SAVED BY KEEPING THE LAW], for *“the just shall live by faith.”* Yet the law is not of faith, but *“the man who does them shall live by them.”* [THE LAW, APART FROM GOD, IS NOT FAITH].

Messiah (Christ) has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, *“Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”*), [THE ‘CURSE’ OF THE LAW IS DEATH. MESSIAH (CHRIST) DIED IN OUR PLACE TO REDEEM AND SAVE US FROM THE CURSE. THE LAW ITSELF IS NOT A CURSE] that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus), that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. [THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO THE GENTILES THROUGH FAITH, NOT THROUGH BEING DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM].

GALATIANS 3:19-22:

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed [YESHUA (JESUS)] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!

[THOSE WHO OBEY THE LAW - GOD’S COMMANDMENTS, ARE NOT AGAINST GOD’S PROMISES, BUT ARE OBEDIENT IN FAITH].

For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law [NO ONE CAN ATTAIN SALVATION OR BE MADE PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS BY THE LAW ITSELF]. But the Scripture has confined all under sin [ALL ARE DESCENDED FROM ADAM AND INHERIT ORIGINAL SIN - ROMANS 5:12, AND ALL HAVE SINNED AND HAVE FALLEN SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD - ROMANS 3:23], that the promise by faith in Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ) might be given to those who believe [THE PROMISE OF SALVATION IS GIVEN TO US BY FAITH IN YESHUA (JESUS), NOT BY KEEPING THE LAW].

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul was addressing the many Jews who lived among them. These Jews, whose eyes had seen the crucified and resurrected Messiah (Christ) (Galatians 3:1), began to believe in their own righteousness and in making themselves perfect through the law (Galatians 3:3). They had forgotten that their righteousness and their salvation was not a matter of doing the works of the law, but through faith in Messiah (Christ).

Paul reminded the Galatians that miracles performed among them through the Holy Spirit were not manifested as a result of keeping the law, but were supplied by God through faith in Him (Galatians 3:5). Only by having faith in God can prayers be answered, faith healings occur, mountains (obstacles) be moved, and miracles occur. Only by faith in God can we attain salvation.

Should believers discard the law, and rely solely on faith for salvation? Believers should rely solely on faith to attain salvation, but should not discard the law, for in doing so they risk losing their salvation.

MATTHEW 7:21-23:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will [OBEYS THE COMMANDMENTS] 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!’”

Yeshua proclaims that through faith, many will prophesy, cast out demons, and do many wonders in His name, but because they had ‘faith only’ and neglected to keep His commandments, He will call them lawless, declare He never knew them, and command them to depart from His presence.

Keeping the law through obeying His commandments does not demonstrate a lack of faith *unless* in doing so one forgets Messiah (Christ). We should never seek to attain perfection in the flesh by keeping the law, as Galatians 3:3 alludes to, but we should keep the law to be as perfect as we can be.

ISAIAH 64:6:

All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.

MATTHEW 5:48:

“Therefore you shall be PERFECT, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

1 JOHN 2:4-5:

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.

Faith and the law are not in conflict with one another, *unless* through self-righteous law keeping, a person negates faith in Messiah (Christ) or if by relying on faith only, a person neglects the law. Faith and law go together.

ROMANS 3:31:

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

Works-based salvation has been practiced historically by law-keeping, Messiah-denying Jews and sacrificing, self-suffering Catholics, both of whom err in their motivation in trying to do work for their salvation.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13:

WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

We are commanded to *work out* our salvation. How? By repenting of sin and practicing righteousness through keeping His commandments.

Many end times lawless ministers have extended the span of those who seek salvation through works by saying that anyone who keeps the law does not have faith and is therefore practicing works-based salvation.

REVELATION 22:12:

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”

The law keepers, those who have faith in Messiah (Christ), will be rewarded for practicing His commandments, for doing good works and will enter His kingdom. Many non-law keepers who say they have faith in Him and do many wonders in His name, they will be told to depart from Him, because they practice lawlessness (Matthew 7:21-23).