

The Biblical Concept of Good Works

Introduction

- A. "How can a person be right with God?" is probably one of the most important and serious questions a person could ask.
- B. In general the answers to this question have been three. (1) Believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him as your Savior and Lord; (2) Believe in Jesus Christ and do good works; (3) Do good works.
- C. The importance of the question necessitates that we settle the issue from the Bible. What does the Bible say? How can we be right with God?

I. The Relationship between Salvation and Good Works•

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Romans 3:27,28

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justified the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. . • How then was it reckoned? when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision . . . For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Romans 4:2-5,10,13.

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. Galatians 2:16

For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8,9

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 Spirit. Titus 3:5

Observation: These verses make it very clear that salvation is not by the performance of good works.

II. The Illustrations concerning Salvation and Good Works.

For the children (Jacob and Esau) being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Romans 9:11,12.

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling- stone. Romans 9:31,32.

Observation: These illustrations underline the verses mentioned above. Salvation is not based on good works.

III. The Relationship between Faith and Good Works.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? . . . Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. . . But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect? . . . Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also. James 2:14,17,21-22,24-26.

Observation: Now we see the correct relationship of faith and works. Works are an evidence of genuine faith. Faith is necessary as the source of the works and works are necessary as an evidence of faith.

The question must now be asked, "What is it that saves a person? Is it his expression of faith or is it works?" The Biblical answer is again very clear – it is faith which brings one into a correct relationship with God and works are an evidence of that relationship.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8,9

IV. The Biblical Warning to AH Those Trusting Their Good Works.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God it is evident, for, The just shall live by faith. Gal. 3:10,11

Observation: Many, in the days of the Early Church, were Jews who thought salvation came by the works of obeying the Old Testament Law. Here Paul reminds them that if that were true they would have to obey perfectly. One failure of perfection would dash all hope and bring the curse (condemnation) of the law upon them. The conclusion is that no one can obey God perfectly and all who try to win salvation by works are under the curse of the law.

Conclusion: The Lord Jesus was asked about this important subject. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." John 6:28,29

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