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# Bible Talk

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This week the question is: If I obey God, am I trying to be saved by works?

The reason we are addressing this question this week is because several have suggested that if we teach that men must obey God's law, we are therefore teaching salvation by works.

In the NT there are several passages which teach men are NOT saved by works. One classic example is:

## **Ephesians 2:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,  
<sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.

In contrast to this, however, the Bible plainly says:

## **James 2:17-26**

<sup>17</sup> ... faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe; and tremble!

<sup>20</sup> But do you want to know, O foolish man, that

faith without works is dead?

<sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

<sup>22</sup> Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

<sup>23</sup> And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

<sup>24</sup> You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

<sup>25</sup> Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

<sup>26</sup> For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Now, we have a problem here. One inspired writer plainly says we are NOT saved by works, and another inspired writer, equally as plain, states that we ARE saved by works. Is the Bible contradicting itself? Was James wrong when he said that men are justified by works?

Many so-called "Bible scholars" say, "Yes indeed, these Bible writers ARE contradicting each other and the Bible is not inspired!" But, to suggest such a solution is the "easy way" out and it ignores a very plausible and viable explanation.

Please consider this: **The Bible speaks of more than one kind of work:**

**1) Works of human righteousness, and**

**2) Works of God's righteousness.**

### **Romans 10:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

<sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> For they being ignorant of **God's righteousness**, and seeking to establish **their own righteousness**, have not submitted to the **righteousness of God**.

**Works of human righteousness** are works of merit. These are the works that puff men up with pride and make men feel as though heaven **owed** them a favor. These works make men feel as though they have been so good and so perfect that they **deserve** eternal life. This was the problem of the Pharisees:

### **Luke 18:10-12**

<sup>10</sup> "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

<sup>11</sup> "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

<sup>12</sup> 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

Do you see this man's problem? He was proud of himself! He felt no need for a Savior. He felt as though he could not possibly be lost because he believed he lived such a perfect life that Heaven **owed** him salvation.

Now, when the Bible says that we are saved, "Not by works, lest

any many should boast," it is referring to these works of human righteousness—these works of merit. They do not save us and none of us can say we **deserve** heaven.

## **Works Of God's Righteousness**

In contrast to works of merit, or "works of human righteousness" the Bible describes works that DO justify us. Works that are essential for salvation. These are called "**works of God.**"

### **John 6:28-29**

<sup>28</sup> Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the **works of God?**"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the **work of God**, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

Here, believing on Jesus is called a work—it is a work of God. **Works of God's righteousness** include all the commandments that God has given to us today!

### **Psalms 119:172**

<sup>172</sup> My tongue shall speak of Your word, For all Your **commandments are righteousness.**

### **Deuteronomy 6:25**

<sup>25</sup> 'Then it will be **righteousness** for us, if we are careful to observe **all these commandments** before

the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.'

Can anyone name a single commandment of God, given to men today, that is not necessary to obey? My friend, the very fact that GOD commands something makes that commandment absolutely essential for salvation. This is why James said:

**James 2:10-12**

<sup>10</sup> For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

<sup>11</sup> For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

<sup>12</sup> **So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.**

**Summary**

Now, if a man keeps all the commandments of God and teaches other men to do so, can that man boast and brag that he **deserves** salvation? Has he performed any "works" that **merit** and make him **deserving** of salvation? Of course not! He has done only what **God** commanded:

**Luke 17:10**

<sup>10</sup> "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our

duty to do."

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, let's make an application of these Biblical principles!

**FIRST**, when God commands us to do something today, it is **essential** and **mandatory** that we do it:

### **Mark 16:15-16**

<sup>15</sup> And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

<sup>16</sup> "He who believes **and** is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

God has commanded that men be believe and be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). No man can be saved without being baptized like God said!

One man left a message on our machine that we were wrong about baptism. He said baptism is no where commanded. I wonder what he thinks Mark 16:16 is—simply a good suggestion? No my friend, it is a divine command which is required for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)! *That means you cannot be saved without it!*

**SECOND**, after we have obeyed God's command for baptism, or any other command, we cannot glory in ourselves as though we

**deserved** heaven! We have done only what God told us to do.

In answer to this week's question, "*If I obey God, am I trying to be saved by works?*" the answer is **NO!** When men obey God they are trying to be saved **by God!**

**Matthew 7:21**

<sup>21</sup> "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.

**Matthew 5:19**

<sup>19</sup> "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.

**Announcements**

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We invite you to call again every week as we consider different subjects on **Bible Talk**.