

# The Proper Relationship Between Faith And Works

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A lot of people believe in God, they just don't believe what he says, or they believe some of it but not all of it, or they believe what he says does not apply to them today. Here is a quote, which reflects how most people just want enough to slip into heaven, but not enough to cramp their lifestyle.

**Three Dollars Worth:** "I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my peace, just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man, or pick beets with a migrant; I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want about a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy about three dollars worth of God, please." *Wilbur Reese.*

Many people say, "We're under Grace, not the Law." But my answer to them is that they are lying. They're hypocrites. Because they obey man's law, but won't obey God's Law. They say "Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings," yet they don't obey the Laws of the King! They place the will of man above the will of God.

## Grace is not the Opposite of Law

Grace is like a governor's pardon to a prisoner; it forgives him, but does not give him freedom to break the law. Likewise, the Lord is our Governor (Psalms 22:28), and his grace forgives us, but does not give us freedom to break His Law.

The proper relationship between faith and works can be best illustrated by the example of the apple tree. The apple tree does not produce apples so it can **be** an apple tree but produces apples **because** it is an apple tree. A follower of Christ will do good works because he is, and not so he can be, one. When Christ dwells in your heart, your actions will show that He is changing you on the inside. You will become like a light on a hill in a dark world (Matthew 5:16).

Grace is not the opposite of God's Law, because the giving of the Law by God was itself an act of Grace, for God did not have to tell us what sin is. The real opposite of Grace is **Gracelessness**, and the real opposite of Law is **Lawlessness**. God's Law is an act of God's Grace. Therefore, for us to obey God's Law is synonymous with God's Grace saving us. His Law and Wisdom saves us from sinning. To set Grace against the Law is a contradiction of God's nature, because God never contradicts himself.

With this ignorant view of the law, it is no wonder that Christians are being led like lambs to the slaughter by lawless governments that Christians themselves have allowed to come to power.

Everybody wants a Savior, but most people want a Savior on their terms, and not God's. They want to live their life without God interfering in their life. So they create a Savior in their own mind, and only accept the parts of scripture that don't contradict their views of their Savior. People who believe they are not under God's Law believe there are no laws at all except their own, and that's how every man appoints himself as his own god (Genesis 3:5). The Ten Commandments, unlike the temporary sacrificial Old Testament laws, are a reflection of God's Character. It is His image. We are to reflect God's image. His Law is His way of telling us **how** to be conformed to His image (Romans 12:2).

Shall we "test" out adultery to see if it is really destructive or not, and judge the Law by what our "conscience" or "feelings" tell us? Shall we do the same with murder, coveting, etc.? Believe it or not, this is what is happening in the Christian world. Once you make your religion existentialistic, then there are no laws at all except your own, and that, friend, is new age doctrine. In short, every man appoints himself as his own god. This line of reasoning may seem extreme but sometimes we need to see the consequences of taking our position to its logical conclusion before we see the folly of our own personal theologies.

## Examples

Let's go to the book of Jonah. Nineveh was a wicked city, and God sent Jonah to tell them that He was going to overthrow that city. So, Jonah goes into the city and starts preaching, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4). After Jonah preaches this message, look what happened:

Jonah 3:5-8, "**So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and**

**put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God:" and listen to what he says, "yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands."**

Now, Nineveh believed in God. And they did the godly work of repenting and turning from their wickedness. And because of this, God did not destroy Nineveh. If they didn't repent, God would have destroyed them (Jonah 3). Now, let me ask you a question, dear reader. Was Nineveh saved by their godly works? Or were they saved by God's grace? Think about this before reading further.

The answer is...**both!** Why? Because they are not opposites. Look at what God's Word says is the reason why he did not destroy Nineveh: Read this carefully:

Jeremiah 18:8, "**If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."**

You see, the nation of Nineveh repented, and turned from their evil. And because of this, God's grace saved them!!! God pronounced evil upon Nineveh, and they repented, and God saved them. His Law, in Jeremiah 18:8, states this as the reason! He says **IF** that nation repents (conditional), **THEN**, and only then, will God be gracious to them.

It does not say how long after Nineveh "believed," and repented before God decided not to destroy them; it could have been one minute. Even though they did not do any "godly work" up to that point, just like Abraham might not have done a "godly work" up until the time he "believed," the following fact remains:

As soon as they "believed," they gave up their own will to seek God's Will.

This is very important. As soon as they "believed," they set their heart to become obedient to God. You see, usually before one obeys God, they must first hear His Word and "believe" in him before they put their faith in Him (Romans 10:17). So, in this sense, we are saved by "believing in God." Yes. However, this goes right along side of obeying him. You cannot separate the two. Once you "believe", you will be moved to "obey" Him as well.

If one truly "believes" in God, they will then obey his commandments. If one "claims" to believe in God, but does not seek God's Will, then his works bear witness that he is not of God, and this "belief" will not be counted as righteousness.

You see, those people who say God's grace saves us are correct. Those who say our works save us are also correct. But they are both full of half-truths if they say God's grace is the **ONLY** thing that saves us, or if works are the only thing that saves us. You see, they go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. They compliment each other; they do not contradict each other.

The primary reason God said he was going down to Sodom and Gomorrah was because of the violence that it was filled with (Genesis 13: 13), but Lot found grace (Genesis 19:18-19), because he was a righteous man (Genesis 19:1). The reason he destroyed the earth in the time of Noah was because of the violence it was filled with (Genesis 6:13), but Noah "found grace" (Genesis 6:8), because he was a righteous man (Genesis 7:1). And here he is into Nineveh and the Ninevites knew that they needed to repent of their evil doings, and specifically turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger, so that they don't perish. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil that he said he would do to them, and he did it not.

God did not show grace to Sodom and Gomorrah because they did not do the godly work of repenting and turning from their evil. God did not show grace to those during Noah's time, because they did not do the godly work of repenting and turning from their evil. God shows grace to those who have a heart that seeks after God. He does not show grace to those who do not seek after Him.

### **Obedience**

Today, the meaning of the word "believe" (and "faith") has been weakened. In the eyes of most, it has become a mere acknowledgment of a certain fact. To many, it has nothing to do with obedience. But in 1 Peter 2:7, the words "believe" and "disobedient" are represented as opposites.

1 Peter 2:7, "**Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient..."**

In other words, to believe is to be obedient, while unbelief is synonymous with disobedience. The

Scriptures exhort "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

As a result of the way we view the words "faith" and "belief", many think that all they are required to do is believe that Jesus existed and died at Calvary, and they are in good standing with God. If this were the only requirement, the demons would be in good standing with Him (James 2:19). But there is no salvation for them! "Faith" is Greek word #4102, *pistis*. This word comes directly from a primary verb (#3982 *peitho*), so is itself **ACTIVE**. "Believe" is the same, as it comes directly from *pistis*. **Faith and belief is some action based on God's word of promise.**

1 Timothy 6:12, "**Fight the good fight of faith** [Action]"

Here, Paul expresses "faith" as an action, as something we are to fight for. Here is another verse, which describes "faith" as a "fruit," or as a godly work:

Galatians 5:22, "**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance...**"

As you can see, scripture defines "faith" as a fruit. Scripture places "faith" in the same category as godly works. Therefore, if godly works is a verification of being a child of God, faith is also an evidence of being a child of God.

Those who say we are saved by faith only are full of half-truths. Look at these passages:

James 2:24, "**Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.**" James 2:17, "**Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.**"

In other words, the relationship between faith and works is so close that in fact they are one entity.

James 2:26, "**For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**"

### **Legalism?**

I find it interesting that so many Christians call me a "legalist" because I follow God's Law. But I try to explain to them that everyone is a legalist, everyone is a slave to someone's will, whether it is God's, Caesar's, or their own. For example, the very ones who say I'm a legalist, are themselves legalists to every code, rule, and regulation that Caesar passes. They obey Caesar's will without taking any thought as to whether it is right or wrong in God's eyes. **They do it blindly, and that's blind faith in a false Savior.**

Let me ask you a question, who will God be more pleased with? Those who are legalists to man's law, or those who are "legalists" to God's Law? I think the scripture is clear. If we are to walk as Jesus walked, and reflect HIS image, and Jesus, according to these people, was himself a legalist, then I believe God will be much more pleased with those who walk in **His Commandments**, like Jesus did, rather than **man's commandments**, like the Pharisees did.

The scripture nowhere condemns anyone for following God's Law, and it never calls someone who follows God's Law a "legalist." On the contrary, God's Word **encourages** people to follow God's Will. The ones who are condemned in scripture are those who place the commandments of men above the commandments of God (Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:7, Titus 1:14).

Many claim "We are under grace, not the law," and use that as an excuse to forsake God's Law and do their own will. But ask them, "If this means we are not under God's Law, why is it that you are under man's law?" They will readily admit that they are under man's law. Ask them "Why?" They will say, "Because God's Law says to obey the government." Then point out to them that they just said they were not under God's Law! Why are they still under that part of God's Law that says to obey man, but not under God's Law that says to obey God? Did God intend for man's law to replace God's Law? Did God intend to replace obedience to God with obedience to secular man?

Many an unbeliever is willing to go God's way if God goes his way; many a professing believer ends up going his own way and making it look like God's way. **Are you going you're own way and making it look like God's way, or are you going God's way even if it hurts?**

We are to place ourselves under His jurisdiction, living in His kingdom. And we're not going to be perfect, we may fall and do wrong, but we are to check everything that we're doing. And if we do something that's against God's Word, we repent immediately to renew our mind. That's how we renew our mind, by repenting to the King and saying, "I'm sorry. I did not want to do that. It's a habit; it's the way that I learned in the world. Help break me of that." And He does help us if our heart is truly after Him. And if you don't repent, he has the natural man right there as a rod of correction for you, and that's what man's codes, rules and regulations are all about.