

Faith And Works In The Life Of The Believer

Explore Your Faith Teaching Series - Explo-9 ©

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OUTLINE

Introduction

In this study, we explore the relationship between 'faith' and 'works'.

Understanding this relationship is crucial to the believer's assurance of salvation.

The study deals with *imputed righteousness* (which saves) in contrast to the *righteous requirements of the law* (which condemns).

It also examines how faith expresses itself *through* works, and deals with misconceptions about faith. The importance of understanding this doctrine cannot be overestimated!

Before we begin this study, there are some important safeguards (checks and balances) that we need to be reminded about. These are directed primarily towards the attitude of faith that we exhibit in our relationship with others. Here are some guidelines:

1. Having faith does not mean believing that God must necessarily meet every need or desire of one's heart (no matter how 'noble' or 'good' you might personally consider it to be). There are some things that we **will have to put up with** (endure) in this life. *To misunderstand this is to have a faith that is misplaced. Both Abraham and Paul (to name just two believers), are good examples of not receiving, yet being faithful.*
2. Faith is not to be supplanted by presumption (often concealed by the apparent "standing on the word"). Presumptive faith (faith for faith's sake) is irresponsible and is damaging to the body of Christ. Presumption is sin!
3. Faith is always outworked through love. If one's faith demeans his brother, it is *misapplied* faith. Quoting scripture to someone who is in need (rather than listening and attempting to meet their immediate need) is a good example of irresponsible use of one's faith. **It is wholly unbiblical!** It does not edify; rather it tears down confidence. There is a time and a place for everything.
4. Professing one's level of faith is not necessarily an indicator of one's faith. Love towards one's brother or sister is the *only* true indicator of one's faith. Gentleness of spirit and a quiet assurance in one's heart give others greater confidence in the God of one's faith than memorized Bible verses as a remedy for each situation

Having said this, let us examine the relationship between faith and works.

We are going to look at Faith in the context of the gospel message - that is, faith as related to righteousness, and consequential to salvation.

In essence, the factual content of the gospel is this:

(See **Cor. 15:1-5; Rom 4:22-25**)

- a. Jesus was delivered to death on account of **our sins**
- b. Jesus was **buried**
- c. God **raised** Jesus on the third day
- d. We are reckoned **righteous** by believing these facts

Righteousness is imputed because of and through faith

A. Received by faith, *without works* (**Rom 4: 5; Ephesians 2:8-10**)

B. **BUT, living faith** produces appropriate works (**James 2:24, 25**)

-Grace is received without earning it

-Works is something we do

C. The relationship between them

1. We are not required to keep the Law of Moses—or any other law. Christianity is not a set of laws, in order to be considered righteous.

-Not justified by keeping law (**Rom.3: 20**)

-Law and grace are exclusive (**Rom.6: 14**)

-The law stirs up sin (**Rom 7:5**)

-The law cannot bring righteousness (**Rom 10:4**)

2. Turning back to the law in order to attain righteousness is a serious error
 - e.g. Galatian Christians; the work of the cross became obscured (Gal. 3:1-3)
 - Returning to the law brings a curse (Gal 3:10)
 - Confirmed in O/t (Jer. 17:5)
3. Law works from outside (leaving us to our own ability), therefore still unrighteous because it is impossible to keep the law. To fail in keeping just one bit of it is to fail in the whole law.
- 4 Grace, which imputes righteousness through faith, works from the inside, supplying supernatural ability to keep god's laws. To 'impute' in the biblical sense means to ascribe righteousness (or guilt, etc) to a person *by vicarious substitution*. 'Vicarious' means 'acting or work done on behalf of, or in place of another' (Oxford Dictionary definition).
 - Thus, Christ suffered *vicariously* for us; his righteousness became the believer's righteousness 'vicariously'. His righteousness was credited to our account or 'imputed' to us, the moment we believed.

What is 'the righteous requirement of the law'?

We are commanded to "be holy" (**Lev. 11:44**; 1Pe. 1:16). **How?**

Consider: the law says, "I must keep all the rules"

But grace says, "Jesus in me lives out his holiness through me" (**1Cor.1: 30**)

- A. Possible only with supernatural help (**Rom 8:34**)
- B. Only Love is capable of meeting the demands of the Law. This is what Jesus explained when he was asked what the greatest commandment was.
 1. The law has two objectives (**Matt 22:36-40**):
 - a. love god
 - b. love neighbour
 2. Love is therefore the fulfillment of the law (**Rom 13:8-10**). Only Christ achieved this!
 3. Faith has its outworking in love (**Gal. 5:6**).
 - 4 Love is the goal of all teaching
- C. Love motivate obedience (**John 14:15:23**) - This means willingness, not legalism.
- D. Love is more effective than fear (**1 John 4:18**). - This means obeying through love not through fear of the consequences of disobedience.
- E. Obedience of love is progressive (**Phil 1:9-11**) -This means we are to work at it, with the Spirit's help.

From the above it can easily it can be seen that it is futile to try to keep the Law.

FOR THIS REASON, Faith is reckoned to us as righteousness (**Rom 4:23-24**).

Conclusion