

## Bible Q and A

### Question # 6; Are there “Works” involved in my salvation?

**Answer:** James said, “*faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself*” (James 2:17). The apostle Paul said, “*for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory*” (Eph. 2:8-9).

How does one reconcile such statements? Some have concluded that James contradicted the apostle Paul while others believe the book of James does not even belong in the Bible. Let us consider the above question for a moment.

Should I seek my salvation through acts of obedience (i.e., works)? YES! Jesus tells us that any who do not obey the laws of God shall be condemned to hell (see Matt. 7:21-27). How then do we reconcile Paul and James’ statements?

To answer in a short and concise manner one must turn their attention to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. God had “*redeemed*” Israel out of the bondage of Egypt by His great power (Deut. 7:7-8). These redeemed people were now a “*possession*” of God’s (Deut. 7:6). God’s redeemed possession was **commanded** to keep all God’s laws (Deut. 7:11). Please note that nothing Israel did was deserving of God’s good treatment (cf. Deut. 9:4-6). Why then did God redeem them from Egypt and promise to give them a land flowing with milk and honey? The Bible tells us that it was because He loved them (Deut. 7:8).

The Christian today is one who has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus (I Pet. 1:18-19). Said purchase released the Christian from the bondage of sin (Jn. 8:32-34). The Christian is now God’s own “*possession*” (I Pet. 2:9) and recognized as a “*bondservant*” of God’s (I Pet. 2:16). The Christian is bound to obedience to God’s laws seeing that he (or she) now belongs to God as a bondservant (see I Pet. 1:22). Why did God redeem us by the blood of His Son? God redeemed man because He loves us (I Jn. 4:10). Please note that you and I have done nothing to deserve God’s mercy and salvation. We have all sinned (Rom. 3:23). We have all gone astray from God’s way (Isa. 53:6; I Pet. 2:25). Those who say they have not sinned and need the blood of Christ are liars (I Jn. 1:8). The prophet Ezekiel foretold of a day when undeserving man would be cleansed of their sins (Ezek. 36:20-31).

Now we can fully understand Paul and James’ statements. These two inspired writers did not contradict each other. Paul tells the Ephesians that nothing they had ever done was deserving of redemption. They (like the Israelites and all of us) had been “*rebellious since the day I knew you*” (Deut. 9:24). The Lord voluntarily gave himself upon the cross because he loves us (Jn. 3:16). Jesus did not die on the cross because people were or we are morally great people. The book of James thereby explains how that Christians are bondservants of God’s and bound to obey His commandments (i.e., justified by works) (see Rom. 6:16ff; James 2:20-24).

Scores of people have foolishly stopped their studies at Jesus’ love for man and conclude that obedience to God’s laws is not needed (I Pet. 2:21-24). What about our love for Jesus? Should we not illustrate our **love** toward God by obedience to His word (cf. Jn. 14:15)? What about our **faith** in Jesus? Should we not illustrate our faith in the Lord by our acts of obedience (Jn. 3:36; Heb. 11:1ff; James 2:21-24)? What about our fear of God? Should we not illustrate our **fear** in the Lord by acts of obedience (Deut. 5:29; 6:1-3; Eccl. 12:13; Rom. 3:18; II Cor. 7:1; I Pet. 2:17; Rev. 14:7)? What about our gratitude for the Lord giving his life upon the cross that we might have the opportunity to live with him for ever? Shouldn’t we show our **gratitude** for such love (Deut. 8:17; Eph. 2:9; I Cor. 11:23ff; James 4:16-17)?

What conclusions of you drawn from this study? Consider Moses’ conclusion at Deuteronomy 10:12-13, “*And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to **fear** Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to **love** him, and to **serve** Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all*

*thy soul, to **keep the commandments** of Jehovah, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?*" This was the same conclusion the wise king Solomon came to (Eccl. 12:13), the prophet Micah (Micah 6:8), and Jesus (Matt. 22:37). Again, what is your conclusion?

If you are still confused over the idea of works verses no works consider the bridge that Paul built between the two thoughts at Romans 3:27. Paul said, in relationship to man's salvation, "*Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? Of works? Nay: but by a **law of faith.***" Dear friend, you must see that we are under a law today (i.e., the law of Christ or law of faith / see Gal. 6:2). If there were no law for you and I to follow there would be no such thing as sin (see Rom. 4:15; I Jn. 3:4). Do you sin? Your answer is yes isn't it? Then there is naturally law. Man thereby gains access into God's gracious and merciful justification through an obedient faith (see Rom. 5:1-3). Paul said this redeeming grace has been freely given to us at Ephesians 1:6-7. Free in respects to our doing nothing to deserving it. Obtained, by our faithful acts of obedience which indicates our love, faith, fear, and gratitude toward God (James 2:23-24). Have you obeyed the gospel message?

If you would like to debate or discuss this subject further please do write an e-mail to John Robertson at [jcrobertson1@juno.com](mailto:jcrobertson1@juno.com)

We certainly welcome questions, disagreements, and comments... that is why we have set this forum up (we want to hear from you).