

Is Faith that alone saves a Work?

Paul in Romans 3:22 correctly translated says that you become good in God's eyes by the faith of Jesus Christ. Poor translations have it as faith in Jesus Christ. The idea is that we are saved by faith alone but the faith is Jesus' faith imputed to our account. We thus gain a righteous status. See page 36 - Paul's Letter to the Romans, Moore Theological College, Surrey, 1994. Paul said that Abraham was put right with God by faith and by doing nothing. He meant that instead of Abraham doing work to try and please God, he let God do the work. This trust was faith.

Some say it is only the works of the law that do not save. But Abraham lived many centuries before Moses gave the law so the works are good works in general.

IS FAITH A WORK ?

If we cannot earn salvation and faith alone saves us, then faith is not a good work that earns salvation. The Bible says that salvation is a present from God and faith is accepting that salvation. Your work of faith gets you saved not because you deserve it but because God chooses to save believers. You believe because you have been saved. Faith, in the Bible, follows when God saved you by his grace without asking any work from you.

Faith is not belief according to the Bible. It is trust. It involves repentance and belief. So you trust God to believe what he has said in his word and you resolve to obey him and that is faith. The trust causes the belief and the repentance and if you really trusted you would believe all God said and commanded. So, it is belief in God and acceptance of God's way. Trust that is followed by action that shows you trust is stronger trust than mere trust that is not practiced. Faith in the Bible could be called strong trust or more real trust. James may use faith in the sense of mere belief without action when he wrote that faith alone not enough. The word can mean acceptance of a creed without living it and acceptance of a creed and living it. Paul said that faith that causes good works is necessary for salvation which to him meant faith that was sometimes one and sometimes the other.

The Bible says that faith that saves is both belief and repentance and is not a human work (Ephesians 2:8-10). Does that mean that God programs the saved to believe and repent like robots? You may have free choice but what alternatives you have to choose from is determined by your thoughts and feelings. For example, a person who is free to choose tea or coffee cannot choose lemonade for he or she has forgotten that it is an option. So, free agent can be made to go a certain way by manipulation. God can censor your thoughts and feelings to bring you to faith. God can determine your free will if we are free.

That would still mean that faith is your work. It is an act you have done in your heart. You may not have been able to do it without God but it is still a free and voluntary act. Salvation is all of God but not all of God in the sense that God forces you to get saved eliminating your freedom of choice. Faith is your work that God has caused you to do.

If faith is your work then its worth is in you and not in the one believed in or trusted. It would then be a source of spiritual pride and smug self-righteousness. It would mean that the work of Jesus has no value for you unless you give it value. To accept the infinite work of Jesus would seem to be an infinitely good work that deserves salvation and conflicts with the Bible insistence that salvation is not by works. Personally, faith is always a work though the Bible says it is not. The one who does a good work that earns salvation and denies it is practicing self-deception.

Calvin said that everything we do is tainted by sin and unacceptable to God and even our faith is sinful. But he saves us by faith even though we sin in that faith. He does so out of pure generosity and mercy and though the faith is useless. The reason faith has no merit is not because we have no free will but because we are sinners. God pretends our faith is the faith of Christ and does not see its faults. It is really Christ's faith that saves us. Calvin would say we can do good but none of us will do it. In the sense that none of us will ever do good it can be said that we can't do good. That way he can preserve free will. Calvin "solved" the problem of how a good and fair God could honour faith like that and accept the believer by saying that Jesus repented for and in behalf of the sinner who tries to reach God through sin to make up for the inadequacies. Calvin stated that anybody who wants to be saved will be brought to salvation. One wonders then on what basis he can reject the Catholic who sincerely wants salvation despite all the errors of Rome who never comes to Christ alone for salvation? Calvin was wrong.

The solution to the problem of faith being a work that saves is this. It is not faith that saves but predestination. God has chosen you for salvation and at some point he will cause you to believe and have faith and that faith will be evidence that you have been saved. You are saved by faith in the sense that faith is the principal good work needed for salvation. So

salvation by faith alone does not mean that faith saves in itself but that faith is like good works, a result of being chosen for salvation and saved and saves you in the sense that it is the trigger for the activation of salvation. It does not earn salvation or merit it in any way for the connection is not one of causation but of coincidence.

Some say that predestination makes you counted for righteousness before God even before you are saved when you exercise faith. So your salvation is fixed but is not activated until you believe by the power of God.

EXPRESSED BY WORKS ?

Protestantism says that we are saved by faith alone without good works. We are saved without works for works. The evidence for salvation or that you have been saved is by your doing good works.

Jesus said that the world would know who his true followers were by their great love for one another.

He said that he was the vine and the apostles were the branches (John 15). And apart from him they can do nothing. Meaning nothing good.

Sanctification is the making a person holy or good. The Bible says it is incomplete in this life (Romans 7:18; Philippians 3:12; Hebrews 12:23).

Only a true saved Christian could be trusted to preach the gospel of God.

The problem is that it is so easy to do some good works as evidence that one has been saved without being really saved at all. Even Hitler could have claimed to have been saved and offered some good works as proof. We all deceive people to make them think that we are better than we really are.

The impotent evidence for salvation makes one unable to be sure if one is really destined for Heaven or not. No honest person who is supposed to be unsaved can believe that they are completely incapable of good and will only be able to do it when Jesus saves them.

The impotence of the evidence can only terrify people and make them fear for the eternal salvation of their friends.

If the good works are done because of gratitude to God for saving you then there is a problem. You are doing them because you are glad God saved you instead of being glad that God pleased himself to save you. That would make them bad works. The good works must be done to please God and simply because they are his will. A person that was really saved would be that selfless but hardly any even know of the principle.

And how could you be saved on your deathbed when you have no chance to do good works? When good works must follow salvation it would seem that you have not been saved at all.

The doctrine that good works prove the gospel and are God's testimony that his doctrine of salvation is true is one of the most inexcusable errors in the Bible and in the Protestant religion.

Conclusion

Faith is not a work. It is a fruit of the grace of God. Biblical salvation is all of grace and has no human input. Faith is no more a work than letting somebody save you when you are drowning. It is accepting help.