



8 | 5 Things Our Works-Oriented Friends Need to Understand.



Works Based thinking is at the basis of all religion except biblical Christianity.

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. - Romans 11:6

Regardless of their human origins, all non biblical religious systems believe that spiritual progress may be made through self-improvement and spiritual advancement.

1.) Works-Oriented Friends Need to Understand the Reality of *Sin*.

Satan was a marvelous expression of God's creative power. As such, he was filled with pride and rebelled against the authority of God. From the time of his fall forward until now, the two dominant claims of Satan has been that he has a right to self determination and that he will one day progress to the place where he equals and surpasses God. When Adam and Eve fell, their sin was like Satan's. Sin, is not merely represented in the claim to self determination (in preference to conforming to God and His ways), sin includes the inherent conviction that we can progress and succeed in our own rights by our own efforts. In contrast to Satan's claim, the Bible teaches **1.)** We have all sinned, not only because we inherited this nature from our parents, but because we choose to sin (Romans 3:23, 6:22-23); **2.)** We are all enemies of God and must all be restored to God (Romans 5:6-12); **3.)** Sin is not merely the evidence of our weakness *it is a confession of our rebellion*. It ultimately results in our rejection of the knowledge of God (Romans 1:18-20; 8:7).

2.) Works-Oriented Friends Need to Understand the Terms *Faith* and *Work*.

a. Faith. Faith is not faith unless it is in an object. Faith is not merely believing, it is believing God and believing what God says He will do. No man can approach God except by faith, by relying on the person of God and His promises. That is what *biblical faith* is about. Hebrews 11 tells us that faith

is both substantive and its results are verifiable in our lives. It is impossible to approach God or please Him, except by faith (Hebrews 11:6).

B. Works. Works are simply good deeds and other acts of obedience to man or God. The Bible speaks of works in the general sense of doing any good thing and it also speaks of those works required by the Old Testament law that had been given to Moses. *Any* works which we try to perform in our own effort in order to please God or elevate ourselves produce disaster and make us even more accountable to God (Galatians 2:16, Romans 7:5, Romans 4:4-5, Isaiah 64:6).

3.) Works-Oriented Friends Need to Understand that Salvation is Free.

The Lord Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice (shed His blood) on the cross to take away our sin, the sin we could not atone for or remove from our lives. The fact that He rose again is proof that His death was sufficient to take away our sin. This act of love provided the gift of salvation. A gift must be received. True gifts are never earned. Notice the words of Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

These verses teach us the very opposite of what other religions teach.

1.) Salvation is a gift received through faith; 2.) It is not of ourselves, but is a gift; 3.) If man could earn it, he would boast before God; 4.) As a result of this free gift, we are God's workmanship, created unto good works. Notice carefully that good works are produced in the life of the believer *as a result* of receiving this free gift of salvation.

4.) Works-Oriented Friends Need to Understand Faith Produces Works, Never Vice Versa.

Some suggest that Christians teach license because salvation is a free gift (Romans 5:15-18). They do not. The Bible says that faith produces works and if there are no works which glorify God there was never any faith (James 2:17). Abraham believed God and that was credited to him for righteousness. The result was that Abraham obeyed God (James 2:23). In that sense, the man who says he has faith but lives in disobedience has neither faith nor works. In Romans 4:1-12 Paul explains that this principle of justification by faith was clearly taught long before Moses law. Of course, Christians do fall into sin. The Bible tells us that when they do, God will discipline them, or they were never His children in the first place (Hebrews 12:6-8).

5.) Works-Oriented Friends Need to Understand We Cannot Mix Rest and Work.

The warning. Hebrews warns us that, just as Israel failed to accept

God's promise of guidance when entering into her "rest," (the promised land, Numbers 14:1-45), even so we can fall short of resting in His promise of salvation. Unless we rest completely, and solely in the finished work of Christ, the message of Christ serves no benefit to us at all (Hebrews 4:1-11). Ironically, entering into God's rest can be the hardest thing one can do, because it is in our natures to want to commend ourselves to God by our good works. We would like to think that, in spite of our own flaws, we are basically good and acceptable before God. This is an age old problem. Paul warned those coming out of Judaism they could not mix the good works of the law given by Moses with the grace of Christ in order to gain God's approval. To do so would be to fall from (the message of) grace. This is because we may never ever mix grace and works (Galatians 3:3; 5:4, Romans 11:6). No one *in any age* has ever been delivered from their sin by their good works.

b. The blessing. *Because* salvation is based on the work of Christ and what He alone did it is not based upon us at all. This means we could not work to gain it, and we cannot work to keep it. This life is in His son who has made us a new creation in Him. We are now the sons of God. Like any good father, our God will discipline us, even to the point of death, but He will never leave or forsake us. When we rest in this truth and come to Christ for daily cleansing and fellowship, we grow and thrive just as any child does (1 John 3:2; 5:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:17). On whom are you resting - yourself, or Christ?