



5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Works or No Works?

Some religious groups emphasize works. Some religious groups emphasize no works. Which is it, works or no works? What does the Bible say about these matters?

Consider that the Scriptures speak of several kinds of works.

1) Works of the Law (Philippians 3:9; Romans 10:3-4; Galatians 2:21)

“Works of the law” is my own righteousness that I am presenting to God for His acceptance. Have you ever heard, “I am a good person, of course I will go to heaven”? The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 3:9,

*“and may be found in Him, not having **a righteousness of my own derived from the Law**, but that which is through faith in Christ, **the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.**”* (Philippians 3:9 NASB)

Any other righteousness, other than God’s is not acceptable.

In Romans 10:3 it states,

*“Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and **sought to establish their own**, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”*
Romans 10:3 (NIV)

Since Israel did not know that God provided the righteousness they needed (through the ransom of the Messiah), they failed to submit to God’s righteousness, a righteousness that comes as a gift through faith.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and it is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-24 NWT)

“They don’t understand that Christ gives to those who trust in him everything they are trying to get by keeping his laws. He ends all of that.”
(Romans 10:4 LB)

“I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.”
(Galatians 2:21 NLT)

“²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Romans 3:21-22 NIV)

God's word tells us that our own righteousness, a righteousness belonging to ourselves will not save us. It is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). It takes a righteousness that equals God's to be accepted by Him. That's why God has offered, through faith in Jesus Christ, righteousness to all who believe (Romans 3:22). It's a "gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17). "The Lord Is Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30). No other righteousness will be good enough to enter God's Kingdom.

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20 KJV)

This righteousness is provided by God (Romans 3:27 NLT). It's called being saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5,8,13). It is based on the redemption that's in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24).

2) Good Works or Righteous Deeds

Secondly, there are good works or righteous deeds. These are the good works that God has ordained that we walk in.

"God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing." (Ephesians 2:10 New Century Version)

They are expressions and the fruit of God's own life expressed through the believers lives.

"²²But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!" (Galatians 5:22-23 New Living Translation)

These works and fruit glorify the Father in heaven.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 KJV)

3) Works of Faith

Thirdly, there are works of faith (1 Thessalonians 1:3), works that express faith (James 2:18).

"But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (James 2:18 NASB)

There are works that accompany or co-exist with salvation (Hebrews 6:9).

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." (Hebrews 6:9 KJV)

These works are proof of the new nature, of regeneration, of salvation (1 John 3:10). These works are proof of a living faith versus a dead faith (James 2:17). Here are some of the works that accompanied faith in Hebrews chapter 11:

“By faith Noah, prepared an ark to the saving of his house...” (Hebrews 11:7)

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed....” (Hebrews 11:8)

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac...” (Hebrews 11:17)

*“By faith Joseph... gave commandment concerning his bones.”
(Hebrews 11:22)*

*“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents...”
(Hebrews 11:23)*

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;” (Hebrews 11:24-25)

4) Works of Repentance

I almost forgot to mention works of repentance that is referred to by the Apostle Paul and John the Baptist.

*“¹⁹Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:
²⁰But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and **do works meet for repentance** (that is, prove their repentance by their deeds).” (Acts 26:19-20)*

*“⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize, he denounced them. ‘You brood of snakes!’ he exclaimed. ‘Who warned you to flee God’s coming wrath? ⁸**Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.**” (Matthew 3:7-8 NLT)*

So we can see, we are not saved by works (of the law), but we are not saved by a dead faith that has no works (the works that co-exist and accompany salvation).

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20)

Questions

1 Read Galatians 2:21 (NLT).

*"I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die."
- Galatians 2:21 (NLT)*

My own righteousness could not remove one of my sins.

True or False

2 Read Romans 5:17 (NLT).

"For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ." - Romans 5:17 (NLT)

God's righteousness can be received:

- A. as a gift
- B. if we work hard enough
- C. by doing our best

3 Read Romans 3:21-22 (NIV).

*"²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."
- Romans 3:21-22 (NIV)*

You can receive righteousness now:

- A. if you attend church regularly
- B. through faith in Jesus Christ
- C. by giving a large gift of money to the church

4 Read Romans 3:24-25 (NLT).

"²⁴Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin..."
- Romans 3:24-25 (NLT)

The righteousness that God has provided is based on:

- A. the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on the cross
- B. living the best you can
- C. knowing your churches creed

5 Read James 2:18.

"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." - James 2:18

A work of faith is a work that:

- A. anyone can do
- B. expresses faith
- C. makes you happy

6 Read Matthew 3:8 (NLT).

"Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God." - Matthew 3:8 (NLT)

We are to prove by the way that we live:

- A. that we have been raised correctly at home
- B. that we have repented from our sins and turned to God
- C. that our politics are correct

Answer Key

1 Read Galatians 2:21 (NLT).

My own righteousness could not remove one of my sins.

True

It took Christ's death to pay for the wages of our sins and provide forgiveness.

2 Read Romans 5:17 (NLT).

God's righteousness can be received:

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We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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