

WILL WE BE JUDGED BY WHAT WE BELIEVE, OR BY WHAT WE DO?

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At the end of this article are 17 passages, from Psalms to the last chapter of Revelation, which reveal that God does not judge men merely by what they believe, but by what they do. These verses refute the doctrine of "faith only" salvation. Although belief in Christ is necessary, belief alone will not save anyone on the Judgment Day. Men will never *deserve* salvation, but that does not mean that they do not have to obey God to be saved! There is a great difference between:

- 1) Trying to earn salvation, and
- 2) Doing what God says because of love for Him!

In his book *Portrait of God*, Frank Chesser wrote the following words:

Obedience to God's will is love prompting faith to submit to the great I AM. The only thing that God requires of man is "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Compliance with the law of God is not legalism. Trembling reverence for every word of God is not bibliolatry. Submission to the will of God does not nullify grace. Obedience is love moving faith to embrace grace and appropriate its provisions to one's soul. Grace teaches (Titus 2:11-12). Every law of God is grace instructing man as to every action that faith must take in order to enjoy its promised blessings. The trust of faith is firmly riveted in God and His grace, and not in the specific act of faith. The obedience of faith is love perfecting itself (Romans 16:26; 1 John 2:5) by adhering to the demands of grace while relying wholly on God as the source of every good thing (James 1:17).

Salvation happens by the grace of God, and no man has any room to boast (Ephesians 2:8-9), but God's saving grace is only received by those who love Him enough to obey Him (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 14:15; Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 5:6; 1 Pet. 1:22; Hebrews 5:9; James 2:14-26). The phrase "*faith only*" is found once in the Bible, but it is preceded by the words "*not by*"! "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24). God has set forth conditions which must be met to receive His gift of salvation, and Jesus said there will only be a small minority willing to be saved by doing the will of God (Matthew 7:13-14, 21).

Notice this illustration as an example of salvation being a free gift to those who meet God's conditions: *Person A has a one hundred dollar bill that he wants to give Person B. Person A tells Person B that if he wants the money, he can walk across the room to get the money. Person B walks across the room, stretches out his hand, and takes the free gift from Person A.*

Now notice some facts about the previous example: Person B did not *earn* the gift of \$100 by walking across the room – he merely met the conditions set forth by Person A. Person B could have sat in his chair and said, "I believe that Person A will give me

the gift," but Person B never would have gotten the free gift without acting in obedience to the conditions set by Person A! Obeying conditions set by the gift giver is not the same as earning the gift! In a similar way, by obeying God's conditions for the free gift we obtain the gift, but not because we deserve it.

Although Paul said salvation is a gift (Romans 6:23), in previous verses he had explained that men only get that gift after obedience: "*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*" (Romans 6:16-18; cf. Acts 10:35; 1 Peter 1:22). Previously in the same chapter Paul had also described what men must obey to be free from sin: "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:3-5; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). Men are "*made free from sin*" only after they obey the Gospel (the death, burial and resurrection through baptism), and not at the point of belief (cf. John 12:42-43; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21, et al.). Men must also continue to be faithful after baptism (Acts 8:22-24; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:1-6; Rev. 2:10).*

Notice that God judges men by their obedience to Him, or the lack thereof:

- "*Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work*" (Psalm 62:12).
- "*If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*" (Proverbs 24:12).
- "*For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).
- "*I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*" (Jeremiah 17:10).
- "*But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it" (Jeremiah 21:14).*
- "*Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*" (Jeremiah 32:19).
- "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).*
- "*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account*

thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

- "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27).
- "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).
- "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).
- "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:5-6).
- "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).
- "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:15).
- "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17).
- "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Revelation 20:12-13).
- "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

Those trusting in belief alone to save them on the Day of Judgment will be sorely disappointed! God will not judge men merely by what they believe, but by what they have done.

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