

The Timing of Works



One of the biggest and most dangerous lies of Satan is the false teaching that man can earn eternal life by doing good works.

Satan knows that the only way God saves sinners is by grace alone (Ephesians 2:5).

Satan also knows that human efforts such as trying to do so-called 'good' works, trying to keep the Ten Commandments, following traditions, performing religious rituals and so on, all

cancel the grace of God (**Romans 11:6; Galatians 2:21**).

In fact, when anyone adds anything to God's justifying grace, they remain dead in their sins.

The only way a helpless, hopeless, and hell-deserving sinner can be saved is by God's mercy and undeserved grace (**Titus 3:5**).

Sinners must come to the cross of Christ with empty hands of

faith, bringing nothing but their sins. This is the only way they can experience the greatest exchange in human history - the exchange of their sin for the righteousness of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

The wrong Time and the wrong Reason for 'Good' Works

The time and reason for doing good works is extremely important.

The Bible teaches that any righteous acts done before justification are filthy rags in the sight of our Holy God (**Isaiah 64:6**).

Therefore, if someone's reason for doing good works is to become right with God, they cannot be justified. Anyone who tries to establish their own righteousness by good works is

ignorant of God's righteousness (**Romans 10:1-4**).

Despite this, the Roman Catholic Church still teaches that good works are necessary for justification and condemns anyone who says they are justified by faith alone.

The right Time and the right Reason for Good Works

After God justifies a repentant sinner by grace through faith, apart from works, the motivation for doing good works is dramatically different from the unbeliever. Now, the motivation is out of love, and thanksgiving for *having been* justified.

The new creature in Christ desires to do the good works which God prepared for him to do (**Ephesians 2:10**). The believer wants to live a life that pleases Christ by 'bearing fruit in

every good work, and giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified him to share in the inheritance of the saints' (**Colossians 1:10-12**).

A Question Answered

Why did James write, 'A man is justified by works and not by faith alone' (**James 2:24**)?

The answer can be understood when the verse is read in context. James is comparing two kinds of faith; he is not giving instructions on how to be justified. James is presenting the great difference between true living faith and false dead faith.

When he asks, 'Show me your faith,' he is asking a professing Christian for evidence of their faith. Since faith is invisible, James writes, 'I will show you my faith by my works.'

Earlier he wrote the best way to prove one's faith is to be 'doers

of the Word and not hearers only' (**James 1:22**). From the Bible, we know that faith alone justifies, but that the faith that justifies is never alone.

A Root that Is Alive will bear Fruit

James is concerned about people who say they are Christians but their faith is dead and unfruitful (**James. 2:17**). He says that dead faith does not justify and is useless (**James 2:20**). Only genuine faith is alive and bears fruit.

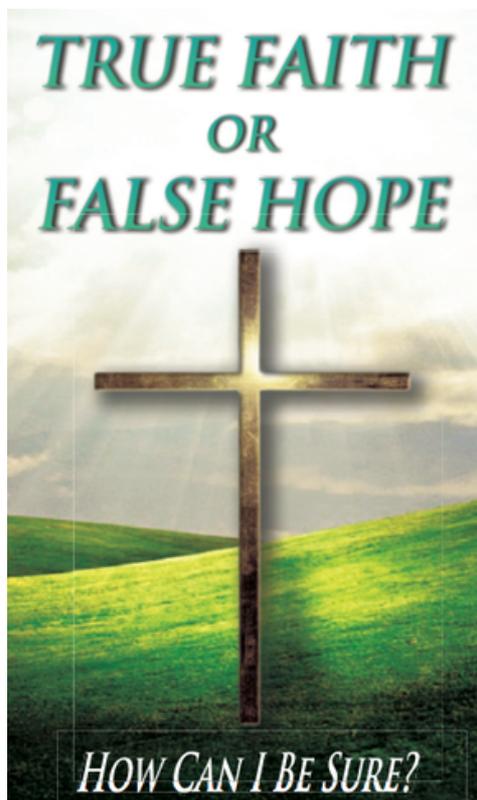
In other words, faith is the root of the tree, and works are the fruit. If the root is alive, the tree will bear fruit, but if the root is dead, there will be no fruit. The existence of fruit shows that the tree is alive.

James is saying the same as Jesus when He said, '... you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples' (**John 15:8**).

So, when there is no fruit, there is no union with Christ.

Tragically, there are many people who say they are Christians but because they are trying to earn salvation by their

The DVD produced by 'Proclaiming the Gospel' Ministry titled, '**False Converts in the Church**' and the tract titled, '**Truth Faith or False Hope: How can I be sure?**' can help them to do that.



works they are dead in their sins.

We must encourage these people to read the Bible and examine themselves to make sure their faith is genuine (**2 Corinthians 13:5**)

