

What Is Meant By ‘Faith’ And ‘Works’?



Foundations (Day 86)
by Derek Prince

The relation between faith and works is an important subject which is referred to in many different passages of the New Testament. Yet it is one about which remarkably little teaching is given in most Christian circles today. As a result, a good many Christians are left in confusion or partial bondage, halfway between law and grace. Not a few Christians also, through ignorance on this point, are led astray into false teachings which lay unscriptural emphasis on the observance of some particular day or the eating of certain special foods or other similar matters of the law.

What do we mean by “faith” or by “works”? By “faith” we mean “that which we believe,” and by “works” we mean “that which we do.”

Thus we can express the relationship between faith and works as taught in the New Testament by the following simple contrast: faith is not based on works, but works are the outcome of faith. Or, in still simpler words: what we believe is not based on what we do, but what we do is the outcome of what we believe.

Let us begin by considering the first part of this statement: Faith is not based on works. In other words, what we believe is not based on what we do. The whole of the New Testament bears consistent testimony to this vital truth. This fact is supported by the account of the final moments of the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross.

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

The Greek word translated “it is finished” is the most emphatic word that could possibly be used. It is the perfect tense of a verb which itself means to do a thing perfectly. We might perhaps bring this out by translating: “It is perfectly perfect,” or “It is completely complete.” There remains nothing more whatever to do.

All that ever needed to be done to pay the penalty of men’s sins and to purchase salvation for all men has already been accomplished by the sufferings and death of Christ upon the cross. To suggest that any man might ever need to do

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anything more than Christ has already done would be to reject the testimony of God's Word and to discredit the efficacy of Christ's atonement.

Devotional

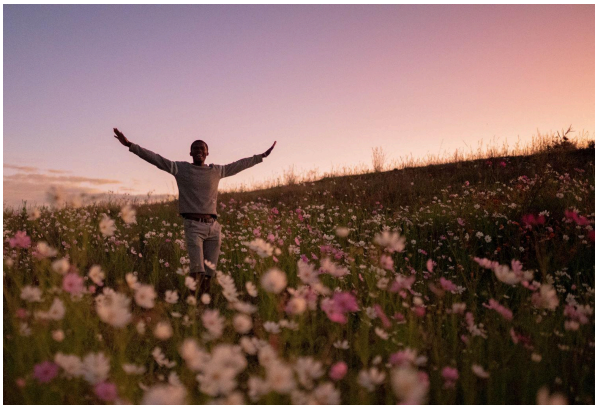
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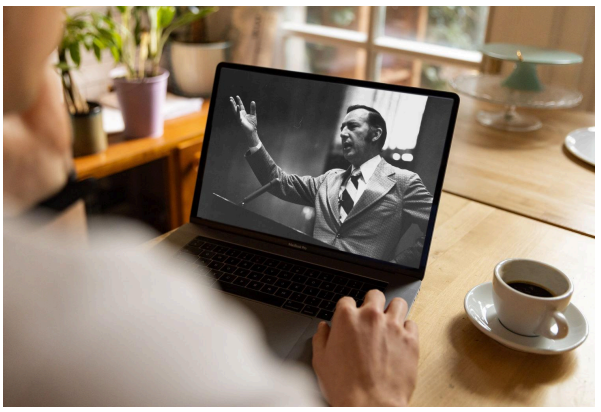
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