



Blackfoot

Church of Christ

Published by Blackfoot Church of Christ
Blackfoot, ID

Volume 7 Number 35

September 1, 2019

Faith Works & Ritualism

By Doy Moyer

Religious Ritualism has always been a problem. This means that one is just going through motions, and going through motions without a heart of faith, even those commanded by God, does nothing but disappoint and anger our Lord. This is an issue continually addressed in the Prophets. For example:

“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.” (Isa 1:11)

God did command sacrifices, but the problem is that they were going through those motions while, at the same, doing what they wanted and failing to repent. God told them how to fix the situation:

“Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” (Isa 1:16-17)

The problem of ritualism is one reason why we are taught in Scripture that works do not save. Salvation is not about a checklist:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

This is also why the greatest commandments, to love God and to love neighbor, target the heart (Matt 22:36-40). If “out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders” (Matt 15:19), then out of the heart also comes the obedience and fruit of the Spirit that are to characterize those whose aim is to please God.

We are not saying that we do not need to do what God says. In fact, faith and obedience are very much linked in Scripture: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:36). See, also, in Hebrews 3:18-19, that the Israelites failing to enter the Promised Land is attributed to both disobedience and unbelief. Biblically, these are inseparable.

However, merely doing works does not in itself involve faith. One can go through all the right motions, yet never please God because it does not come from a heart of faith. On the other hand, true faith will always entail submission to the will of God. We cannot conceive of a biblical faith that ignores what God says to do, but we can conceive of doing things without really having a heart of faith. “Not of works,” then, completely demolishes the notion that all we need to do is check off a list in a ritualistic fashion. Of course, on the other side of the pendulum is mere belief. One can have a mental assent to the truth of something, but this may not translate into an actual faith that trusts God and submits to Him (cf. Jas 2:14-17). Neither extreme is what God wants.

Further, there is a difference between “works” and actual obedience. Two people may even “do” the very same things outwardly, yet one is just doing works while the other is submitting to the truth by faith. The person just doing the works will think he ought to be rewarded for merely working, like a person who punches a clock and wants the paycheck. The person of faith will understand that he is saved by God’s grace, and he

will always want to show his gratitude to God, aiming to please God in every respect (2 Cor. 5:9).

To say that works can save is to say that ritualism should be able to suffice. Yet just doing the outward motions does not make everything as it ought to be. As Micah expressed it (6:6-8):

“With what shall I come to the Lord
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?
Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?”

David, also, understood the principle (Psalm 51:16-17):

“For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;
You are not pleased with burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

If we focus only on the works, we will likely end up engaging in mere ritualism. Yet those works will never suffice to ransom us from our sins. We need the blood of our Savior, and this can never be earned. If we focus on the heart of faith, however, we will aim to please God in all that we do and be satisfied that God will indeed save us by His grace.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Porters are traveling overseas
- Ray & Ginger are traveling
- Sylvia Ward, Ross's Mom, has returned to rehab after a short hospital stay
- Cameron Bauman brain tumor and radiation treatments
- Scott Boucher (Sparks NV) cancer treatment
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines
- Worship Assignments for the month of September are posted on the bulletin board

For prayer requests, call or text

Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

Worship Assignments

Today

Song Leader – Chad Mitchell

Lord's Table – Larry Thompson
– Ben Palmer

Wednesday

Song Leader – Ben Palmer

Invitation – Ross Ward

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



[www.facebook.com @blackfootchurch](http://www.facebook.com/blackfootchurch)
www.blackfootchurch.com