

## Our Own Efforts

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*by Bill Crews*

It is true that we cannot get to heaven by our own efforts, and it is true that any efforts on our part can never merit any of the blessings from God; but it is not true that our own efforts in response to God's own commands and conditions have nothing to do with our salvation.

One morning I was listening to a preacher on the radio. He was very disturbed about learning that 80% of the students in a large Baptist Sunday School class believed that how we live has something to do with our going to heaven. Of course he doesn't take the position that it doesn't matter how we live, but he was disturbed over the fact that these young Baptists had failed to absorb Baptist teaching on how we are saved -- which is the position of most Protestant churches.

Let me outline that position. From the fact that the Bible teaches that we are saved by faith or by believing, coupled with the fact that the Bible teaches that, in some sense, we are not saved by works, they conclude that (1) we are saved by faith or by believing alone, and (2) no other condition is required of us for our salvation -- because that would be salvation by works, which the Bible denies.

But note: (1) In teaching that we are saved by faith, the Bible is not teaching that we are saved by faith alone; the Bible in fact denies that we are saved by faith alone and shows that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys the commands of God given to us. Please read James 2:14-26; John 1:11-12; 12:42-43; Matthew 7:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:8-9; James 2:19; Galatians 5:6. In Acts 18:8 "believed on the Lord" is the same as "hearing, believed, and were baptized." (2) Whenever the New Testament denies salvation by works, it is referring to perfect or sinless obedience, doing all the works required of us. This is an impossibility, and exactly why Paul attacked the teaching of the Judaizers that we are saved by the works of the law of Moses (Acts 15:2, 5; Galatians 2-3; Romans 3-4; every passage denying salvation by works is a passage dealing with whether or not one can be saved by the works of the law of Moses -- salvation by sinless obedience, salvation without a Savior and without forgiveness, an impossibility; these passages do not refer to conditions of grace or commandments for sinners to obey to be forgiven).

We cannot live without sinning; we cannot forgive our sins or save ourselves. We do sin, and we must have a Savior that we might be forgiven. We must have the love, mercy and grace of God; the sacrifice of Christ; and the gospel which is described as "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). We must meet whatever conditions God has laid down for our salvation, and by meeting them we merit nothing; we are not being saved by works of law; we are being saved by faith, by believing -- in the very sense referred to in Acts 16:30-34 and 18:8. Please read them and Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 2:37-41 also.

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