

Different Works

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul says that salvation is “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” James teaches that we are justified by works and not faith alone (James 2:17, 24). Many Bible critics suggest that Paul and James contradict one another. Are the critics right?

Let’s begin with a few critical observations. First, the Bible cannot be the inspired word of God if it has legitimate contradictions. If God is real and all-powerful, then His word should be perfect. It should be void of errors!

Second, there are no legitimate contradictions in the Bible. Every alleged contradiction can be remedied by applying the “Law of Harmony.” Jesus appealed to harmonizing the Scriptures when combating Satan (Matthew 4:3-7). He rebuked Satan for misusing God’s word and failing to consider all it had to say. He was intentionally trying to cause passages to conflict with one another.

Many false teachers do the same things with Ephesians 2:8-9. They fail to carefully study the context and consider other texts. They fail to realize that many different kinds of “works” are mentioned in the Bible.

Different Works

- There are the works of the Law. The works of the Law of Moses cannot justify and gain us forgiveness of sins (Galatians 2:16). Only Jesus kept the Law perfectly. If the works of the Law could save us, Jesus’ death was pointless (Galatians 2:21).
- There are the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). These works include the evil practices of adultery, fornication, drunkenness, divisiveness, jealousy, and idolatry.
- There are the works that “no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:9). These are works we perform believing we are earning salvation. It is when we fail to realize that our “righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Isaiah 64:6).
- There are the works of humble obedience to God (James 2:14-26). These are the works of God’s righteousness (Romans 10:3).

Critical Questions about Works

- Are you involved in the works of the Law? Do you believe observing the Ten Commandments, tithing, observing feast days, and singing with instrumental accompaniment will save you? If so, read again Galatians 2:21.
- Are you involved in the works of the flesh? If so, read again Galatians 5:21.
- Are you involved in works that you boast about? Do you believe that your righteous works can earn you salvation? If so, read Ephesians 2:8-9.
- Are you not involved in any works? Do you believe that baptism is not necessary because it is a work? If so, read John 6:29. Read Luke 13:3 and Romans 10:9-10.
- Are you involved in works of humble obedience? These are the works that God’s servants have performed throughout the centuries (Hebrews 11:1-40). These are the works that perfect faith and demonstrate trust and devotion to God.

Conclusion:

Do you need to be baptized and allow God to perform His work of removing your sins (Colossians 2:11-12)?