

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. We appreciated your comment regarding how important both faith and works are for the Christian and your citing of James 2:17, “faith by itself, if not accompanied by action is dead” and James 2:24, “a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” You asked why it is that so many Christians do not see the connection between these two very important aspects of the Christian walk.

We believe that one reason for the “disconnect” you spoke of may be the element of sacrifice that “works” involves. It is far easier to believe that faith alone is all that is needed in order to enter heaven. Although faith in Jesus’ incredible sacrifice is the Christian’s foundation, that foundation needs to be built upon by works.

When we examine Jesus’ life we find that he had complete faith in his Father. Because of this faith he was able to endure the pain and ignominy of the cross for the purpose of ransoming the entire human race. His sacrifice was truly the greatest “work” of all time. If we are to have an opportunity for life everlasting, will just having faith in Jesus’ sacrifice be enough to get us into the heavenly phase of the kingdom? Absolutely not. The scriptures clearly teach that faith without works is useless (James 2:20). James explains, “Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.” (James 2:21-22) As Christians who are seeking to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus and be part of the heavenly class in order to bless the rest of humankind in the future, the first step is to have faith in Jesus’ sacrifice. The next step is to do works to bring forth “fruit” acceptable to God. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. . . . Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:22-24) God requires that we show our appreciation for the great prize he offers us by giving all that we have to Him. Our “little” all is our human will. We set aside our own fleshly desires in order to do God’s will in every aspect of our lives. This is the “work” that is required of us. The Apostle Paul tells us to “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2) By giving our all to God, we are also to do “good” unto others as we have the opportunity.

For us to fulfill the definition of a true disciple of Christ, the scriptures are clear that the Christian must not only have initial or simple faith in Jesus’ blood, but also do personal character work and remain faithful to the covenant of sacrifice needed to obtain the heavenly crown. “Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

Why do some pastors teach and many Christians believe that faith alone is all that is needed in order to enter the kingdom of heaven? Perhaps they feel that a life of sacrifice is just too difficult and will result in discouragement and failure. We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio