

Free From the Fear of Death: Law and Works vs Grace : Part 1

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The fear of death is something which has plagued humanity since time immemorial. In fact, over the millennia, fear of death -- and more importantly, the question regarding exactly what happens after death -- has so occupied the minds of men, that a wide variety of laws, procedures, traditions, rituals and customs have been put into place, in order to ease one's transition to death, and in some cultures, through death and beyond as well. From the ancient Egyptians, to the Jews, to modern funeral homes, we find different approaches regarding how to deal with death. On one hand, this fear of death -- at least on the part of unbelievers -- is justified. After all, the Scriptures do not paint a very pleasant picture for those people who continue to resist the conviction of God's Spirit until their moment of death. Consider the following verses and be warned:

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
Matthew 10:28, KJV

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
John 3:36, KJV

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God . . . For our God is a consuming fire."
Hebrews 10:31, 12:29, KJV

"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

2 Peter 3:7, KJV

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation 20:15, KJV

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Revelation 21:8, KJV

However, it may surprise you to know that even today, despite our rich Christian heritage, and the truth of God's Word which has been passed down to us, there are likewise some Christians who not only fear death, but who also fear what will happen to them after they have passed out of their current life in the flesh. Why is this? Why would any Christian who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior be so fearful of death? What is the root of this fear? This bondage to fear and death was most certainly known to the ancient Jews. It is made quite plain in the Scriptures. For example, the Apostle Paul notes the following:

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Hebrews 2:14-15, KJV

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Romans 8:15, KJV

The previous two verses form a central part of the primary message which the Apostle Paul delivered to his unbelieving Jewish brethren. Notice that Paul clearly states that as a result of their fear of death, these people -- meaning the Jews -- "were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Wow! Imagine; a lifetime subject to bondage! But the question is this: Subject to what bondage? Taking into consideration the many other things which Paul wrote regarding this subject, I am quite convinced that he is referring to nothing less than bondage to the Mosaic Law; that is, the Laws of Moses of the Old Testament era.

As I amply explain in other articles, the self-righteous, unbelieving Jews -- particularly the primary religious sects of the Scribes and the Pharisees -- were totally beholden to the Mosaic Law. In fact, they proudly wore their adherence to the Mosaic Law -- or at least their claims of adhering to the Mosaic Law -- like a badge. They walked about in their long robes, with their broad phylacteries -- a small leather box they wore on their foreheads which contained snippets of the Scriptures -- and just loved to receive the praises of common Jews, who looked up to them as if they were "sinless saints". How much this sounds like certain modern religious leaders who act in the very same shameful manner.

However, as you may know, the Gospels plainly reveal that these religious Jews were in fact self-righteous hypocrites. Consider what Jesus had to say concerning them in Matthew chapter twenty-three. It is such an all-encompassing exposé of their hypocrisy that I am motivated to share the entire chapter with you:

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but

within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Matthew 23:1-39, KJV

There are a number of other verses which are found in the New Testament which likewise reveal the depth of the hypocrisy, and the level of falsity, of these self-righteous, religious men who pompously and erroneously claimed to be true Jews. Consider the following verses of Scripture and learn the real truth; not as misguided men teach it today, but as God's true unadulterated Word teaches it:

"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you [from the unbelieving Jews], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."
Matthew 21:43, KJV

". . . Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."
John 8:39-44, 47, KJV

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Romans 2:28-29, KJV

"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Romans 9:6-8, KJV

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

Revelation 2:9, KJV

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

Revelation 3:9, KJV

Even though Jesus told His unbelieving Jewish enemies that they could be free from the bondage of the Law through faith in Him, those blind guides knowingly rejected the freedom He offered to them. As a result, they continued to remain under the bondage of the Law, and its harsh mandate of death to the sinner. In fact, Jesus outright told them that as a result of their unbelief, and their rejection of Him, they would die in their sins, as we see by these verses:

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

John 8:21-24, KJV

Not only did the self-righteous Jewish religious leaders and their followers remain in bondage to the Mosaic Law, but as Jesus also mentions in the previous verses, they used the Mosaic Law as a bludgeon to manipulate, control and oppress the common man, as well as to enrich themselves. Tragically, does this not sound like organized religion today as well?

Incidentally, it was in this very same environment that Saul of Tarsus -- later to be known as the Apostle Paul -- was raised. This is why he became such a zealous persecutor of the First Century Church prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus. As Paul himself informs us in the Book of Acts, as well as in one of his Epistles, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and the perfect picture of self-righteous pride and false religiosity. Consider the following verses:

"But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."

Acts 23:6, KJV

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."
Philippians 3:4-6, KJV

In short, Saul of Tarsus was the perfect picture of what we might term a "perfect Pharisee"; that is, if it were really true that one existed. Because the self-righteous religious Jews were enslaved to the Mosaic Law, they were likewise in bondage to fear and death. Please note, however, that this did not include the Sadducees who didn't believe in spirits, or in the Resurrection of the dead. But aside from them, why were the other religious Jews in bondage to fear and death? In a word, while they never admitted it, I suspect that it was probably because they were worried about what was going to happen to them when they died. As Jesus and Paul both inform us, the Scribes and the Pharisees went about trying to establish their own kind of righteousness. Consider the following verses:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."
Romans 10:1-4, KJV

What does Paul mean when he says they "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"? Quite simply, he is referring to the righteousness which is achieved through faith in the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ alone, which the unbelieving Jews did not embrace. You see, even though the Jews presented a very pompous picture of self-righteous sanctimoniousness -- and confidence -- to the Jewish public, I would not be surprised if in their wicked hearts, they were never sure if they were good enough, and holy enough, to merit Salvation. This could be the reason why they feared death. Maybe they were not sure if they had kept enough laws -- or at least all of the right ones -- so that God would grant them Salvation and Eternal Life. This may be why we are told in Hebrews that "through fear of death [they] were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Perhaps because of this uncertainty of not knowing their eternal fate, these religious Jews spent their entire lives living in fear, and trying to keep every aspect of the Laws of Moses that they possibly could. Through their supposed "good works", as Paul writes, they were trying "to establish their own righteousness". In other words, they were basically trying to work their way to Heaven, because they ignored the fact that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But the question is, if a person chooses the former route -- that is, "good works" -- how will he ever know when he has done enough of them in order to gain

Salvation? This is the dilemma which the unbelieving Jews may have faced. So again, this may be why Paul wrote that they "were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Not only were they enslaved by fear, but they were in bondage to the Mosaic Law as well.

At any rate, as I will be explaining in more detail in the second half of this article, it can't be both. Either we are saved and made righteous through our faith in Jesus, or else we trust in our adherence to the Mosaic Law -- which means self-righteous works -- to save us.

As we have now seen, while the Apostle Paul explains that we Christian believers have received the Spirit of adoption, the unbelieving Jews "received the spirit of bondage again to fear." If the Spirit of adoption proceeds from the Father, it seems rather obvious that the spirit of bondage and fear must proceed from Satan. Furthermore, as we saw earlier, Jesus did in fact say that His Jewish critics were the children of the Devil. As the following verses also reveal, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but rather a spirit of peace, because we have made peace with Him through our faith in Jesus Christ:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."
2 Timothy 1:7, KJV

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."
John 14:27, KJV

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"
Romans 5:1, KJV

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
Philippians 4:7, KJV

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."
1 John 4:18, KJV

Concerning this fact that we literally become the adopted children of God through our faith in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, allow me to share with you the following verses for your consideration:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"
John 1:12, KJV

"And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

Luke 20:34-36, KJV

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."
Romans 8:15-17, KJV

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."
Galatians 3:26, KJV

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"
Ephesians 1:5, KJV

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"
Ephesians 2:19, KJV

It is because Jesus preached a message of Salvation which did not rely upon strict adherence to the Mosaic Law -- which was from where the Scribes and the Pharisees derived their power over the common people -- that His Jewish enemies hated Him so. Furthermore, it is for the same reason that the Jews also hated and persecuted the Apostle Paul as he traveled around the Mediterranean region preaching the Gospel of Salvation. Both Jesus and Paul -- as well as the other Apostles -- posed a direct challenge to their entire oppressive belief system -- that is, Pharisaism -- which later evolved into modern Judaism. While Jesus and the Apostles preached freedom from the bondage of the Law, the Scribes and the Pharisees did everything they could to keep people enslaved to the same. Paul again mentions this devilish bondage in the following verses:

"Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children."
Galatians 4:24-25, KJV

In fact, as some of you may realize, this very same hatred towards Jesus, and this same animosity towards the writings of the Apostle Paul, continues unabated today two thousand years later. There are many Jews, Christian Judaizers, and other legalists, who heavily criticize the writings of the Apostle Paul, because these same Scriptural truths expose their hypocrisy today as well. These truths show us that we cannot possibly establish our own righteousness -- or merit Salvation -- no matter how many laws we keep, no matter how many Jewish feasts we observe, no matter how many hospitals we build, no matter how much we give to different charities, etc. Doing such things just won't work, and it is not good enough. It will never meet God's standard of righteousness, and it will never remove the stain of sin from our lives.

These self-righteous religionists -- Jewish and otherwise -- actually despise the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ, because it exposes their own bondage to the Law, as well as their futile endeavors to establish their own goodness and holiness. As we have already seen, Jesus was acutely aware of this self-righteous, deceptive spirit and attitude that pervaded the environment of First Century Israel. Not only did He repeatedly expose it, but through His teachings and sermons, He went about setting the record straight. Jesus wanted everyone to know that they simply could not be saved through any endeavors of their own. He wanted everyone to know that despite everything that they did, and every good work that they performed, they were still unsaved sinners. He purposely set the bar high so that they would learn this lesson. Consider the following sample verses:

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:19-20, KJV

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."
Matthew 5:27-28, KJV

Imagine how the Lord's audience must have reacted in their hearts upon hearing such difficult words as these. As we have seen, they looked up to the Scribes and the Pharisees as being the epitome of holiness and righteous living, just as some people look up to the modern priesthood as well. But you see, Jesus is not saying what He appears to be saying on the surface. As we learned earlier, the Lord knew full well that there was absolutely nothing righteous, or holy, about the Scribes and the Pharisees. He in fact very forcefully accused them of being murderers, liars, hypocrites, scheming opportunists who filled their own pockets at the expense of the poor, the children of hell, and false Jews.

If this is the case -- which it most certainly is -- why did Jesus use these hypocrites as an example before His audience? Why did the Lord place such an insurmountable obstacle before the people by saying that their righteousness had to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees? It seems to me that it is because He knew that the common people had become deceived by those snakes; so He was using the alleged righteousness of their religious leaders to emphasize the futility of trying to establish their own righteousness and holiness. He had to point out the problem to them first, before He could offer them His own Father's solution to sin and death.

This same point holds true regarding adultery. Knowing the evil, lustful hearts of men, Jesus no doubt realized that there was probably not a single person standing there who had not committed adultery in their hearts. Maybe they hadn't committed the physical act of adultery, but that was

beside the point. By making this statement, Jesus was in essence saying "You are all sinners."

These two incidents are not the only times that Jesus strived to emphasize this point. On another occasion, following His encounter with the rich man, Jesus again said something which even troubled His Disciples, and which revealed the futility of trying to establish our own righteousness, as well as the impossibility of human endeavors to reach the Kingdom of God. However, once again, the Lord's intention was obviously not to remove all hope of ever being able to receive Salvation and Everlasting Life; it was simply to point them in the right direction, and show them that hope could only be found in Himself alone, because He alone is the way to the Father. It is for this reason that He says the following:

"And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."
Mark 10:23-27, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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Free From the Fear of Death: Law and Works vs Grace : Part 2

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Jesus Christ Is The Only Way To The Father, Apostles Had To Be Convinced That Jesus Is The Only Way, Freed From Bondage Of Mosaic Law Fear Death And Sin Through Christ, Instructed By The Lord, Firmly Established In The Faith, Contend For The Faith, The Apostles Boldly Preached Salvation By Grace Alone Through Faith In Christ, Justified By Jesus And Not By The Law Or Good Works, Righteousness Through Christ Alone, Jesus Is Our Only Mediator, We Have All Sinned And No One Is Righteous, We Are Dead In Sins But Cleansed By Jesus' Blood, We Have Passed From Death Unto Life, We Will Never Be Cast Out, Jesus Became Sin For Us, Jesus Is Our Righteousness, Love Fulfills The Law, The Royal Law And More Excellent Way, Why Some Christians Fear Death, I Hope That It Is Enough, It Is Enough Because Jesus Paid The Full Ransom Price For Us, We Are Jesus' Purchased Possessions Waiting To Be Redeemed,

No Hybrid Religion Of Grace Mixed With Self-Righteous Works,
If Righteous Comes By The Law Then Christ Is Dead In Vain,
Salvation And Heavenly Rewards, No Free Ride After Coming To
Christ, Keep Busy For The Lord, Closing Remarks, Reading List

As all Bible-believing Christians know today, the reason why it is indeed possible with God, the reason why we can indeed gain Forgiveness, Redemption, Salvation and Eternal Life, is because of Christ crucified. However, two thousand years ago, the Jews -- including the Lord's own Apostles and Disciples -- did not know and understand this. As we have seen, they grew up in a religious environment where everything depended on strict adherence to the Mosaic Law and good works. That is why Jesus had to totally smash that belief system, and make it very clear -- particularly to His own Apostles -- that He alone is the only way to His Father and the Kingdom of God. Thus He said:

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
John 14:6, KJV

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."
John 10:7-9, KJV

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."
John 12:32, KJV

The Lord's Apostles and Disciples had to be fully convinced in their own hearts that there was -- and is -- absolutely no other way to achieve Salvation, other than through Jesus Christ. Jesus had to free them first from the deception of the belief in self-righteous works, so that they could then be effective ambassadors and emissaries of the Kingdom of God to the rest of the sinful world. As long as they thought that there might be some other way, perhaps an easier way, they would not be able to preach with the conviction of the Spirit; and they most certainly would not be willing to lay down their lives for the Lord, as most of them eventually did.

Jesus had to teach them freedom from the bondage of the Law insofar as Salvation is concerned; freedom from the grip of death and sin, and freedom from the deep-rooted fear of not knowing whether or not one is truly saved; by placing their faith in Himself alone, and what He would do for them, and for us as well. Thus, in two of the Gospels the Lord says the following:

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me

to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."
Luke 4:16-21, KJV

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."
John 8:31-36, KJV

After about three years of receiving solid instruction from the Lord -- and even more so after Jesus gave the final proof that He was, and is, who He says He is, through His very own Resurrection from the dead -- the message was imprinted on the hearts of His Apostles. If they had any doubts, surely such doubts evaporated when the Resurrected Christ appeared before their very own eyes. In the words of the Apostle Paul, they became firmly established in the faith. As a result, in the words of Jude, they were able to effectively contend for the faith as well. Consider these verses:

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."
Colossians 2:6-7, KJV

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
Jude 1:3, KJV

Upon examining the Book of Acts and the Epistles, it is evident that the central message of Salvation by God's Grace through faith in the Sacrifice of Christ alone, as opposed to lifelong strict adherence to the Laws of Moses, as well as performing self-righteous "good works", sunk in with the Apostles. They got the Lord's message loud and clear, and this is exactly what they preached. Empowered by the Holy Spirit -- which they received in Acts chapter two -- they taught that no one can possibly keep the entire Mosaic Law. They taught that righteousness is not achieved through our own supposed "good works". They boldly preached that we are all hopeless sinners who are doomed to eternal death, unless we are washed in the Blood of the Lamb of God. They taught that it is only by God's Grace that we are saved, and not by the Law; that is, not through keeping the Laws of Moses. All of these sound Biblical truths are revealed in such verses

as the following:

"And by him [Jesus] all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Acts 13:39, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God . . . But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

Romans 7:4, 6, KJV

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;"

Romans 3:20-21, KJV

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Romans 10:4, KJV

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Romans 11:6, KJV

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Galatians 2:21, KJV

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith . . . Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"

Galatians 3:11, 13, KJV

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Galatians 5:4, KJV

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

James 2:10, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

Titus 3:5, KJV

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness

toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
Ephesians 2:1, 4-9, KJV

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"
1 Timothy 2:5, KJV

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
Acts 4:12, KJV

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
Acts 16:31, KJV

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one . . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"
Romans 3:10, 23, KJV

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
Romans 6:23, KJV

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."
Romans 8:10, KJV

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;"
Colossians 2:13, KJV

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."
1 Peter 2:24, KJV

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
1 John 1:7, KJV

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."
1 John 2:2, KJV

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
1 John 4:10, KJV

In all of the previous verses -- and these are just a few -- we plainly see that Jesus Christ is central to our Salvation, and not so-called self-righteous "good works". As we learned in part one, the Apostle Paul informs us that Jesus alone is the Righteousness of God. Furthermore, through our faith in His Sacrifice for us, we likewise become righteous in God the Father's sight, because we are washed clean in the Blood of the Lamb. There is absolutely no other way in which we can ever hope to obtain Forgiveness and Salvation, regardless of

what the legalistic religionists may try to tell you. Not only that, but as both Jesus and the Apostle John inform us, through our faith, we have passed from death unto life, as we see by the following verses. Furthermore, what God the Father gives us through Christ, He does not take back:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

John 5:24, KJV

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

1 John 3:14, KJV

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16, KJV

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

1 John 5:13, KJV

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

John 6:37, KJV

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

John 10:28-29, KJV

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Hebrews 13:5, KJV

Now, if we have passed from death unto life as the Scriptures plainly declare unto us, and if Jesus informs us that He will never ever leave us or forsake us, then what do we possibly have to fear? We do not have to be afraid of death if we are trusting in Jesus alone for our Salvation, instead of in our own supposed "good works". We are in fact free from the wages of sin -- which is eternal death -- because He who knew no sin -- Jesus -- willingly became sin for us, in order that we might be made the Righteousness of God through our faith in His loving Sacrifice. Consider this verse:

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

2 Corinthians 5:21, KJV

So once again we see that it is all about Jesus Christ, and that it has absolutely nothing to do with a perceived sense of righteousness or sinless perfection that some people seem to think they have. Unlike the Law-bound Jews, and a number of other legalists who even flourish today, instead of being

under the bondage of trying to abide by literally hundreds of different mandates of the Mosaic Law, in the hope that we will somehow merit Eternal Life through our own "goodness" and obedience, all we have to do is place our faith and trust in the Sacrifice of Christ, because He is our righteousness. As far as the Mosaic Law is concerned, Jesus Himself informs us that it can be summed up in the following manner:

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."
Matthew 22:35-40, KJV

I have mentioned before that despite unfounded complaints from his critics -- both the ancient Jews as well as present day critics -- everything that the Apostle Paul taught was a precise mirror of the very same things which Jesus Himself had taught during the time of His public ministry. It should come as no surprise then that Paul would write the following in his Epistle to the Romans:

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."
Romans 13:10, KJV

Wow! I love that guy, and I hope to shake his hand someday in the Kingdom of Heaven! Clearly, everything centers around love; love for God, and love for our fellow man. After all, if our lives are truly ruled by God's Love, then we will not kill, or steal, or commit adultery, or do any of the other things which God frowns upon. As I explain in an article of the same name, the Apostle James refers to love as the Royal Law, and the Apostle Paul refers to love -- or charity -- as "a more excellent way". As the Apostle John informs us, this is simply because God is love. Consider the following verses:

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."
1 Corinthians 12:31, KJV

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"
James 2:8, KJV

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."
1 John 4:8, KJV

So once again we see that it really comes down to love. I began this current article by stating that despite our rich Christian heritage, and the wonderful truths of God's Word which have been passed down to us, there are some Christians who not only fear death, but who also fear what will happen to them after they have passed out of their current life in the flesh. I asked why this would be. If you have carefully read this article, then perhaps you have already discerned the answer regarding why this is, at least with some people.

In looking at my own life, I believe that I have discovered the answer. Even though I have known the Lord for close to fifty years; even though I have seriously studied His Word for about forty of those years; and despite the fact that I understand God's plan of Salvation; nevertheless, I recall a few occasions where I have temporarily slipped into a frame of mind where I will think to myself "Lord, I hope that it is enough." In other words, I will sometimes sit here and reflect on some of my past sins and mistakes -- for all have sinned, remember -- and then I will likewise think of all of the years of my life which I have faithfully invested in the Lord's service. Then I will say "Lord, I hope that it is enough."

I don't know if I say that because I am actually questioning my Salvation, or if I am simply saying that I hope that I have done enough for the Lord so that He won't be ashamed of me or disappointed in me. If it is the former -- although I really don't think that it is -- then it is definitely wrong to say it, because it is enough. The reason why it is enough is because Jesus Christ already paid the full price for our Salvation, and there is nothing more that we need to or can add to it. As I explain in other articles, He paid the full Ransom Price -- or Purchase Price -- for our Salvation with His own Blood; and what is paid in full, is in fact paid in full. Consider the following verses:

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
Matthew 20:28, KJV

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
Acts 20:28, KJV

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."
1 Corinthians 7:23, KJV

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."
Ephesians 1:13-14, KJV

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."
1 Timothy 2:5-6, KJV

It becomes evident then that if we think that we need to do anything other than repent of our sins, place our faith in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and openly proclaim His Name

to others, in order to obtain Salvation, then in reality, we are practicing a works-based religion, rather than a purely faith-based religion. At the very least, we are practicing a hybrid faith which endeavors to mix God's Grace with our own self-righteous works. As we learned through the previous set of verses, this is wrong. Either we believe that we are saved by God's Grace alone through Christ, or else we endeavor to save ourselves through our own perceived goodness and works of the flesh.

I suspect that this is precisely the problem with some of the Christians who fear death. Just like the Jews and some other legalists, they are still trying to save themselves. They are afraid that what they have done for God -- if anything -- is not good enough. That is why some of them are in bondage and fear death. Because they are still depending on themselves, they are not sure if they are really saved or not. They have apparently forgotten that we are saved by God's Grace alone. They may say with their mouths, "Oh, yes, I believe in Jesus, and I know that He died for my sins", but in their hearts they have been deceived into believing that they still need to add something to His Sacrifice, just to play it safe, and just to be sure of their Salvation. They want to pad their bets a little.

If you have fallen under the deception that you still need to help Jesus to save you, then please remember that Paul wrote "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." In this case, "the law" can represent anything you do outside of placing your faith in Jesus Christ, in order to supposedly save yourself, or to try to keep yourself saved. It can include obeying certain legalistic aspects of the Law of Moses, or observing certain Jewish feast days, or tithing to your church, or donating to your favorite charities, or building hospitals and clinics, or doing so many other things which modern society finds laudable. These may indeed be good things which will win you the praises of men, but they do not save you, or keep you saved. Only faith in Jesus saves.

Before closing, allow me to make one final point. While in this article I have emphasized the preeminence of God's Grace over self-righteous works as it pertains to our Salvation, as I also explain in other articles such as "The Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service", "Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?", and "Sluggards and Sloths: Are You Diligent and Faithful in the Affairs of God's Kingdom?", this doesn't mean that once we are saved, we can simply sit on our fannies and do nothing for the Lord. If this is what you have been led to believe; if you think that it is a free ride after coming to Jesus Christ; then my friend, you are sorely mistaken.

While Salvation is indeed a free Gift of God which we receive through our faith in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Heavenly Rewards are quite another story altogether. Unless we remain active and busy serving the Lord following our Salvation, we will not be laying up treasures in Heaven, as Jesus clearly instructed us to do. As a result, we probably won't have much to look forward to once we pass through the Pearly Gates. Consider the following verses:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and

steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21, KJV

"If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

Proverbs 24:12, KJV

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Matthew 16:27, KJV

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:"

1 Peter 1:17, KJV

". . . I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Revelation 2:23b, KJV

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Revelation 14:13, KJV

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."

Revelation 20:12-13, KJV

Please refer to the aforementioned articles for additional information regarding being faithful servants of the Lord.

In conclusion, and to reiterate, what Jesus did for us is in fact enough. The price for our Salvation has already been paid in full, and we are now "purchased possessions" who are simply waiting to be redeemed by the Lord. Therefore, we do not need to fear death, or what comes after death, because our slates have already been washed clean by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. It is a done deal, and we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise. We are free from the bondage and penalty of sin, which is eternal death. Let us therefore walk in newness of life in this present life, as we patiently wait for the fulfillment of the promise in the Eternal Life that is yet to come.

With these thoughts I will bring this article to a close. I trust that you have enjoyed it, learned something from it, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would really appreciate if you would take the time to click on the

corresponding link that is found on this page. Thank you so very much! May God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

A Fantastic Party! Are You Coming?

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit

All Are Given a Chance, But . . .

Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?

Death: Final Battle, Final Victory

Going Down the Highway of Life

Is the Message of Salvation Meant for All Men?

Message to the World

Not Everyone is a Child of God

Salvation is Free

Sluggards and Sloths: Are You Diligent and Faithful in the Affairs of God's Kingdom?

Striving for Perfection: Are You a Sinless Saint?

The Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service

The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love

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