

106. Can Man be Saved by the Law?

Whosoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. *Jas. 2,10.*

How may we obtain God's grace and forgiveness? What an important question this is, a question involving life and death, damnation and life eternal, the question, How is a man justified? All religions give an answer to this vital question, and with one accord all false religions teach that man is justified by the deeds of the Law. Turk and Pope, heathen and rationalist, declare: Do good; lead an upright life, and God will forgive your sins. Even among those Protestant sects who still confess Christ Crucified, one will find this idea to be ingrafted in their souls, that he who leads a life of earnest prayer and sheds tears of repentance obtains God's grace and is saved through these works of his.

What does Scripture say? A man is justified "without the deeds of the Law." That is a statement repeated a hundred times in the Scriptures, taught clearly and emphatically by all prophets and apostles. True enough, there is the command, "This do, and thou shalt live." Luke 10,28. But who can do what the Law demands? There is no man upon earth who can fulfil all its commandments. If you expect eternal salvation by the Law, if you think that you can reach heaven by keeping the commands of the Law, you are deceiving yourself. You cannot be justified by the Law which you have broken. Man cannot be saved by the Law. How then? What we have not been able to earn we receive as a gift.

Salvation is free: "It is the gift of God." What shall we say then? Shall we look upon sin as a trifle, as so many frivolous people do? No, we should stand aghast and horrified when it dawns upon our conscience that we have fallen from the dazzling heights of the image of God to the damning depths of the image of Satan. We should learn to tear from our hearts every shred of pharisaic self-conceit as to our goodness and the merit of our works and say, "I am trusting solely in Jesus." We could be justified by the Law if we were able to keep it; but since we cannot do that, it condemns us. We are justified freely by the grace of God. We are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Prayer.

Lord, we must confess that most of what we have done will be consumed in the last terrible fire, like stubble and straw. To Thee, therefore, we flee, and we pray Thee: Grant that we may be led into the arms of Thy kindness, that we may know that there is One whose mercy is ever new, One whose covenant of peace can never fail, One in whom, when all else fails, the troubled soul can find eternal rest. Let us wholly forget ourselves and look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Amen.

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfil Thy Law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

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