

Isn't Salvation by Faith Too Easy?

Perhaps you understand at this point that Christianity says salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ and not by adhering to a certain standard of good works. But maybe you are bothered by that. Maybe you wonder if salvation by faith is too easy. I mean can anything we don't have to work for really be of substantial value? Or perhaps you are concerned with any religion that says works aren't a part of the salvation equation. You are concerned because such a claim seems to create a whole lot of incentive for unbridled behavior. But while these concerns are not unimportant, I think you will see the problems they address aren't really the problems they seem to be.

When it comes to the free gift of salvation, we must recognize that while there is not a cost to us in terms of good works, there was nonetheless a great cost paid for our salvation. Consider the gift of a new car to a child. For the child the gift is free. But it was not free for the parents who purchased it. Likewise, the gift of salvation is free to all those who trust in Jesus Christ, but this salvation was not free for God. The Bible is clear that the wages of sin is death and that all of us have sinned. In other words, if we are to be saved someone must pay the penalty for our sins and to do so by giving their own life. Of course, not anyone's life could be sacrificed for our sins. It had to be by someone who did not have to pay the penalty for their own sins. The only person who fit that bill was Jesus Christ. Accordingly, he humbled himself, came to earth, was beaten by men, and died for our sins. You might say then that God paid a very high price for our salvation, and that it was not free at all.

There is little doubt that if salvation was possible by good works there would be some incentive to do good, but that does not mean that salvation by faith is without its own incentives to do good. First, we have every reason to do good works out of gratitude for the free gift of salvation God has given us. Most likely those who have given you a big earthly gift receive good behavior from you thereafter. Would we not do the same for God?

Second, since God's gift is an expression of his great love for us, we have incentive to serve and obey the one who loves us so much. Just as I do much for my wife, not because I want to earn her love, but because she loves me already, so the believer should serve God purely out of love.

Third, God, by sending his Son to die on our behalf, has demonstrated that he wants what is best for us. So when we consider his call to certain behaviors, we can trust he has given those instructions because they are for our good. Sure, I could disobey and still be saved, but I would only be shooting myself in the foot on the way to heaven.

Fourth, Scripture does say that while we cannot fall out of the Father's love, we can still find ourselves subject to his discipline. If we would expect a loving earthly father to discipline a child, we should expect our Heavenly Father to do the same, giving much motivation to do good in his eyes.

Fifth, while those who trust in Christ will be saved, the Bible says there will be differences in the rewards we will receive in heaven. It doesn't tell us just what that reward will be, but I have a sense God will do better than give us a cheesy participation ribbon!

I hope you can see then that there are plenty of motivations to do good even in light of the free gift of salvation that is received by faith.