

## The Futile Faith of Some Catholics

Do you fully rely by faith on the Lord Jesus for your salvation? I'm not asking you if you believe in Jesus in a vague and general way, but whether or not you trust him with all your heart to get you to heaven.

If you were brought up in the Catholic religion, you have been told at confession to make satisfaction for sins by doing penance, such as prayer and fasting. You were also taught to merit grace by doing good works.

You believe in Jesus, and yet, if you follow the official teaching of the Catholic Church, you don't fully trust him with the salvation of your soul. The focus of your heart is shifted from Christ and his cross to self and your deeds. You must make satisfaction; you must merit grace; you must add works to your faith in Christ for your final justification.

My friend, I am constrained to forewarn you that such faith cannot justify you before God. I say it again, on the authority of the divine Word: if you attempt to add works to faith for justification, Christ is of no value to you. Listen carefully to what the Bible says:

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5 NKJV).

And again, read the same scripture in a Catholic version:

"But when one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness." (NAB).

Whose faith, according to the inspired Scripture, is credited as righteousness? Is it the faith of him that believes and works? Or of him who believes and does not work? Are you attempting to be justified by faith apart from works, or by faith and works combined?

The apostle is not excluding works as the fruit or purpose of salvation. Elsewhere he is adamant on the absolute necessity of works, godliness and love in the Christian life.

But in this context he is speaking on a different matter, on how God justifies the ungodly. He speaks of righteousness "accounted" or "credited" to the sinner that believes in Christ. Paul tells how the legal debt is crossed out and instead God writes "Righteous by Faith" on the believer's account.

Paul will not allow us to miss the point. The Protestant motto "faith alone" is definitely feeble in comparison to the powerful apostolic statement: "him who does not work but believes"! The Bible does not merely say "faith alone" but it positively excludes works altogether for justification. Indeed the Spirit defines justifying faith by contrasting it to works. He rightly believes in God who makes no attempt to present his personal works for justification.

What about the person who both works and believes in Christ? Can he be justified also? As much as I wish to give a positive answer, I would be deceitful if I do. No, sadly, the person who attempts to be right with God by faith and the merits of his works will most certainly fail. There aren't two ways to God; there aren't two contradictory gospels – one that excludes works and the other that includes them. There is but one gospel: the justification of whoever does not work but believes.

Add one grain of works to your faith, and it is no longer the faith that justifies but a futile and demonic counterfeit.

Dear friend, are you justified by faith; are you at peace with God? Are you convinced that a fatal heart attack will usher you straight to the glory of heaven? If you are doubtful and uncertain, it is because you are not grasping the cross of Christ. You cannot -- as long your hands are filled with "good works".

Throw them away! Discard your works-merit in the rubbish bin where they belong. Come empty-handed to Christ and hold fast to him as your only defense before the God's Law. If you do not work but believe on the Lord who justifies the ungodly, your faith will be accounted for righteousness. That's a divine promise!