

Fuzzy Gospels: The Popularity of Salvation by Works: Verbal, Ritual, Psychological, Corporate

54. There are ten ways that people are led to seek salvation by means of personal works:

1) **Verbal Works.** (1) “Repent and believe.” The word “repent” is **μετανοέω, metanoēō** and is defined as a “change of mind.” One can become aware of his sins and be embarrassed about them, but these sins were judged on the cross and are not the issue in salvation. What one must change his mind about is Christ. To believe that He is responsible for the transfer of our sins from our account over to His is what makes salvation by grace possible. Yet, this word has been distorted to mean “feeling sorry for sins” and, when included as part of the gospel, becomes a category of salvation by works.

(2) “Confession of sins.” And unbeliever cannot confess his sins. He is condemned by the justice of God and without faith in Christ he cannot be forgiven and therefore, the “wrath of God continues to abide on him” (John 3:36).

(3) Begging God to save you. A spiritually dead person has no relationship with perfect God. The love of God has provided a solution to his sin problem through the work of Christ. Salvation is not granted upon the unbeliever’s request for it but through his faith alone in Christ alone.

(4) “Inviting Christ into your heart.” First of all, the unbeliever does not have a relationship with Christ except through His unconditional love. But, to quote Paul in:

2 Corinthians 6:14 - What partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Christ is not going to accept an invitation to indwell the body of an unbeliever. The “heart” is in the soul and the soul is under the tyrannical control of the sin nature so what fellowship would His Light have with this darkness? This is therefore a naïve act by a benighted unbeliever suggested to him by a confused believer.

(5) “Acknowledging Christ publically.” Faith is a nonmeritorious decision that places one’s trust in the integrity of the object, which is Christ, for salvation. This is done in the privacy of the soul and does not require a verbal proclamation before others for its validity.

Often Romans 10:9-10 is a passage used to justify public confessions of faith for salvation, so it is helpful to note its corrected translation:

Romans 10:9 - If you acknowledge to God Jesus as Lord of Israel, and believe in your *kardia* that God resurrected Him from the dead, you will be saved;

v. 10 - for by means of the *kardia* mankind believes, resulting in imputed righteousness, and by means of the mouth mankind makes a statement to God about salvation.

This passage is written for Jewish unbelievers. Notice the sequence of events here. First, the individual must express his faith in Christ as Lord. This means he understands that Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord, or God, of Israel. Second, this expression of nonmeritorious faith results in the imputation of divine righteousness. Third, now saved, the new believer makes a verbal statement to God affirming his conviction that he is saved.

- 2) **Ritual Works.** (1) Circumcision was required by the Judaizers. Paul deals with this in the Book of Galatians.
 - (2) Salvation by baptism. This is a heresy started by Catholicism and adopted by some denominations that emerged from the Protestant Reformation. Details on this and the doctrine of water baptism can be studied by referencing the 2005 Shreveport Bible Conference: *Baptism: Controversies & Schisms*.
 - (3) Mantras. Repetition of assigned slogans or phrases is the babbling of a condemned person. What is required is faith in Christ not meaningless terms designed to persuade God to save you.
 - (4) Taking the Eucharist. Only a believer in fellowship is qualified to take the elements of the Eucharist and those who assert that having done so resulted in salvation are involved in a blasphemous act. The ritual is for remembrance by a believer of the Person and work of Christ on the cross. When they pervert the ritual by designating it as a means of salvation they put the horse before the cart.
- 3) **Psychological Works.** (1) To “walk the isle” during or following a church service, or (2) to “raise your hand” as a profession of faith. These are psychological works expressed physically by placing emphasis on the individual rather than the saving work of Christ.
- 4) **Corporate Works.** These involve works that must be practiced by members of the local church in order to be saved, therefore salvation is allegedly achieved by membership in an organization and works carried out through a joint endeavor. (1) Joining the church. If you are not a member of the Catholic Church you will go to hell. However, if you are not a member of the Church of Christ you will go to hell. By the same token, if you are not a member of the Mormon Church you will go to hell. The best human-viewpoint bet would be to join all three.

(2) Tithing. The Hebrew word for “tithe” is **תְּעִיֶשֶׁר** *ma'aser* and means “a tenth” and therefore, “ten percent.” It was a system of taxation in the Old Testament. According to Malachi 3:8-10, the Jews were to pay their tithes to the national treasury. There were three tithes under the Law, (a) 10% for the Levitical priesthood, (b) 10% for the Levitical sacrifices, both paid annually, and (c) 10% for the legitimately destitute, paid every three years. There is no mandate to tithe in the New Testament and is therefore not required of a Church Age believer. He is instead instructed to give “as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). True grace giving is the act of a believer who is motivated by doctrine and guided by the Holy Spirit. This makes it impossible for giving to be a means of salvation.

(3) Working in the church. There are many tasks that must be performed in the local church and those with spiritual gifts fill these posts. Divine good production can only be accomplished by a spirit-filled believer therefore such works cannot be performed by an unbeliever. Thus, working around the church is not a means of salvation.