

Faith that Works

**We are right with God through faith in Jesus Christ,
but believers follow God's commandments to please him,
love their neighbour, and avoid sin.**

How can I get right with God?

We are saved through faith in Jesus Christ. This means that we believe that he died for our sins and rose again, and we confess him as Lord. When this happens, God changes us and gives us a new heart that desires to live for him.

How do I stay right with God?

In the same way that we begin our relationship with God through faith, we *stay* right with God through faith in Jesus. We do not maintain this relationship through our good behaviour. We both begin and keep this relationship in the same way, through faith in what God has promised in Jesus. Through faith, God changes us and makes us new. The Apostle Paul says that what counts is 'a new creation' (Gal. 6:15).

How do God's commandments help me?

We should keep every command of God, but we cannot do this. The command 'You shall not murder' may be achievable, but 'Love your enemies' is much harder (Exod. 20:13, Matt. 5:44).

It is almost impossible to stop worrying, yet Jesus said, 'do not be anxious about tomorrow' (Matt. 6:34). It is hard to see how someone can stop themselves from being greedy or envious, though the Bible says that the greedy and those who envy will 'not inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. 6:10, Gal. 5:21).

If then we were to consider everything together that God has commanded us to do, this would be like a mountain that we could never climb no matter how hard we try. For this reason, our salvation does not come through keeping the commandments, but through faith in Jesus.

Are some commandments essential?

We cannot single out specific commandments that we must keep in order to be saved, nor can we choose to just keep our favourite commandments. God's commands work together as a whole. When we break one command, we have abandoned God's law. The Apostle James says, 'For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it' (Jam. 2:10). Therefore, faith in Jesus remains our only hope because we cannot simply focus on certain commands which we find easier to keep.

How then do we understand the commandments?

The commandments help us in at least two main ways. Firstly, they show us that we have sinned. They act like a mirror in which we see our own reflection. Romans 3:20 says, 'through the law comes knowledge of sin'.

Sin is our disobedience of God and our selfishness. Sin in our lives separates us from God and we need his forgiveness.

God the Father loves us and has made forgiveness possible through his Son Jesus. God promises that 'the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin' (1 Jn. 1:7). All sins can be forgiven no matter how bad if we seek God's forgiveness through Jesus.

Secondly, God's commands guide us and show us how to please him, love our neighbour, and avoid sin once we have faith.

Pleasing God

We do not get right with God through good behaviour, but through faith. Through faith in Jesus, we are accepted by God as his children. Once God is our Father, then he is pleased with our obedience. This obedience is never perfect and does not keep us right with God, but God is still pleased with our imperfect obedience when it is based on faith.

Loving our neighbour

Faith always goes together with love. Where we find faith, we also find love at work. For this reason, our imperfect obedience not only pleases God, but through it we also love our neighbour. God's commandments show us how to love others in the best possible way. We are able to put our faith into practice, care for people, and show them the love of Christ in the way that is most helpful.

Avoiding sin

When we put God and others before ourselves, then we avoid sinning against them. However, if sin is allowed to rule again in our lives, faith and love begin to disappear. For this reason, we are to follow God's commandments so that we may stay away from sin and not turn away from faith and receiving God's forgiveness. We must always guard our faith because 'the righteous will live by faith' (Rom. 1:17).

How do I strengthen my faith?

Romans 10:17 says, 'So Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ'. Therefore, listen to preaching, read the Bible, participate in communion, and talk about your faith with other Christians.

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