

Grace, Faith, and Works

by Chris Pope

Lately I've heard a lot of people placing the writings of Paul above the rest of scripture. Some even claim that what Paul says trumps everything else in scripture including Yahweh and Y'shua's words. These people preach and teach that faith alone is all that is required for eternal life and they use the hard to understand writings of Paul to do this.

There is NO doubt that no one besides Y'shua has ever or will ever follow the law perfectly. That doesn't mean that we can now say that we don't have to even try to keep Yahweh's commandments, because "Y'shua kept them all for me, so I don't have to". I would really encourage such people to take Paul down off of a pedestal and apply the whole of scripture to your life and walk with Yahweh instead of just relying on Paul's writings for instructions on how we live our lives and walk in our faith.

Some of the scriptures these people use are in Romans 3 so let me try to explain what Paul is actually saying in these verses. First we have to understand who he was writing to. He wasn't writing it to us in our modern westernized society. He was writing it to the believers in Rome sometime around 56 AD. These believers were comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers and we know at this time Paul had not been to Rome to personally start a church there, so most likely these people heard the gospel somewhere else and brought it back to Rome with them and started meeting in the synagogues every Sabbath.

Before we can just read this letter to the churches in Rome and apply what it says to our lives today, we have to first understand what it meant to its original audience and why he would have written it to them. So what was going on with these believers in Rome in 56 AD? Well, you had a bunch of Gentiles that heard about this guy named Y'shua who was performing miracles, healing the sick, raising people from the dead and they were told his message from someone who knew it and they believed in him. They liked what they heard and they placed their faith in him and what he had done, but because they were not raised learning and reading the Tanakh they didn't know the commandments and laws like the Israelites did.

Then you had the Israelites, who knew the Tanakh and Torah because they spent every Sabbath in the synagogues reading it. They also heard about Y'shua and all the things he was doing and they believed in him too. They recognized Him as the prophet that Moses spoke of in the scriptures and they knew that He had fulfilled all that was written about Him by the Prophets.

Once they all got together the Israelites started noticing that the Gentile believers were not following the laws like they were. They let this go to their heads, and started boasting about how good they keep the law and how they were better than the Gentile believers because of how good

they kept the law. They were openly stating that they were more righteous than the Gentiles because of their keeping of the law. This is the point that Paul is addressing in Romans 3.

21But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (In this verse Paul is simply stating that before Y'shua's sacrifice the only way a person could see Yah's righteousness is by looking at the law, words that were written down or verbally passed down from generation to generation, but now because of the sacrifice of Y'shua we have more than just the words to see his righteousness, because the words were made flesh, which the Law and the Prophets predicted would happen.)

22This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, (In this verse Paul is affirming that this gift is available for anyone, not just for Jews/Israelites or Gentiles, but for anyone who believes.)

23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Here Paul lets them know that none of them are any better than anyone else because they have all sinned)

24and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Again here he confirms that this free gift is available to ALL)

25God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— (Y'shua was the final and ultimate Passover Lamb, slain to cover the PENALTY of sin for everyone, past, present and future. His sacrifice did not take away sin, not my sin, not your sin. Sin is still here, it has not been taken away, but for those who believe in him, the PENALTY for that sin is now taken away.)

26he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (He, Yahweh, fulfilled his promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3), Paul in verse 25 and this verse is using a midrash on Psalm 143 to show how Y'shua's death relates to Yah's righteousness.)

27Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. (Here Paul is singling out those who are bragging about how good they keep the law.)

28For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. (Here he is still singling out the boastful law keepers and he flat out tells them that it don't matter how good they keep the law, that how good they keep the law is not going to get them into the Kingdom. What Paul does not say, is that the law is not a part of it or that the law is no longer needed. This verse DOES NOT SAY "faith apart from the law". There is a VERY key word there that changes the entire verse away from what you interpret it to say. WORKS makes this verse fit the context of what is going on with the believers in Rome. The Israelites were all about how good

they were keeping the law, WORKS. Paul is telling them that Faith is more important than them bragging about how good they kept the law, NOT that the law is not important. See Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

In these verses, Paul shows us how Grace, Faith, and WORKS are all tied together. Verse 10 is my favorite though. Paul very clearly says that we were created for good WORKS that Yah has already prepared for us so that we can walk in them. What are the good works we are supposed to walk in that Yah already created for us? His commandments, statues and ordinances, all found in the Tanakh or Old Testament.)

29Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, (This verse is self-explanatory.)

30since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. (Again Paul is showing how Yahweh see's everyone who believes as equal.)

31Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. (This is my favorite verse of all of these, because it's where Paul anticipates that some will misunderstand what he is saying and will falsely believe that he is saying that Faith is all you need and that the law is nullified. Let's replace two words here, nullify and uphold, with their concordance definitions and rewrite the verse using these definitions to get a good understanding of what it is saying. 31Do we, then, "render idle, inactive, or inoperative, or put an end to or do away with, or abolish" the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we establish, make firm and uphold the authority and force of the law. Paul is not by any means diminishing the role of the law and as you can see from the verses in Ephesians he even shows how Grace, Faith and Works, all work together. All Paul is saying is that we are all the same in the sight of Yahweh and bragging or boasting about how good we keep the law is not going to get anyone into the Kingdom. NOWHERE DOES PAUL EVER TEACH A FAITH ALONE DOCTRINE OR THAT THE LAW HAS BEEN DONE AWAY WITH.)

Now let me break down Matthew 7 the same way, because Y'shua flat out tells us to obey his father's commandments.

21"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (This is pretty simple to me, Y'shua says that only the people who DO THE WILL OF MY FATHER, will enter. He is not saying that following the law is what gets you there, but he defiantly is NOT saying that all you have to do is believe in him and have faith. THE WILL OF HIS FATHER is to obey his commandments.)

22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (Y'shua is not saying that people were bragging about keeping the law and how much of a good person they were. These people genuinely thought they were going to get into the Kingdom. They are SHOCKED when He turns them away and they even say in their defense, "but Lord, we believed in you and did miracles in your name". They were not trying to get in based on their deeds. They are saying that they believed in Him 100% and had faith to even work miracles in his name.)

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' (But their having faith and believing in Him was not enough, so He tells them to leave, you who practice LAWLESSNESS. Lawlessness is not abiding by the laws that Yahweh laid out in the OT that show us how to live righteously, the same laws that Y'shua showed us how to live with his example.)

I'm going to list quite a few scriptures here, from both New and Old, from various writers, including Paul, that all line up with each other and show that on top of having faith, there is also action required on our part and that action is keeping His commandments which HAVE NOT been done away with or Nailed to the Stake.

1 John 2:3-6 3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (I'm not calling you a liar, Greg, but the scriptures are. Anyone who says they know him but does not keep His commandments is a LIAR and the truth is not in them.)

Deuteronomy 4:40 So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time." (Nothing here about them coming to an end, it actually says do them so that it will go well for you and your children for ALL TIME.)

Deuteronomy 5:29 Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever! (Keep them ALWAYS so that it will be well with us FOREVER.)

Deuteronomy 6:1-2 1 "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. (Keep them ALL the days of our lives.)

Joshua 22:5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (It doesn't say 'til Y'shua comes then you don't have to anymore cause he will do it for you.)

Psalms 78:5-8 5For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children, 6That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children, 7That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments, 8And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not prepare its heart And whose spirit was not faithful to God. (Keep his commandments, not like a stubborn and rebellious generation.)

Psalms 119:115 Depart from me, evildoers, That I may observe the commandments of my God. (If this sounds familiar it's because this is what Y'shua was referring to in His quote in Matthew 7:23)

Proverbs 4:4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let your heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

Proverbs 7:1 My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.

Proverbs 7:2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of your eye. (All three of these verses allude to keeping His commandments and LIVING.)

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Every person should KEEP His commandments because each person will be judged based on our acts, DEEDS, WORKS, and not whether or not someone just has faith.)

Matthew 19:17 And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Y'shua himself stating clear as day that if you want to enter into life then KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS. It doesn't get much clearer than that.)

John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (A direct quote from Y'shua, I choose to keep the commandments, because I love him, not for salvation.)

John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." (Again, direct from the mouth of Y'shua. If you love him keep the commandments.)

1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and un-circumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. (This is Paul, saying that what matters is KEEPING the commandments, I agree with him.)

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. (How do we show our love for Yahweh? By keeping his commandments, that are not grievous.)

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (These last two verses are from a FUTURE event that has yet to happen and we see that the dragon went to make war with who, the people who believe in Y'shua, NO it's the people who KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF YAHWEH AND HAVE FAITH IN Y'SHUA.)

So I've pretty much covered the whole bible with overwhelming evidence that the Law was never done away with and that the Faith alone doctrine is not accurate unless one were to twist the writings of Paul to their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:16

Shalom and Yah Bless.