

# Easily Missed Signs Your Faith Is Based on Religious Duty

I sat on the plush, cream-colored sofa, helping my mentor fold laundry while her 2-year-old played on the floor. I was a senior in college, involved in campus ministry and leading a Bible study, and I enthusiastically updated her on both endeavors. I'd begun telling yet another story when she calmly interrupted me with a simple, matter-of-fact statement: "You believe in a works-based gospel."

We'd known each other a while, and her statement stunned me. Was she serious?

I quickly brushed it off in the moment. But later that week, I found myself kneeling by the side of my bed, soaking my plaid purple bedspread with tears. She was right.

There I was, wallowing in my sin, wanting desperately to be back in the loving arms of my Savior. I had asked for forgiveness, but the relief wasn't coming. As I poured my guilty conscience onto the pages of my journal, I was struck by one word: time.

That's what I thought I needed: time. I didn't really want forgiveness. I wanted time—enough time to fill my life up with the right things, the good things, to settle the score. It was salvation by works at its worst.

All my striving, all my desire to put time between myself and my mistakes, it was another attempt to earn my salvation through my own effort.

Rather than trusting the work of Christ on the cross for my righteousness, I had become dependent on my own actions to

save me.

I was living exactly like the Israelites Paul describes in Romans 10:3: “For, being ignorant of God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God”

After Christ’s death and resurrection, Israel was still working hard to keep the Law of Moses in order to gain righteousness. They were working to save themselves, forgetting that “Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness for every one who believes” (Rom. 10:4).

The law, our works, the right things—they were never supposed to save us. God had planned our salvation and redemption through Jesus Christ all along. Christ is the only perfect fulfillment, the only victory we have over sin and death. His perfect life allows us to be justified through our faith alone. Faith and nothing else—just Jesus.

As I knelt beside my bed that day, I realized Jesus truly was all I needed. His sacrifice covered me then, despite all my striving, and it covers me today. I need His righteousness, not my own. He is enough.

Friends, no matter what our past, present, or future holds, the only work that can save us is the work Christ completed on the cross. May we call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

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