



## *The Armor of Faith*

### Topic Summary: The Importance of Faith and Works – Part II *If Works Matter, What Does That Mean to Us?*



*Judgment of the Nations*  
*Public Domain*

### **Introduction**

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support and catechesis for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of discernment and study to become lay Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

### **Discussion:**

Last time, we discussed the question of faith and works. We discussed the challenge of understanding the meaning of faith and works through one or two elements of scripture, rather, we must review the greater context. While there are those who profess we are saved by faith and faith alone, it is interesting to note that someone pointed out that the only place where these two words are mentioned side by side is James 2:24, which states, “*See how a person is justified by **works** and not by **faith** alone,*” which is a statement counter to the faith alone formula.

Of course, we made the point that to gain the full context, we must also consider the relationship of various segments of scripture. As we considered what is stated and taught through scripture, it was our conclusion that works are important to the demonstration of our faith. The question, then, becomes, if works matter, what does that mean to us? Given the nature of what we do or fail to do; if we make a mistake, or if we simply chose to ignore the commandments in leading our life, what does this mean to us? With these questions in mind, I would like to begin our discussion with a section of the book of Jeremiah.

*33 But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days—oracle of the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 They will no longer teach their friends and relatives, “Know the LORD!” Everyone, from least to greatest, shall know me—oracle of the LORD—for I will forgive their iniquity and no longer remember their sin. (Jeremiah 31:33-34)*

**(Question:** Here, we are told that God will place His law within us and write it upon our hearts. We are also told by the prophet that God will forgive our sin. In this statement, there is hope of forgiveness so we will not be separated from our Creator because of our misconduct. **What does this mean in relation to the discussion of faith and works?)**

*14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has **faith** but does not have **works**? **Can that faith save him?** 15 If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, **what good is it?** 17 **So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.***

*18 Indeed someone may say, “You have **faith** and I have **works**.” **Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.** 19 You **believe** that God is one. You do well. **Even the demons believe that and tremble.** 20 Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that **faith** without **works** is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by **works** when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? 22 You see that **faith** was active along with his **works**, and **faith** was completed by the **works**. 23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham **believed** God, and it was credited to him as **righteousness**,” and he was called “the friend of God.” 24 See how a person is justified by **works** and not by **faith** alone. 25 And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also **justified** by **works** when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by a different route? 26 **For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.** (James 2:14-26)*

**(Question:** Here, we see the discussion of faith and works taken head on. **What can we learn from this segment of scripture about the nature of faith and works?)**

**(Question:** If works are important to the demonstration of our faith and we fail in our works, what does that mean for our salvation?)

**(Question:** There is a difference between making a mistake in our behavior and the obstinance of our deeds in opposition to His commandments. There is also a difference between one who is defiant and one who was defiant, but observed the fallacy of that defiance and repented. **What is the nature of this difference and how do we believe this may be judged?)**

39 Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." 40 The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? 41 And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

**(Question:** This scripture should give us hope that even unto our last breath, we have the opportunity to receive His forgiveness. In this exchange, only words are exchanged, so we might be tempted to present this as an example that we need to only speak of faith to receive salvation. **What happened here and what example should we take from it?)**

1 "[But] take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. 2 When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites[b] do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, 4 so that your alms giving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. (Matthew 6:1-4)

**(Question:** This teaching of Jesus presents another wrinkle in the works and deeds arena. **What is the lesson we should receive from this segment of scripture?)**

(CCC: 1021) **Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ.** The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that **each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith.** The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul—a destiny which can be different for some and for others.

**(Question:** Here we are told that our passing from this world marks the end of whether we accept or reject the divine grace of our Lord and Savior. **If we do not know the hour of our death, how might we desire to approach our life?)**

(CCC: 1022) Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification or immediately,—or immediate and everlasting damnation. **At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.**

**(Question:** The last sentence of article 1022 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, attributed to St. John of the Cross appears to set a stage consistent with the greatest commandments related to us by Jesus in Matthew 22:36-40. **Upon what love shall we be judged and how might that love be demonstrated?)**

**9 He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but now made**

manifest through the appearance of our savior **Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel**, (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

**(Question:** In the discussion of the importance of faith and works, perhaps we have overlooked something greater. **What might that be?)**

### **Quotes:**

What was the first rule of our dear Savior's life? You know if was to do his Father's will. Well, then, the first purpose of our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner he wills; and thirdly, to do it because it is his will. We know certainly that our God calls us to a holy life. We know that he gives us every grace, every abundant grace; and though we are so weak of ourselves, this grace is able to carry us through every obstacle and difficulty.

– St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

O God, do not leave me. I have done nothing good in your sight, but according to your goodness, let me now make a beginning of good.

– St. Arsenius

Few souls understand what God would accomplish in them if they were to abandon themselves unreservedly to Him and if they were to allow His grace to mold them accordingly.

– St. Ignatius Loyola

God gives each one of us sufficient grace ever to know His holy will, and to do it fully.

– St. Ignatius of Loyola

Do you want the Lord to give you many graces? Visit Him often. Do you want Him to give you few graces? Visit Him rarely. Do you want the devil to attack you? Visit Jesus rarely in the Blessed Sacrament. Do you want him to flee from you? Visit Jesus often. Do you want to conquer the devil? Take refuge often at the feet of Jesus. Do you want to be conquered by the devil? Forget about visiting Jesus. My dear ones, the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament is an extremely necessary way to conquer the devil. Therefore, go often to visit Jesus and the devil will not come out victorious against you.

– St. John Bosco

### **Final Thoughts:**

In the end, we can argue all we want, but that will not change what will happen on our day of judgment. Even if we declare we are saved by faith alone, what will that mean for the nature of our judgment? We must reflect upon how our faith was demonstrated through our life. Was the nature of our faith lived or simply spoken? Can we really demonstrate faith by living in opposition to His commandments? If we are honest in the answers to those questions, we might have pause to think about what will come of our conversation with Jesus. If we take segments of scripture in isolation, we might be tempted to wonder if there is any hope for us.

As we discussed, there is hope, for as Jesus told us in John 12:50, *“I know that his commandment is eternal life.”* He also told his disciples, as recounted in Luke 24:46-47, *“Thus it is written that the*

*Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”*

Our hope is in the sacrifice made for us, but the hope is only there if there is life within our faith. We can only demonstrate this by the choices we make in what we do and what we choose not to do. I, personally, would not want to test that I may be judged by simply what I profess from my lips while my works reflect nothing of the faith I profess. I believe the discussion, though it has continued for centuries, is somewhat moot because it is by His grace, His mercy, and His sacrifice in atonement for our sins by which those who believe in Him are saved, but if I truly believe, then, the actions of my life should reflect that faith. Where my hope lies, is that should I fail, if I approach Him with a contrite heart, my failures may be forgiven so that I may be cleansed of my iniquities and my robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb, so that through that purification, I may enter into His kingdom where love is shared by all, where there is no pain or affliction, and where evil is not allowed to follow.

**Wrap Up:** Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with a look at the Profession of Faith.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: The Meaning of Our Profession of Faith