

## **The Contrast: Self-Effort vs. Rest**

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### **Scripture References**

John 1:17

Romans 6:14

Romans 4:1-6

Galatians 3:9, 10

Galatians 2:16

Hebrews 4:1-11

Romans 11:6

John 6:28, 29, *NLT*

Isaiah 54:13

Joshua 24:13

Deuteronomy 6:10-13

Matthew 8:23-27

Mark 4:35-41

### **Summary**

*Just as there is a contrast between the law that Moses gave and the grace that Jesus brought, there is also a contrast between self-effort and rest. God only works on our behalf if we are resting; therefore, we must rightly divide what it means to be at rest on a spiritual level. Knowing the difference between working to get God to do something and having faith in what He has already done allows us to enter into the place of rest where He wants us to be, and to stay there. We are not made righteous in God's eyes by our performance, but by our belief in Jesus Christ. We are the righteousness of God by faith, even when we sin, but many Christians do not understand this. We must move beyond the mindset that makes it difficult for us to believe that we could actually receive something from God without doing anything to deserve it. Stress and worry are signs that we are still in self-effort; the peace of mind from believing that we already have everything Jesus made available for us is the acid test that proves we are truly at rest.*

#### **A. We no longer have to live by the law. Jesus gave us a better option by offering us grace.**

1. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).
  - a. Jesus is grace, and grace is the truth.
2. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).
  - a. We should be living by grace, *not* by the law. The law was given only to Jewish people, but grace has been extended to everyone.
3. What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works (Romans 4:1-6).
  - a. Christianity was born out of the new covenant. Under the Law of Moses, there was no such thing as a Christian; therefore, if we are to call ourselves Christians, we must move out from under the law and learn to live under grace.

- b. Under the law, we will always operate by the flesh. The law requires us to work to get anything done.
  - c. Abraham lived even before the law; grace was already in operation. He was justified by his belief, not by his performance.
- 4. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Galatians 3:9, 10).
  - a. The law had more than six hundred commandments. Our efforts to try to do something that cannot be done—keep all of the law—automatically put us under the curse.
  - b. The law was not given to make us holy, but to make us realize that we are incapable of keeping all of it. The law points us to Jesus, who was the only one who *could* keep it.

**B. Under the law, self-effort was required. Under grace, all that is required is faith in Christ.**

- 1. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Galatians 2:16).
  - a. Jesus, not the works of the law, is the reason why we can be blessed.
- 2. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his (Hebrews 4:10).
  - a. Under the new covenant, the focus is on learning how to enter into resting from our self-efforts.
- 3. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work (Romans 11:6).
  - a. If we have to do anything to earn what we have, it is not by grace. Many Christians still work hard to get what Jesus has already made available.
- 4. They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?" Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent" (John 6:28, 29, *NLT*).
  - a. God does not need us to try to do what He already did. Our sweat will not accomplish anything, but our faith *will*.
  - b. Religion is not the same thing as a relationship with God. Religion condemns and judges people; it does not see the person, but instead sees processes and works. A relationship with Jesus is all about receiving what He wants to give us, even if we do not deserve it.

**C. The definitions of rest and the Sabbath have evolved from the law to grace.**

- 1. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my

- rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief (Hebrews 4:1-6).
- a. Rest is the highest kind of faith there is. When we enter into rest, our faith takes possession of what has already been made available.
  - b. Rest does not mean inactivity or rest *from* work; it means to rest *while* we are working. True rest means we are not stressed out.
  - c. "The gospel" specifically refers to the Gospel of Grace.
  - d. The authenticity of our faith is demonstrated through our rest.
2. Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Hebrews 4:7-11).
- a. Healing, deliverance, prosperity, and everything pertaining to our children are all finished works. We can rest in this knowledge.
  - b. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children (Isaiah 54:13).
  - c. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was a particular day; however, the Old Testament can be described as the book of shadows. The Sabbath, as it was described, was a shadow of Jesus. In the New Testament, the Sabbath is not a day, but Jesus, Himself.
  - d. When we are not at rest, we are not in belief. Worry and stress come from unbelief.
  - e. Instead of laboring to be rich, delivered, or healed, we should instead labor to be at rest. Sometimes we must *work* to remain at rest when the world tries to make us doubt.

**D. Under grace, our faith allows God to do things for which we cannot take the credit.**

1. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat (Joshua 24:13).
  - a. Some Christians who have been in church a long time still have difficulty believing that they could actually get something from God without doing anything to deserve it.
2. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name (Deuteronomy 6:10-13).
  - a. After God pulls us out of the ditch and rescues us, we can have a tendency to forget what He did for us.
  - b. When Jesus and His disciples got into the boat and a storm arose, the disciples panicked because they were not at rest (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41).
  - c. In rest, Jesus was controlling the storm and guiding the boat; the disciples did not realize this.
  - d. They did not know that God, Himself, was in their boat. When storms hit in our lives, we must remember that when Jesus is in our boat, we *will* make it to the other side.

Category: grace

Keywords: contrast, law, grace, rest, resting, faith, belief, believe