

Myths that Turn from the Truth

There are two main distinctions to recognize with the law of Moses: (1) the moral *righteousness* of the law; (2) the non-moral *actions* of the law. The *righteousness* of the law is expressed in the moral commandments, “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness ... Thou shalt not covet” (Exo 20:13-17). Such morality is inherent and binding upon all people made after the image of God. But the *actions* of the law are the non-moral ordinances God imposed upon His people by circumcision: abstaining from meats, keeping the Sabbath day, observing annual feasts, and offering sacrifices.

Because Christ set us free from those *actions* of the law, He warned us to not misunderstand Him as destroying the *righteousness* of the law, “**Think not** that I am come **to destroy the law [nomos 3551]**, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but **to fulfil**” (Mat 5:17), “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for **this is the law [nomos 3551] and the prophets**” (Mat 7:12). He will deny entrance into the Kingdom those that didn’t keep the *righteousness* of the law, “I never knew you: depart from me, **ye that work iniquity [anomia 458]**” (Mat 7:23), “workers of lawlessness” (DBY), “you lawbreakers” (NET), “you who practice lawlessness” (NKJV), “you who break God’s laws” (NLT). The Greek noun *anomia* is the negation of the noun *nomos* for “law.”

The issue with the Gentiles in Galatia was that false teachers of the law had deceived them into circumcision with the intent of keeping the *actions* of the law. The Greek noun *ergon* means “actions,” whatever actions the context requires. In Galatians, it’s Peter’s actions that “he did eat with the Gentiles” (Gal 2:12), “We are **Jews** by birth and not **Gentile** sinners, yet we know that no one is justified by **the works [ergon 2041] of the law** but by **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ**. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by **the faithfulness of Christ** and not by **the works [ergon 2041] of the law**, because by **the works [ergon 2041] of the law** no one will be justified” (Gal 2:15-16 NET). Nobody is justified by the *actions* of the law—abstaining from unclean meats—but by Christ’s faithfulness to His Father in giving Himself as the sacrifice for our sins, “I have been **crucified with Christ**, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of **the faithfulness of the Son of God**, who loved me and **gave himself for me**” (Gal 2:20 NET).

This was also the issue Paul addressed with the Romans—Christ’s faithfulness versus the *actions* of the law, “the righteousness of God through **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** ... because of **Jesus’ faithfulness**” (Rom 3:22.26 NET), “a man is justified by **faith [faithfulness]** without **the deeds [ergon 2041] of the law**” (Rom 3:28).

Rather than the *actions* of the law versus the faithfulness of Christ, false teaching today makes it an issue of the *righteousness* of the law versus our faith or beliefs. The *righteousness* of the law is being destroyed by faith.

In the apostles’ days, the false teachers were “specially they of **the circumcision ... Jewish fables [mythos 3454]**, and commandments of men, that **turn from the truth**. Unto the pure **all things are pure**” (Tit 1:10,14-15). The myth they used to turn people from the truth was that some meats weren’t pure. But these were simply *actions* of righteousness which don’t save, “**Not by works [ergon 2041] of righteousness** which we have done, but according to **his mercy he saved us**, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost [*breath*]” (Tit 3:5). In our days, true to what Paul prophesied, it’s a different myth altogether that’s turning people away from the truth, “**For the time will come** when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their ears* **from the truth**, and shall be **turned unto fables [mythos 3454]**” (2Ti 4:3-4). The myth is that we’re saved by faith, not by keeping the moral *righteousness* of the law.

The truth Christ and His apostles taught is that we must live righteously: “That **except your righteousness** shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall **in no case enter** into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:20); “Therefore if the uncircumcision keep **the righteousness of the law**” (Rom 2:26); “That **the righteousness of the law** might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:4); “that we, being dead to sins, should **live unto righteousness**” (1Pe 2:24); “And if **the righteous scarcely be saved**, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1Pe 4:18); “he that **doeth righteousness** is righteous, even as he is righteous ... whosoever **doeth not righteousness** is not of God” (1Jo 3:7,10).

In Christ’s last words to us, “Blessed *are* they that **do his commandments**, that they may have right to **the tree of life**, and may enter in through the gates **into the city**” (Rev 22:14). It’s not about believing but about doing God’s commandments.