

Faith & Works

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In my last article, we saw that Grace as a comprehensive Biblical term represents everything God did in providing salvation to mankind. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), which means eternal separation from God. Sin is a violation against God and causes mankind to lose fellowship with Him. God is absolutely holy and absolutely just and He cannot just overlook sin. There has to be punishment for sin and that punishment is eternal separation from fellowship with God. The only way man can regain that fellowship is if he pays the just penalty for that sin. It doesn't matter what that sin is, the penalty is the same. We have all lost our fellowship with God and that cannot be restored unless we pay the penalty in full.

Thankfully for us, God is rich in grace and mercy and He doesn't want to see man suffer for all eternity. He wants man to have a chance to regain that fellowship so He came up with a plan where man can have a hope of being reconciled without having to suffer an eternity of punishment. God was under no obligation to do this. There is nothing mankind can do to earn or pay for it, we don't in any way deserve it. Nothing man did compelled God to do this. And this means of reconciliation came at great personal expense for God. Namely the life of His Son as a substitutionary death penalty for us. God could have washed His hands of mankind and walked away to leave mankind to his fate forever and God would have been perfectly within His right to do so. He didn't owe man anything. Mankind got himself into this predicament all by himself without any help from God. God was absolutely blameless in all that man did. God had no obligations towards mankind whatsoever in this entire affair.

But because God loves us so much, He graciously came up with a plan whereby man could be reconciled to Him and escape the death penalty of sin. Grace can be illustrated as God reaching down from heaven towards sin sick and doomed mankind with an offer of salvation. His motivation for doing this came entirely out of His love for mankind. That's grace.

Faith as a comprehensive Biblical term represents man's response to God's gracious offer. We respond to God's grace by faith. Grace alone cannot save us because if it did, then everyone living would automatically have their tickets punched for the ride to heaven no matter how they lived. We have to respond to God's gracious offer in



Faith works and glorifies God!

order to receive it. The response we must give is represented in the Bible as faith. It is by grace that we are saved through faith ([Ephesians 2:8](#)).

Neither grace nor faith are mutually exclusive, meaning one does not rule or cancel the other one out. Our salvation is not by grace only because we must have faith. Salvation cannot be by faith only because we must have grace. Salvation is made available by grace through faith. Two roles, two actions, two responses working together. God responded to our situation with grace. We respond to God's offer through faith. In order for either one of these to be of any benefit to us, we have to have both.

Now when we read on to Ephesians 2:9 we see another point that Paul makes in that context. *"Not of works, lest any man should boast."* So how do works operate in our faith response? This is a very important question that needs to be answered because there a vast number of people who believe and teach that faith is really faith only and that no works are necessary. They support this teaching by saying that works don't save us. And within the proper context, they are absolutely right. Works don't save us. The remainder of this lesson is going to examine the role of faith and how it relate to works.

First of all, we need to define what a work is. A work is any mental or physical act that is intended to produce a result. The act of making a decision is a work. Even the mental exercise of believing something is a work. Believing something requires the intake of information upon which a decision is made. That is an act which is intended to produce a result.

The Bible even defines faith as a work in 1 Thessalonians 1:3

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father". And again in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, *"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power"* (KJV).

Faith is a work. Now for those who believe and teach that Biblical faith means 'faith only' and that we are saved by faith without works, this becomes a problem because if we are not saved by works, then we cannot be saved by faith which is defined as a work in scripture. So then how do we solve this problem? How can we be saved by faith which is a work, but not be saved by works? The simple answer to this is that, yes the word of God does teach us that we are not saved by works, but it never says we can be saved without them. The understanding that not being saved by works and being saved without works is an assumption that is totally foreign to what the word of God actually teaches us about faith and works.

Our understanding of faith and works must come from a comprehensive view of all that was written about them. Jesus declared in Matthew 7:21 that only the obedient would inherit eternal life. One cannot be obedient to Jesus without engaging in works.

There are more than one kind of works and more than one way which they are relevant to our salvation. Not all works are the same and not all of them have the same application in regards to our salvation. So one must ask, in what way do my works save and in what way do they not save me?

1) The gift of God's grace, which is everything He did in order to secure a means and hope of salvation for mankind cannot be bypassed by any work. God's grace cannot be taken away from or diminished by any human

work. God's grace cannot be earned, payed for or deserved by any human work. In that way, our works cannot save us. Our works cannot save us by going around God's grace.

2) God was under no obligation to provide man a means of salvation. He would have been perfectly well within His rights to let us die. The entire plan of redemption for mankind was all set in place before time began 1 Peter 1:20. Paul wrote in Romans 5:8, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" No human work can add to or take away from that commitment. In that way, we are not saved by our works. Our works cannot save us by going around God's plan of salvation.

3) Jesus gave His life for us (Galatians 2:20). He died the death we deserve (1 John 2:2). No human work can make that sacrifice unnecessary. In that way, we are not saved by our works. Our works can not save us by going around the blood of Christ.

4) Jesus said in John 14:6, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" No human work can bypass Christ and get us to the Father. In that way, we are not saved by our works.

5) We were dead in our sins before we came to Christ (Colossians 2:13). He purchased us with His own blood (Acts 20:28). We were purchased with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). We are therefore His possession (Eph 1:14). We were dead, and now we are alive. The cost was Jesus' blood. We belong to God. He is rightfully entitled to everything we do. Every work we engage in rightfully belongs to Him. Our works are not solely ours to decide what to do with. There's nothing we can do that will buy us back from God. We have nothing to offer that does not already belong to Him. In that way, our works cannot save us.

In our last lesson, we looked at the term faith as it was used in many applications in the word of God. We're going to go back through a few of those and make some observations as it relates to the subject of works. Let's keep in mind as we go through this list that faith is defined as a work in the word of God which we saw earlier in this lesson.

Faith is a Work:

1 Thessalonians 1:3, "*Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father*" And then again in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, "*Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power...*" The inspired apostle Paul defined faith as a work.

The work of Faith is our Shield:

Ephesians 6:16, "*Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*"

Using our faith as a shield is a work of faith. We cannot use our faith as a shield and quench the darts of the wicked without engaging in a work. Using our faith as a shield requires a decision to do so and then the act of doing it. God does not owe us anything when we do this. We don't deserve God's grace nor can we merit our salvation by making our faith a shield. We have not bypassed Jesus with this work of faith. We have not added to nor taken away from God's grace with this action in any way shape or form.

The work of Faith is both a sacrifice and a service:

Philippians 2:17, *“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.”*

Sacrifices are things we have to give up. Service is something we do for one another and for those outside Christ. We cannot engage in a faith that sacrifices and serves without doing something. A faith without sacrifice and service would be a faith that is missing these works. James wrote in chapter 2 and verse 14, *“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?”* This was a rhetorical question which had the implied answer of ‘NO’. It is not possible for faith alone to be a sacrifice and a service. It is not possible for faith to be a sacrifice and a service without works. The work of Faith therefore includes the work of sacrifice and service.

That being said, this work of faith does not merit us salvation. It doesn’t pay for it, it cannot add anything to what God has done for us, It cannot save us apart from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In these ways, our work of faith through sacrifice and service can not save us.

The work of Faith is a Walk:

2 Corinthians 5:7, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight“.*

Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

Colossians 2:6, *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him...”*

The work of faith includes a walk. A walk is a way of life lived. It is not possible to walk a way of life without engaging in a work. Our work of faith must include our walk, our way of life. This work of faith is not meritorious, meaning we don’t deserve eternal life, nor have we earned it. It cannot get us to heaven apart from Jesus Christ, nor can it make His sacrifice for us unnecessary. These are ways in which our walk of faith cannot save us. But this does not mean our walk of faith is not necessary.

James wrote in James 2:17, *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”* James says that a faith without works is alone and dead. James made it clear in verse 14 that a faith without the walk will not save us.

The work of Faith is a trial:

1 Peter 1:7, *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”*

A trial is a test of faith, patience, or stamina through subjection to suffering or temptation. We cannot endure the trial of faith without doing something. James wrote in chapter 2 and verse 18, *“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”* We show our faith to others when we endure the trial of our faith and overcome suffering and temptation.

The trial of our faith cannot pay for our salvation. This work of faith cannot get us a home in heaven apart from God’s grace. We don’t deserve God’s grace when we work the trial of our faith. These are ways in which our work of faith cannot save us. It does not mean that our trial of faith is unnecessary.

The work of Faith is a Fight:

1 Timothy 6:12 *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses”*

Fighting requires defensive and offensive actions. We have to defend and carry the truth of God’s word to the lost. One cannot engage in a fight without doing something. Fighting the good fight of faith requires action. James wrote in chapter 2 verse 19-20, *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”* James declared that a faith with no works is a dead faith. In verse 14 of James 2, He made it clear that faith only would not save. A dead faith cannot produce a living soul.

Fighting the good fight of faith is a work. Does this work of faith merit God’s salvation? No... Will this work of faith make Jesus sacrifice on the cross for our sins unnecessary? No... Will this work of faith repay God what it cost Him to offer us salvation? No way... These are ways in which our fight of faith cannot save us. There are things that our works simply cannot do and we need to know this in order to have the proper mindset or attitude about them.

Biblical Faith is a Shield, faith is a sacrifice, faith is a service, faith is a walk, faith is a trial, faith is a fight, therefore faith must be a work.

Works cannot earn or merit us salvation but we can’t be saved without them. Jesus declared in Matthew 7:21, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”* Since we cannot get into the kingdom of God without doing His will, then we know we can’t get there without works.

Works cannot compel God to offer man a means of reconciliation but we cannot be reconciled without them. Paul wrote in Titus 3:5, *“Not by works 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”* God implemented the plan of redemption all on His own without any help or motivation from us whatsoever.

Works cannot place us in a position where we can boast of our salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* Works can never be used to make us prideful, but we cannot be saved without them.

Works cannot replace Jesus on the cross, But we can’t be saved without them.

Works cannot bypass Jesus to gain access the Father but we can’t access Him without them.

Works cannot repay what it cost God to save us, but we can’t be saved without them. 1 Corinthians 6:20, *“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* The price that was paid for us has nothing whatsoever to do with our works. Works cannot repay that debt but we certainly cannot be saved without them.

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:8-9

“...God, Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his

own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”

God’s grace was given to us through Christ Jesus. That decision was made before time began. Nothing we can possibly do can change that, add to it or take away from it. But that does not mean works/obedience to God is not necessary,

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”

We cannot obey the gospel without working. Its just not possible. Those who obey not, or fail to obey, will be punished forever. Faith without obedience leads to destruction. Faith without works is dead.

James 2:20-22, *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?”* (KJV)

We have looked at lot of things that works cannot do. Now let’s take a little time and look at some of the things the word of God says works can do.

The work of obeying Jesus makes us wise: Matthew 7:24

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:”

Failing to obey Jesus makes us foolish: Matthew 7:26-27

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

Works of obedience to God demonstrates our love for Him: John 14:23-24

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

Works of disobedience to God demonstrates that we do not love God: John 14:24

“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”

Those who work righteousness are accepted by God: Acts 10:35

“But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

Works of obedience makes us servants of righteousness: Romans 6:16

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

Works of righteousness make us righteous 1 John 3:7

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”

Failure to work righteousness results in our not being of God: 1 John 3:10

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

If we fail to work obedience to God’s commandments and claim we know Him, we are liars with no truth in us: 1 John 2:4

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

Those who do work obedience to God’s commandments are in God and also have God perfected within them: 1 John 2:5

“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”

Those who work obedience have purified their souls: 1 Peter 1:22

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently”

Works of obedience will help us seek for glory and honour and immortality and eternal life: Romans 2:6-7

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life”

Failure to obey will result in condemnation: Romans 2:8-9

“But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile”

Those who do good will be resurrected to eternal life while those who do evil will be resurrected to condemnation: John 5:28-29

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Obedience to Jesus Christ results in Him being the author of our eternal salvation: Hebrews 5:9

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”

Good works result in good things. Bad works result in bad things. But one thing we must never forget is that no matter what good we may do in life, our works did not promote God to offer us salvation. They can not pay for it. They cannot earn it. No matter what good we may do we don’t deserve it. We can’t work our way to heaven without Christ. We can’t work enough to get around the need for His death on the cross. Those are things that

works can never do and we must always keep that in mind. We can never work enough to gain an eternal inheritance in heaven apart from God's grace and our faith.

But on the other side of the coin, we also can't get to heaven without works either. If we want to be saved, we are going to have to work for something we can never earn, never pay for, never merit, never deserve and never get apart from God's grace.

John 6:27

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

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