

How Grace and Works Fit Together

by Eli Brayley



"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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." - Ephesians 2:8-10

Notice how works are mentioned three times in this passage. First, we are saved by grace through faith and not of works. Works have absolutely nothing to do with us being saved. If we say that we have to have works to be saved then we flatly contradict this Scripture.

Secondly, our salvation is the work of God. We are His work-manship. He is the one who worked so that we could be saved without works. He died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. We don't work but receive, by faith, the gift of God that He worked for.

Lastly, we are saved unto, or for, good works. We are not saved by good works, but God saved us so that we would be people who do good works. When Christians stress the fact that works have nothing to do with salvation it often comes across as if we are saying that Christians have nothing to do with works at all. This of course isn't true, but we simply need to understand where works fit in and where they don't. If we place works in the wrong place, we destroy the gospel and forfeit the reception of salvation (Gal. 2:21, 5:4). That is why we take this so seriously.

Therefore whenever we hear someone say that works have something to do with *being saved* (notice I didn't say *with salvation*) we immediately recognize it is not the gospel. The gospel is all about grace: receiving something you don't work for. "*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.*" (Rom. 4:4-5) We do not believe that grace in this context has to do with God graciously working in us to do works. That is for another time. This context has to do with receiving the gift of justification without the necessity of doing any works at all - not even those works which God works in us. Notice!

"Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested..." (Rom. 3:21)

"To the man that does not work..." (Rom. 4:5)

"David describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God counts righteousness without works..." (Rom. 4:6)

"Not of works..." (Eph. 2:9)

It is "not of works"! Being saved has nothing to do with works, even the works that God does through us (for that is for *after* we are saved: Eph. 2:10, Phil. 1:6, 2:13, Titus 2:14, 3:8). This is talking about the absolute absence of the necessity of works for being saved. That is what the gospel is all about!

And as I have said elsewhere (which is the point I must stress again), it is *not faith* that produces love in us (love, which is the essence of all good works), but it is the *object* of faith that does this, and the only object of faith that does this is the gospel as stated above. Only the belief that *God justifies the ungodly without any necessity of works because God loves you and died on the cross for your sins so that you can be saved freely as a gift* produces the resultant fruit of love in our lives. It is only when we believe in the love that God has toward us, as demonstrated in the "unspeakable gift" of the death of His Son, that we truly understand what love is and are transformed thereby. So we must banish the idea that mere faith produces works and that works are required to be saved. The true Biblical principle, which I will paraphrase from Gal. 5:6, is that: **faith in the love revealing gospel of justification by faith without works produces in us the love which moves us to do good works.** That is the true relationship between faith and works, and how salvation and works fit together.

So ironically, when we start telling people that they must have works to be saved, and when we get them to stop looking at the freeness of the gift of God's love but rather at themselves and their works, we sever the root of fruit-bearing. We may be sincere in our desire to see people bear fruit, but we are actually fighting against the cause. The truth is, the grace of God is counter-intuitive. If you preach that men do not have to do works to be saved since God has provided everything necessary for them because He loves them, they will actually produce the fruit of love. If we preach that they must do works to be saved (however we explain it), we will actually see just the opposite. No one will be saved, and everyone will become miserable, being motivated by fear, not knowing the true love and grace of God, nor the joyful confidence that grace brings. When we plant such seeds, should we be surprised at the fruit that's borne?

Contrary to what the wisdom of the world may think, grace is the only answer to man's sin problem. God's grace through Christ justifies and saves us, and that same grace also sanctifies and changes us, making us living witnesses of the love of God in Christ Jesus which we have personally believed and experienced. As John Newton said so well, it truly is "amazing grace!"

Below is a list of recommended books to help you understand and grow in grace.

*God's Way of Peace** by Horatius Bonar
We Would See Jesus by Roy Hession
*Revolutionary Love** by Festo Kivengere
Case For Christ by Lee Strobel
The Death of Christ(for academic readers) by James Denney
The Cross by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
*Thankfulness and Confession** pamphlet by Brad Scheelke
*How to be Free From Bitterness** pamphlet by Jim Wilson
Classic Christianity by Bob George
Why Grace Changes Everything by Chuck Smith
*Discipleship by Grace** by Derek Levensky
Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything by Tullian Tchividjian
Agape Leadership by Peterson & Strauch
Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce by Eric Metaxas
*Another Hand on Mine: Carl Becker** by William Petersen

*Note: * indicates our publication or difficult to find.*

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