

## **The Gospel of Divine Accomplishment**

Ephesians 1:3-6, 13-14.

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It would be wonderful if we could simply rejoice in the truth of the gospel without having to contend with lies and heresy. On the other hand, the beauty and power of the gospel of grace, and the precious souls who will perish without it, demand that we “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people” (Jude v.3). There are those today who would say to me, “Let’s stay positive, people don’t want to hear negative talk.” They go about telling nice stories and anecdotes sprinkled with a Bible verse here and there and then dare to call that preaching.

Consequently, there is a growing number of people within our churches who profess to be Christians but who are not. They are the deceived. They are the blind being led by the blind leaders who lead people only into the pit of hell. These people are not being given the whole gospel; rather, they are given a watered-down, man-centered version of the gospel designed to attract them to church membership but cannot save anyone. This is serious. So, I beg you to hear me.

### **Who Saves Who?**

There are two gospels heard in the world, though only one is true, and the other is a man-made, man-centered counterfeit. Those two gospels are 1) that of divine accomplishment and 2) the gospel of human achievement. The glorious news is that the gospel of divine accomplishment, as preserved for us in the pages of the New Testament, is “the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Ephesians 1:13). Still, the gospel of human achievement is by far the more popular of the two gospels for it preserves the delusion that man remains spiritually and morally capable of responding to the gospel, and therefore is in control.

One other note here: the proponents of the false gospel would never refer to it as human achievement, for they readily concede that one cannot be saved apart from grace and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ — although they quickly insist that God cannot save without that

person's vital contribution of faith in order to "get in" followed by good deeds in order to "stay in." In other words, the gospel of human achievement views grace, faith, and Christ's work as absolutely necessary but insufficient apart from man's contribution. In this scheme, it is the combined work of God and fallen man that results in the salvation of man (synergism).

Now, the truth, the gospel of divine accomplishment, also includes the necessity of one hearing and believing the gospel in order to be included in Christ. However, the gospel of divine accomplishment teaches that grace is what saves us, and faith is the gift of God. Hearing and believing therefore is evidence of a *prior grace received* as opposed to a means of accessing grace for salvation (see Ephesians 2:1-10; I Corinthians 1:26-31). The gospel of divine accomplishment is just as it sounds, that is, the proclamation of what God has *already* accomplished in his Son on behalf of spiritually and morally dead sinners, who, due to that condition, cannot contribute anything as a means of getting in or remaining in the household of God. As Jonathan Edwards stated, "The only thing you contribute to your salvation is the sin that made it necessary."

Paul's letter to the Ephesians offers us wonderful insight into the gospel of divine accomplishment:

#### **The Gospel of Divine Accomplishment**

**"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves" (Ephesians 1:3-6, NIV).**

Whereas the gospel of human achievement would change Paul's message to read:

#### **The Gospel of Human Achievement**

**"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed *me* in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For *I chose him* and therefore became**

**holy and blameless in his sight. In love I am adopted to be a son through Jesus Christ in accordance with *my pleasure and free-will*—to the praise of *my decision* and his glorious grace, which he has *conditionally given me* in the One he loves.”**

As one can see, the gospel of human achievement does not exclude any role of God in Christ as the title might imply; rather, God the Father is said to be the source of spiritual blessing in Christ. However, in this scheme, God’s action in Christ is not at the center of salvation; rather it is man’s response and action that is central and vital. Grace and faith in the work of Christ are said to be absolutely necessary, but *insufficient* and thus requiring autonomous action on the part of the sinner, without which God cannot save him. In this scheme, though man is viewed as a sinner, he remains morally *capable of* participating in his own salvation and at the center.

And once you are in God’s household, both gospels also have two very different views as to how one *remains* in. One is unconditional grounded in God’s mercy and power, and the other, probationary based on your performance (conditional). According to the gospel of divine accomplishment, how one remains in is revealed in Ephesians 1:13-14: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

Here we learn that at a certain point in time, one hears the gospel, believes the gospel, and then is marked in Christ with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (see also Galatians 3:1-5). So, it is by a work of the Spirit in accord with sovereign grace alone that the spiritually and morally dead sinner is made alive in Christ and united to him by faith, and so enters the household of God; it is then that this newly included one in Christ is sealed as God’s own possession, a member of the holy people of God, the indwelling Spirit being the evidence of this seal of ownership. And this seal is also *the guarantee* of final inheritance which is yet to be fully realized at Christ’s return and the consummation of this age (Revelation 21:1-8). To say it another way, it is God’s very own presence within you by the Holy Spirit which serves as the

evidence and guarantee of one's inheritance in Christ until redemption is fully realized on the Day of Christ.

The message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, as tied to divine accomplishment with the guarantee of its consummation, is thematic in the New Testament.

- Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
- I Peter 1:3-5: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."
- Romans 8:28-30: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

In a testimony to the insidious nature of man's compulsion to be at the center of God's saving activity, there are those who teach that by "foreknew" here, that God looked down the annals of time and saw those who would choose to believe and so then predestined them. Once again, this teaching places God as responding to man. But God's foreknowledge is always centered on his own saving action in Christ and not the will of the sinner. Nonetheless, this type of teaching remains popular for the reason previously stated, that is, so fallen man may remain autonomous from God and possess the controlling center stage. It is not a saving gospel, and therefore is no gospel at all; indeed, Paul said it is worthy only of a double curse (see Galatians 1:6-9).

On the other hand, “The message of truth, the gospel of your salvation”, as Paul states at Ephesians 1:13, is that beginning with his sovereign choice in eternity past, God then accomplished your salvation in full by sending his Son into human history to suffer and die as an atoning sacrifice for your sins: past, present, and future; and by raising him from the dead, God declared him just and we who are in him as justified (see Romans 5:1-2). At Pentecost, God poured out his Spirit upon his people to empower and apply what Christ accomplished, and the promise of the restoration of his presence within his people was also fulfilled.

In short, you are in Christ because of God’s saving action, you believe because of God’s saving action, and you remain in God’s household, kept not by your good deeds and power, but by the power of God.

This means you are a new creation, in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17-21). You have a new identity as God’s beloved child, just as he loves Christ, and you are now called to walk in accordance with that new identity as a member of God’s new humanity in Christ Jesus. “The old has gone, the new is here!”, and while it is yet to be fully realized, you nonetheless have this hope as an anchor for the soul. AMEN.

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