

Is it Grace, Works or Both?

September 13, 2020

by C Benjamin Dill

Good morning, Lighthouse, are you ready for the Word of God this morning?

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by **grace** are ye saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

9 Not of **works**, lest any man should boast.

Faithful students of the Bible know that there are basically two categories of religion that all of the different so-called faiths in the world fall into.

Those two categories are: grace and works.

There are those who believe that man can be saved from his sins in full or in part by his own meritorious conduct, which God calls *works*. These works may be anything from religious activities such as baptism, church attendance, giving, observing the Lord's Supper, and trying to keep the law, to any number of good deeds of all kinds; including abstaining from sins.

There are others who believe that man can only be saved from his sins through faith in Jesus alone; Who, being God in flesh, shed His blood to pay for our sins.

What our text refers to as *grace* is that gracious, unselfish act of pure love that was accomplished by our Lord Jesus as He laid down His life on the cross on our behalf.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

3 ...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The **grace** of God that saves us **is received through faith**.

Faith is the Greek word "Pistis". It means reliance upon, trust in, dependence upon.

The verb form of this Greek word is "Pisteuo". This describes to us the act of placing or putting our trust in Jesus and can be for many things; the first and most important of which is to save us from the penalty of our sins and give us eternal life.

Faith also describes the state in which we exist when we have placed our reliance upon Jesus to save us.

Faith is sometimes used to describe the whole body of truth found in the Holy Scriptures.

Jude vs. 3 ...that ye should earnestly contend for **the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.

So, if we were to read **Ephesians 2:8-9** with the definitions of these terms inserted instead of the words themselves, it might go something like this:

For by the act of pure love in Jesus shedding His blood for us on the cross are ye saved, being received through the act on your part of placing your trust, your reliance upon Him to save you; understanding that no part of this is of or dependent upon you; it is rather the gift of God: not of your religious activities or your meritorious deeds or your refraining from sins, lest you be able to brag that you had some part in providing this for yourself.

For us who strive to defend our faith against corruption and who also strive to win as many sinners as possible to a saving knowledge of Christ, **works**, because it is constantly being mis-taught; as either the full or some partial means of access to heaven, has somehow become the enemy.

This is a sad thing, because good works is not the enemy!

If you go read the next verse of our text, you will find that good works is something believers were created to do!

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.

Faith, works and grace are inseparable partners in Christian life; however, you had better understand clearly the roles they each play or there won't be any Christian life to live!

The false doctrine, the heresy of teaching that a man is saved, either in full or in part, by his own works, has been brought against the Lord's Churches for centuries; it is one of Satan's favorite tools to use against us.

When this doctrine is accepted, it causes the hearers to stay lost, somehow believing they are keeping themselves saved through their own efforts.

I was privileged to lead a very sweet couple to Christ this past week.

In our conversation this subject of trusting in our works came up. This man, who had been saved less than 5 minutes said this:

"If you are trusting in your works, doesn't that mean you are not trusting in Jesus?"

He is five minutes old in the Lord and he already understands this clearly!

Even when we defeat this heresy by proper application of Scripture, Satan often gets a second win when we take the proper emphasis off of good works that should rightly be there in our Christian walk.

We all need a clear understanding of faith, works and grace; first of all:

I. Faith is “reliance upon”.

A. Faith is something we use and understand every day.

1. The illustration I use in teaching Basic Bible Truths that has proven extremely effective in getting this message across is very common.
2. When you got paid back in the days before direct deposit, you would take your hard-earned paycheck, hand it over to someone at the bank you probably don't even know, and drive away completely confident, trusting that your money would be there when you need it.
3. “To put in trust with” is what it means to believe; to have faith; that is exactly what you did with your paycheck.
4. Everybody uses faith every day: trusting Jesus to save you works exactly the same way.

B. Exercising faith is your part.

1. God has done His part in all of this.
2. He gave His only begotten Son to die for your sins.
3. He has even proven that it is true.
4. Jesus did His part as well: He willingly laid down His life for you...not to mention finding you and bringing you this glorious message.
5. Now it is your turn to act.
6. You can sit there and stay lost or you can, in your heart, let go of any other hope - and place your trust only in Jesus.
7. “OK Lord, as of now, I'm trusting You to save me from my sins”.

8. Actually, the way that works is that you can say it and mean it with all your heart...or...you can mean it with all your heart whether you say it or not. Since God knows your heart, it's all the same.

Another thing that requires understanding is that:

II. Faith is not a work.

A. You would think that nearly anyone would already know that; but there are some scriptures that get often misinterpreted.

1. **John 6:28-29**

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

2. Some have read these verses and have said, "Look, it says right here that believing is the work of God".

3. No, silly, the Lord had just fed thousands with the miracle of a few loaves and fishes. Those in that crowd are asking the Lord what it would take for them to be able to do that.

4. The Lord is explaining that this miracle wasn't so that they could do it too, it was shown them that they might believe on Him whom God hath sent.

B. The term "faith" or Greek "pistis" is used in two ways in the Scriptures.

1. Faith is a decision in the heart; it is the placing of your trust in Jesus alone to save you from your sins.

Romans 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...

2. After you trust Jesus to save you, faith is the state of having trusted Jesus to save you and now you are continually trusting Him to keep you saved, to guide you, to answer your prayers, to keep His promises: to provide for you in every aspect of life.

3. **1 John 5:13** These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

4. We are saved by Jesus paying for our sins, which He did all by Himself.

5. We receive that salvation through our trusting Him to do it...**Not** of or by any works on our part whatsoever.

Sooner or later someone will read the book of James and the question will come up:

III. How does faith save us?

A. *That is easy to explain, **our faith does not save us!***

1. **James 2:14-18**

14 What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? **can faith save him?** [this answer is obviously “no”]

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;

notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

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.

2. If this is confusing, just think about what you have already learned...

3. We just read in **Ephesians 2:8** that salvation is “not of ourselves...” so is it your faith that saves you, or is it God’s gracious sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that saves you?

4. Well, that is plain enough; “for by grace are ye saved”.

5. Our faith is merely the means through which Christ’s sacrifice is imputed to us.

6. It is, however, perfectly acceptable to say that we are justified or saved by faith [such as in **Romans 3 and 4**] provided you have prequalified that statement by pointing out that the faith being discussed is in Jesus’ work on the cross.

B. Don’t make the mistake of many who conclude that if our faith doesn’t save us, then it must be our works or some combination of faith and works.

1. No, **it’s the blood that saves...nothing else!**

2. **Romans 5:9** Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

3. **Romans 3:25** [Jesus] Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation **through faith in his blood**, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

IV. If works have nothing to do with going to heaven, why bother; why are they so important?

A. *There are a multitude of reasons; here are a few:*

1. Good works are part of the purpose for which you were created.

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.

2. Good works are the primary means through which we glorify God.

a. **Psalm 66:2** Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.

b. **Ephesians 3:21** Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

2. Maybe the most important to you is that good works are necessary in order to be sure that you really are going to heaven.

a. **1 John 2:3** And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

b. **1 John 3:14** We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...

B. If your faith does not motivate you unto good works; according to the Apostle James, you have a dead faith.

1. Genuine faith in Christ to save us always motivates us to righteous activity, because it is upon that faith that God causes our "dead in sin" spirit to be made alive, born again, passed from death to life...and re-created in righteousness and true holiness!

2. **James 2:17** Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

3. Maybe you trusted Jesus for some miracle or maybe to save you from some danger or some traumatic situation?

4. Salvation and the new birth of our "dead in sins" spirit that comes with it, happens only when we place our faith in Jesus to save us from our sins.

5. Christ died for our sins...all other problems He can solve without dying.

Conclusion: So...

Is it grace, is it works or is it both?

Roman 11:5-6

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

False teachers and those who simply do not understand how salvation works use many scriptures to try and prove that it takes more than Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to save us.

Those Scriptures not only do not prove their point, they ultimately prove the truth.

That 5-minute old Christian I told you about was dead right!

As long as you are depending or hoping or wishing or trying to assure yourself, "just in case" by working to make sure...what you are doing is just the opposite of what it takes to be born again.

Put your trust in Jesus and Jesus alone.

Most of us here have done just that and we don't lose even a wink of sleep worrying about whether we are going to heaven.

We depend on Jesus and Him alone!

Listen up Church, understanding this truth not only allows sinners to be genuinely saved, understanding this truth will prevent Satan from destroying this Church!

All of us need to be equipped and able to contend for that true faith, which was once delivered to the saints!