

6.30.19 ~ Ephesians 2:8-10, Salvation is by God's Grace, through Faith, expressed in Good Works.

In chapter one, and the first part of chapter two in Ephesians, we read about many of God's blessings, the greatest of which is our salvation.

Read Ephesians 2:8-9... Paul makes it clear that there isn't anything we can do to earn salvation; it is a gift from God, through Jesus Christ (See **Romans 3:10-12, 21-24; Romans 4:25; Romans 6:23.**

Going to church, singing in a choir, teaching a Sunday School class, going on a missions trip, obeying the Ten Commandments (as if anyone really could), being a good neighbor, helping the poor and needy, visiting orphans and widows, these are all good things, but none of them can save a person from sin's penalty.

The only thing any person can do, in order to receive God's forgiveness, is to believe in and receive God's Son, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (cf **Acts 4:12; 2:21**).

When you repent, confessing Christ as Lord, you act in faith to receive God's grace, for it is a gift from God, it cannot be earned by [any] good works or rituals or sacrifices, that you, or I, could ever accomplish.

In Jesus' day, and in the thousand years before He came, certain works *were thought to* render a person as good, even righteous, not only in his or her community's eyes, but also in the eyes of God.

During the time of Jesus, religious leaders did not encourage, exhort, or exemplify righteousness of the heart, but instead they mandated and regulated the keeping of rules, laws, ceremonies, sacrifices, covenants and traditions.

The Pharisees proclaimed and promoted their own man-made righteousness; but Jesus sovereignly proclaimed and exemplified God's righteousness.

Jesus' first comprehensive teaching among the Jews, is known as the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**). In **Matthew 5:1-12**, Jesus taught about the blessings and the persecutions which come to everyone who follows Him. In **verses 13-16**, He taught about being "salt" and "light," in order to bring praise to God the Father. In **verse 17**, He declared that He was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, and in **verse 20**, Jesus turned the prevailing religious attitudes and practices upside down, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and [the] Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

In other words, without the inner righteousness that can only come through a personal relationship with God, no one will enter the kingdom of heaven, for all the external acts, religious rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, feast days and law keeping, will not bring salvation.

See **Galatians 2:15-16...** No one is, or will be, justified before God based on keeping the Law, for no one is, or will be, saved by what they might accomplish or avoid.

Paul proclaims (**Romans 10:9-10**), "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

Salvation happens in the heart of a person through faith in Jesus Christ, it is an undeserved and unmerited gift from God, and is therefore, called "grace."

Since salvation is not the result of works, no one can boast or take any credit for making it happen; but if salvation is all by God's grace, and human effort has nothing to do with it, are "good works" still important?

Read Ephesians 2:10... God ordained that we should do good works, in His power, for His glory; at the point of genuine salvation, we are created in Christ Jesus to accomplish that which God prepared for us to do, having given us everything we need to be victorious.

Good works have nothing to do with gaining salvation, but they have everything to do with declaring salvation by honoring the One who has saved us.

No good work can produce salvation, but many good works are produced by salvation. Before you can do a good work for the Lord, the Lord has to do His good work in you (cf. **Romans 5:8; 8:1**). God has raised you from death, to life, for eternity, in Christ.

Look, righteous attitudes and righteous acts proceed out of a changed life, they don't lead to nor can they prove a changed life.

Paul writes (**2Timothy 3:17**), that in Christ we have been made "adequate, equipped for every good work," because Jesus (**Titus 2:14**), "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Jesus has redeemed us to be "a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good."

No wonder James says (**James 2:17**) "faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself," (**verse 26**) "For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."

God will complete what He has set out to do in and through those who genuinely belong to Him. But then, that really is the important question, isn't it? Do you belong to God through Christ?

2Corinthians 13:5, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?"

Are you genuinely saved by God's grace, through faith in God's Son? Is there evidence of God's Spirit [the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth] living in you?

Jesus said (**Mark 1:15, 17**), "Repent and believe the gospel... Then, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men," and in **John 10:27-28**, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give

eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

Wow! No wonder Jesus said (**John 14:6**) "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Have you received God's gracious and merciful gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? If you are a Christian, praise God! And in fact, you are my brother or sister, for every genuine believer and follower of Christ is a member of the Body of Christ, the Church, the Fellowship of Believers, the Family of God.

We are encouraged, equipped, and exhorted to honor the Lord and to serve Him, as a living examples of "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

If you are here today and you are not a Christian, but you sense in your heart the need to get right with God, to receive forgiveness for your sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord, what are you waiting for?

Acts 2:21, "And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Acts 4:12, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 10:43, "Opening his mouth, Peter said:

'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ ([for] He is Lord of all)— you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.'"

Pastor Mike
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