

By Grace unto Works

Ephesians 2: 8-10

Our text today deals with doctrine that has been debated for centuries. This debate was central to Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* being nailed to the chapel door in Wittenberg, Germany, sparking the Reformation. Men and scholars have long debated the means by which salvation is obtained – is it an act of grace through faith alone; is it obtained through our works, the keeping of certain ordinances and religious sacraments; or, is it a combination of the two.

While this debate continues to rage, there is really no reason for it to continue. If we believe the Word of God to be the final authority for all of faith and practice in life, then we must be content and willing to allow the Bible to speak for itself. While this passage isn't the only one to address this doctrine, it alone will settle the debate, if we allow the Word to speak.

I want to closely examine the [certainties](#) revealed in the text as we consider the thought: [By Grace unto Works](#). If you are unsure about the means of salvation, I hope our time today will settle your confusion and offer the assurance you need. As we consider the passage, keep in mind the possibilities presented by man – Salvation is an act of grace; it is obtained through works; it is the result of both working together. First we must consider:

I. The Inability of Works – Paul is not vague or careless in handling this issue. When one takes the time to consider the passage, it becomes immediately evident that works are unable to save. Consider:

A. Their Inadequacy – Paul declared that salvation is [not of works, V.9](#). He removed the possibility of human effort to obtain salvation, declaring that it is [not of ourselves](#), simply not obtained through personal works or achievements. Paul emphatically declared that works of the flesh are inadequate to secure salvation.

- Although this is clearly revealed, many continue to pursue salvation through their own works or merit. “I hope when I stand before God, the good deeds I’ve done in life will outweigh the bad. I attend church; I read my Bible; I have been baptized; I am a morally good person.” Did you sense the problem with such theology? These are depending on works they have done. I have done this; I continue to do that. Their hope is based on their works alone. Salvation is not of works! It is not obtained through our efforts!

B. Their Tendency (9) – [Not of works, lest any man should boast](#). Paul well understood the tendencies of the flesh and the pride within our hearts. If salvation were of works, then we would all have reason to boast. We would have no need of the Lord, in essence viewing ourselves as our own savior.

- Few, if any, would admit to such pride, but their words condemn them. Those who seek salvation through their own efforts continually convey the various works and deeds they perform. Again, I have done this; I continue to do that. They speak of their works, but never refer to the sacrifice and provision of Christ. Such an approach reveals great pride and arrogance. It literally seeks to elevate the individual to a place reserved for Christ alone! [Acts 4:12 – Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.](#)

C. Their Insecurity – Allow me to ask a few hypothetical questions regarding a works-based salvation. If this were possible, how much work is necessary to obtain salvation? How much does one have to accomplish to please God and satisfy His righteous demands? None are perfect in life. If you are depending on works, and you have somehow worked hard enough to merit salvation, what happens when you sin? How much additional work is necessary to pay restitution for the sin you committed? If it is possible to obtain salvation by works, how much work is necessary to maintain it?

- When one considers Scripture in its entirety, it quickly becomes evident that such an approach is futile and will never result in salvation. James declared if we could keep all the Commandments, but ever broke one, we were guilty of them all. Who among us has never lied or desired something that someone else had? We have all been guilty of this, so we are all condemned by the Law of God. Such guilt renders us condemned before God. The only way to be acceptable to God is to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account. This will never be obtained through works or personal effort.

II. The Ability of Grace – I hope you realize that works are unable to save; but don't despair, God provided a means of salvation by grace. Notice:

A. The Promise (8a) – [For by grace are ye saved through faith](#). Salvation is promised for those who approach the Lord according to His divine plan. Paul declared that salvation is an act of God's grace, received through faith in Him. God knew we were unable to keep His righteous demands. We could never become acceptable to Him in and of ourselves. Prior to the foundation of the world, God had a plan. His only begotten Son would come to earth in the form of a man, live a

sinless life, and offer Himself the atoning sacrifice for sin. He endured the judgment and wrath of God in our place, paying the penalty for our sin. In His abundant grace, He offers salvation for all who respond to Him, believing in the finished work of the cross by faith. God offers grace, and those who receive it by faith receive salvation. This is promised by our Lord.

B. The Provision (8c) – *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* Here Paul revealed the gracious provision in salvation. It is not obtained through our works or effort; it is by grace through faith. He also spoke of an interesting fact – salvation is the gift of God. We all know that gifts are freely given. By their nature, they are given without expectation of anything in return. Gifts are freely given and freely received. God made the means of salvation through the offering of His Son, and offers salvation as a free gift to all who receive it by faith! Although none deserved such a gift of grace, God offers it to all who desire to receive it.

C. The Peace – Looking at this passage in its context, salvation by grace through faith, freely given and freely received, offers great peace to those who are saved. Remember the approach of those who seek salvation by works? They are depending on their works and effort. Consider God's plan – by grace through faith, a free gift. There is wonderful peace resting in the Lord. I find comfort knowing that I didn't work to earn my salvation, and I am not expected to perform certain tasks to keep or maintain it!

- Now, I realize some take offense at that, but I am preaching truth. If salvation is contingent upon works, relying upon us, which particular sin would cause one to lose their salvation? Where is such doctrine explained in the Bible? What would one do to receive salvation again? If the blood of Christ isn't sufficient to keep me, then He would have to be crucified again to provide salvation again. Such doctrine is dangerous and unbiblical.
- Many believe such theology promotes lose living, offering a license to sin. This too is not founded in Scripture. *Rom.6:1-2 – What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* ^[2] *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* Those who are genuinely saved by grace may sin and fall short, but they will deal with the conviction of the Spirit, chastening them to return to God. Those walking in fellowship with Christ, saved by His grace, will have a desire to please Him!

III. The Compatibility of Both (10) – *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* Paul didn't seek to minimize good works. In fact, he encouraged them. Works and grace are not contrary to one another; they are compatible within the lives of believers. Those who are saved by grace will reveal their

relationship with Christ through their works. Many think James and Paul taught conflicting doctrines, but they actually agreed when it comes to works and grace. [James 2:17-18 – 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.](#) Notice:

A. The Production (10a) – [For we are his workmanship.](#) This has the idea of “*a product, literally a fabric.*” The believer is a genuine work of the Lord; we are His creation, His tapestry. He has woven our lives as it pleased Him. One could never argue this is an act of God’s grace. We are created in His image, according to His divine plan.

B. The Purpose (10b) – [For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.](#) Our lives are an act of grace, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. God does not provide salvation and place us on a shelf, simply to wait for future glory. He has created us, by His grace, in order to serve Him through our good works. The works we perform in life, bear witness to His marvelous grace. Those who experience grace in salvation are motivated and equipped for good works! Thus works and grace or not contrary to one another. Works are the result of grace received.

C. The Plan (10c) – [For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.](#) The work revealed in the lives of believers, ordained of God, is to be consistent with the grace we have received. The Lord desires every believer to walk in a way that pleases and honors Him.

- This is impossible with man, but possible through the Spirit. Those who are right with God will reflect His grace through the life they live. Our walk will match our profession of faith. Now, many question how some live as they do, following a profession. While I am convinced it is possible to stray from the Lord, and engage in sin following salvation, such behavior will not be without consequence. God has ordained that we walk according to His will for our lives.
- I am not the judge of men, but I fear many have made a profession, but they lack a possession. Many have proclaimed salvation, but lack a personal relationship with Christ. If you are able to live as you please with no conviction for sin, I doubt you have been truly saved. Those the Lord loves, He chastens. Children of God will be chastised and convicted for their sin.

Conclusion: I trust our time today has been beneficial. This passage is relative for everyone here. It clearly explains the path of salvation. We have either responded by grace through faith, receiving salvation, or we are yet apart from God. What are you depending on today for salvation?

Have you submitted to Christ by faith? Are you resting in His grace alone, or are you trying to earn your salvation through works? Works always follow salvation, but they never produce salvation! If the Lord has spoken to your heart today regarding salvation, respond to His offer of grace and come to Him by faith!