

Eph 2:10

“Good Works Accompany Faith”

Idea: Good works accompany faith, therefore pray for and strive to grow in your obedience to the Lord.

Intro: In Eph 2:8-9 Paul teaches that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, and not of works. We believe that we can't do anything to gain salvation. We can't even initiate salvation since we are dead in sin. That being said, this doctrine of justification by faith alone has been sometimes misunderstood, and grossly misunderstood at that. Some suggest that this doctrine of free grace leads to people living terrible sinful lives. The thinking goes like this. “If I can't do anything to save myself, then why bother. And if God's grace is free, then it doesn't matter how I live. In fact, since God forgives all my sins, then I can do anything I please. I have the greatest get out of jail free card that there is.”

But this is a gross misunderstanding of grace and salvation. Vss. 8-9 make it clear that your good works don't save you. But that doesn't mean that good works have no place in the Christian life. In fact, they are the natural and necessary result of salvation. Today, I'll be preaching from vs. 10 about the necessity of good works.

1. Faith is the gift of God.

Eph. 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Salvation is the free gift of God's grace. Even the faith to believe is the free gift of God. The Spirit brings life to those spiritually dead in sin. The HS brings life and enables us to believe.

Jesus himself points to this gift in describing faith to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 6. (37) “All that the Father gives Me shall come to me...” (44-45) “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.”

When Jesus says that the Father draws people to himself, He is not saying that God attracts people, like a flower attracts bees. He uses the same word as a fisherman dragging or drawing in a net full of fish. It would have been a very vivid and understandable term for all those fishermen in Capernaum.

So we've seen that salvation is the gift of God's grace, received through the gift of faith. It is not the result of works. So what is the relationship between faith and good works?

2. Saving Faith Leads to Good Works.

a. God saves us for a purpose - Much like ch. 1, Paul speaks of salvation in the context of God's design for our lives. In 1:4 He says, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him..." Then 2:10, after saying that we are saved by grace through faith and not of works, Paul says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." In both cases Paul speaks of your holiness and obedience as part of God's design for your life. He has saved you for a purpose, a purpose that you would be holy and blameless, that you would do the good works that He has prepared beforehand.

You could think of it this way. If you plant a fruit tree, you naturally expect someday to pick and eat fruit from that tree. That's why you planted it. Just this last week, our neighbors' nectarine tree was ready to pick. And wow, it has some really good nectarines. Sweet and so juicy that it drips down your chin. That's why you plant a fruit tree. They were so good it made me want to plant a tree.

In a similar way, God saves you for a purpose. He saves you so that you would bear fruit, so that you will do the good works prepared for you. The fruit can't save you. That's not the purpose of the good works. But at the same time, you can say that the good works are absolutely necessary. They are a sign of life and fulfill one of God's purpose of your salvation.

b. Good Works Accompany Faith.

Another way to put it is that faith is accompanied by works. Ken Smith once put it in the form of a math equation. Much of the world, if they believe in heaven, think that they will go to heaven based on their good works. $GW = S$. The Bible clearly proves this wrong when it says, Not of works, lest any man should boast.

The RC church and some Christians claim that you must have faith with your good works to be saved. $GW + F = S$. But once more, the Bible clearly proves this wrong when Paul says in "...yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified." (Galatians 2:16, ESV).

Some have then concluded that good works don't belong in the equation at all. They say $F = S$. They are right in dropping good works from the first part of the equation, the part that says that your salvation depends on your obedience. But they make a grave mistake to drop good works completely. The mistake lies in the fact that they deny that God has saved us for

GWs. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we would walk in them.

Good works accompany faith, or are the result of faith. $F = S + GW$.

c. Faith without works is dead.

Or if you put that in the negative, you have what James 2, Faith without works is dead.

When a person is alive there are certain things that you can look for to indicate whether they are indeed alive or not. They breathe, their hearts beat, they respond to questions. These are signs of life. If there are no signs of life then you assume that the person is dead.

This illustrates the relationship between faith and works and salvation. There are signs of life. It's natural that a living tree produce fruit. It's natural that a living person would breathe and speak and work and rest. It's natural, and even necessary.

Go back to the equation $F = S$. When I say that salvation is by faith alone, some misunderstand the nature of faith and say that salvation takes only belief - there is no need for repentance or commitment to obedience. This understanding of faith and salvation has given rise to those who call themselves Christians but who live without any change in their lives. They live in total disregard to God's word and His ways. Some take this position to the extreme by saying that once you have accepted Jesus as your savior that it doesn't matter what you do. You can lie, cheat, steal, sleep around, murder, even renounce Jesus, and you will still be saved.

To counter that teaching it has been well said that salvation is indeed by faith alone, but the Christian faith never stands alone. One who claims to be a Christian and lives without regard to sin I would urge to take stock. Their life and their profession don't match, and there are no signs of life. If you are such an individual, I would urge you to consider whether or not you are in Christ, whether or not you have repented of your sin and thrown yourself on the mercy of God in Christ. Gordon Keddie has put it this way, "It is just not good enough to say that you following the Lord's will when your deeds indicate otherwise... There is... a full and necessary consistency between faith and action." (Keddie, p. 108-109)

James argues, "What good is it; my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him?" He restates his argument in verse 17, "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." To put that into a positive statement; "Genuine faith is fruitful." (Keddie p. 109).

This really isn't a new argument that Paul devises. He stands in complete harmony with the rest of scripture when he says that faith without works is dead. We are studying

the 10 Commandments in my Sabbath school. The prologue reveals God's grace toward Israel, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt; out of the land of slavery." On that basis, God goes on to say, this is how my people act.

We love to sing the Psalms. In them we say, "I love you Lord!" How is it defined? We love Him and doing what He commands.

Jesus said the same thing. John 14:15, "If you love me, you will obey what I command... 21. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him... 23-24. If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."

Paul said the same thing. Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness," Conversely, Gal. 5:19-21, "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Paul says the same thing. Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

So what?

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone. Thank God! You and I would never be saved without God's mercy and grace. Thank God. I mean it. Thank God for your salvation.

Saving faith never stands alone. GWs accompany faith. In fact, the just will live by faith. By faith live for Christ. By understanding and resting in the person and work of Jesus for your life, live for Him. God has prepared GWs for you. Set your heart and mind on those things. Take the step of looking at the fruit of the Spirit and ask God to help you to grow in each of the fruit. Make it a point in your devotions to study love, joy, peace, and so on, so that you can practice them in your life. Study the deeds of the flesh. Ask God to see if any sin holds you captive. Then work to put off adultery, envy, anger, and so on. Do so remembering and rejoicing that you have been purchased at a price, the price of Jesus' death on the cross. And do so remembering that you have been purchased for a purpose, the purpose of glorifying God through your obedience.