

“Not of Works”

Lesson Text: Ephesians 2:8-10

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Ephesians 2:8-10**- “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works. lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
- B. Salvation is by grace, through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, and is not of works.
1. Our studies of Ephesians 2:8-9 have brought us to the point that we must consider the phrase, “not of works.”
 2. The expression “**not of works**,” wrongly interpreted, has caused millions of people to reject simple obedience to God’s word.
 3. In so doing, they think that works have nothing at all to do with salvation.
 4. Have you ever wondered just why this erroneous concept is so wide spread? In this study we want to examine the topic of works and their relation to salvation by grace through faith.
- C. The inspired words of Paul are, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them**” (Ephesians 2:8-10).
1. This is one of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament.
 2. It tells us of God’s gracious salvation offered to those who have sufficient faith to submit to His will.
 3. It also says something about works.
 4. Works and salvation is much like saying oil and water to some people. Most people in the religious world say they do not mix.
 - a. Do works have anything to do with salvation?
 - b. If you have examined the matter, you must agree that nearly the entire so-called protestant world would say, “works have nothing to do with salvation.”
 - c. They ask, “How can a man work his way to heaven?”
 - d. It is commonly believed that it is absurd to think that any kind of works are even considered in reference to salvation.
- D. After all, Paul clearly said, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast” (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

1. Paul also said in **Romans 11:6**- “And if by grace (speaking of salvation), then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace, otherwise work is no longer work.”
 2. His statement in chapter four seems to fortify the common view that no works of any kind are involved in salvation from sin. Speaking about Abraham in **Romans 4:4-5**, the apostle Paul writes: “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”
- E. From all we have read so far, do any of these passages sound like Paul was saying that obedience to God is excluded?
1. None of them can correctly be construed to mean that one who truly believes must do nothing at all to be saved . . . or does it?
 2. When the apostle also wrote, “But God be thanked though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (**Romans 6:17-18**), he is absolutely not contradicting himself on works.
 3. The fact is, the expression “not of works” does not exclude faithful obedience to the gospel commands.
 - a. Rather, acts of obedience to God are definitely included.
 - b. **Ephesians 2:8** says salvation is “through faith.”
 1. Faith must be seen in works and faith that has no works is of no value.
 2. It saves no one.
 3. Works done through faith are a very integral part of man’s duty in being saved from sin?
- F. There are obviously some works that have nothing to do with salvation, that in fact hinder salvation.
1. Salvation is not “of works” of some sort. What are they?
 - a. First, Paul says in the text that the works are the sort about which man can boast.
 - b. He says, “not of works, lest any man should boast.” Boasting is precluded in the salvation of sinners.
 - c. If a mere human could devise some system by which he could obligate the Almighty to give him salvation, he would boast of it to high heaven.
 - d. Let a person devise a means of making millions of dollars and see how quickly he brags to the world of his accomplishment.
 - e. But such is neither possible nor permitted in salvation from sin.
 2. Does anyone really think that faithful obedience to the commands of the gospel is in the category of works “of which a man may boast?”

- a. How, in the name of sense and reason could such a conclusion be reached?
- b. **Galatians 2:16** says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”
 1. The law in this verse is the law of Moses.
 2. That law was taken out of the way by the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary.
3. The Bible tells us that it was. **Colossians 2:14-15**- “Having blotted out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”
4. The Jew could boast of his glorious past as the “apple of God’s eye,” God’s favored nation, and that resulted in his boast of having the law of God.
5. Having the Mosaic Law, the Jew then boasted of his salvation by works of Law.
6. Do you remember the young man who came to the Lord and told Jesus that he had kept the Ten Commandments from his youth? The Incident is recorded in Luke 18:18-23.
 - a. Jesus told him that one thing was still lacking.
 - b. The law of Moses was still in force at the very time Jesus spoke to this young man.
 - c. The man was told to sell his possessions and give to the poor.
 - d. He went away sorrowful.
 - e. But think back at what he said. No doubt his pride swelled when he knew he had the opportunity to tell Jesus how well he had kept the Law of Moses.
 - f. The point is, he boasted of his accomplishments.
7. Works of the Law of Moses are in no way connected with salvation in the gospel of Christ. The gospel is Christ’s New Covenant. Notice also that Paul said, “even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.
 - a. There are works of the law that are excluded, but by the same token there are works of faith that justify. Justifying works are included in salvation by grace through faith.
 - b. Paul stated clearly that those who believed did so in order that they might be justified by faith.
 - c. Please notice also the faith is in Christ.

- d. The simple solution to this matter is that works of faith are obedience to Christ and that is what saving faith in Christ is all about.
- G. Listening friends, those of you who have been led to think that works (any kind of works) nullify saving grace have been misled.
1. Think about It a moment. A believer “might be justified.”
 2. Most protestant doctrinal discourses affirm that the believer “is justified”—not “might be iustified
 3. The unwholesome doctrine of “justification by faith only” does not agree with the word of God.
 - a. Paul wrote In **Galaltians 2:16** that sinners are justified by “faith in Christ.”
 - b. This is so because the personal faith of a sinner leads him to obey the gospel of Christ.
 - c. That faith is saving faith and leads one who believes the gospel to be baptized into the sacred name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, for the remission of sins.
 - d. Why? Because very simply, Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (**Mark 16:15-16**).
 - e. Think about the word “he who believes’ for a minute. Believes what?
 1. Naturally, he must believe the gospel.
 2. What does he believe about the gospel?
 3. He believes what the gospel reveals about Christ—His death, burial and resurrection.
 4. Then he who believes this and is NOT baptized will he be saved?
 5. Think carefully. The Lord said he who believes the gospel AND IS BAPTIZED WILL BE SAVED. **It is still by God’s grace that He has chosen to accept this obedience.**
 6. Being baptized is obedience to the gospel and that Is certainly not what Paul had in mind when he said salvation is “not or works, lest anyone should boast.”
 7. The works that are of no value in salvation are works of the Mosaic Law or those of which some man might boast.
 8. Works of faith make one acceptable to God and justify one who believes.

CONCLUSION:

A. In Closing I want to call your attention to two.

1. **Acts 10:34-35**- “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”
2. **James 2:24** - “You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.”
3. **Romans 1:5** – “Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith . . .”

B. Have you obeyed from your very own heart the gospel of Christ?

1. If not, don't delay do it now while you can.
2. You can do it this very hour and at this very place.

God's Plan for Man's Salvation.