

SALVATION BY GRACE VERSES SALVATION BY WORKS.

I started reading a book called *Controversial Issues In Social Policy*. The title of the book increased my awareness of controversial issues in bible doctrine. An example of a controversial issue in bible doctrine is, salvation by grace verses salvation by works.

The bible says to study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. In order to accomplish that goal I would highly recommend that:

Before arriving at the whole truth, be sure that all the scriptures on a subject are collected in one place, to be read together at one time.

One great fault with many people is the acceptance of only part of the Scriptures on a subject and the rejection of other passages that contradict their theory.

Salvation By Grace Verses Salvation By Works.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

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.

'---

Hebrews 6:1.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Hebrews 9:14.

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Galatians 5:4.

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Romans 11:6.

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.

Romans 2:13-14.

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Galatians 2:16.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Romans 3:27-28.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Romans 4:1-3.

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

'-----

Ephesians 2:8.

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

Those who operate in pride don't have a good revelation of salvation by grace. They are under the delusion that God saved them or uses them because of some merit of their own. Once we see how destitute of any worthiness we are on our own, and we humble ourselves and receive salvation as a gift, then boasting is excluded.

God has designed salvation in such a way as to eliminate any boasting from man. If salvation was by works, either partially or wholly, then man could boast, but grace and faith eliminate man's boasting altogether. Salvation by grace brings praise and glory to God. If we could save ourselves, either partially or wholly, we would take the credit for it. That is not the case. All the glory goes to God.

Ephesians 2:9.

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

No one deserves salvation. It cannot be earned by what the Bible calls "dead works" (Hebrews 6:1 and 9:14). Dead works include all religious activities, good deeds, and/or charity that one may do as a means of being justified before God. Faith toward God and what He has done through Christ Jesus is the only means of receiving His free gift of salvation.

To trust in any human work or effort as a means of salvation is to fall from grace and to sever one's self from the Savior (Galatians 5:4). No one can be saved by the combination of grace and works, for they exclude each other (Romans 11:6). You must be saved by grace through faith alone (see note at Ephesians 2:8), or your works must meet the standard of God's perfection

set down by His holy Law (Romans 2:13). “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds or works of the law” (Romans 3:28, see note at Galatians 2:16).

The phrase “works of the law” is used seven times in the New Testament in five scriptures (Romans 9:32; Galatians 2:16, 3:2, 5, and 10).

What are “works of the law”? Any rule, command, or law that a person observes in an attempt to be accepted in right standing with God is a “work of the law.” In other words, works of the Law are a righteousness produced by one’s self, belonging to one’s self, offered to God as a means of meeting God’s standard for acceptance.

Philippians 3:9 says it’s “having mine own righteousness [a righteousness belonging to me], which is of the law” (emphasis and brackets mine). (See Romans 9:30-10:10 for a fuller understanding of the works of the Law.)

Works of the Law have always been man’s attempt to be accepted by God. Paul says, “[Let me] be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Philippians 3:9, New International Version, brackets mine).

It takes a radical revelation of the Gospel of grace to abandon faith in the works of the Law. God’s standard of righteousness is the righteousness of God alone.

In stark contrast to the works of the Law, there is the “work of faith,” as referred to in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11. These may be the same actions that others do as works of the Law, but the motivation is different. Works of faith are the fruit of relationship with God whereas works of the Law are done to try to obtain relationship with God (see note at Romans 9:32).

'---

Romans 3:27.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

Faith is governed by law. That means it’s universal and constant, just like gravity. If we ignore the laws of gravity, they can kill us. Likewise, if we ignore the laws of faith, even if it’s through ignorance, we can die. Faith can be counted on more than any physical thing controlled by law, such as electricity.

Boasting, bragging, and pride about our holiness or spiritual accomplishments are sure signs that we don’t understand justification by grace through faith like Paul was teaching it here. If we acknowledge that we are no better than anyone else regardless of our conduct and that the only way we obtained peace with God was through putting faith in what Jesus did for us, then there is no room for boasting about our achievements. It was the accomplishments of Jesus that saved us.

Pride is the root of all divisions in the church today (see note 11 at Acts 20:30). Therefore, the prevalence of division in the church is a painful testimony to the lack of this foundational truth of justification by grace through faith.

Notice that Paul referred to the law of faith. Faith is governed by law, just as gravity or electricity is. If we would view faith as a law, rather than as something that sometimes works and other times doesn't, we would begin to get very different results.

The law of electricity has been here on earth since creation. Man has observed it in such things as lightning and static electricity, but it was not until someone believed that there were laws that governed the activity of electricity that progress began to be made in putting it to use. Likewise, none deny the existence of faith, but it is only when people begin to understand that there are laws that govern faith and then begin to learn what those laws are that faith begins to work for them.

'-----

Romans 4:1-3.

- 1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
- 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.
- 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Romans 4:1.

The question is, "What good, then, were Abraham's works?" Paul answered this indirectly. He stated what Abraham's works were not good for. They were not good enough to grant him justification in the sight of God; that came by faith. He showed that Abraham's works, or efforts, didn't earn him anything from God. Abraham was justified by faith for over thirteen years (see note at Romans 4:10) before he performed the act of circumcision that the Jews were insisting was necessary for right standing with God (Romans 4:10-11).

Romans 4:2.

Our own good works will only allow us to boast if we're comparing ourselves with other people (2 Corinthians 10:12). However, in the sight of God, not one of us has anything to brag about. We have all come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Romans 4:3.

See note at Romans 4:22 for a definition of imputation.

Paul was showing an inspired revelation of the Old Testament scriptures. All devout Jews knew the story of Abraham, but they had missed this simple truth that Paul brought out. In Genesis 15:6, the Scriptures clearly say that Abraham believed God and God counted Abraham's faith for righteousness. It can't get any clearer than that. Later in this same chapter, Paul referred to the interval of time (over thirteen years) between when the Scriptures state Abraham was

counted righteous and the time when he was circumcised, as further proof that Abraham's righteousness was given to him before he performed the righteous acts of the Law (Romans 4:10).

Paul had just made a series of radical statements that were hard for these Jews to swallow. Here he went back to Old Testament scripture and the founder of the Jewish nation to prove his assertions. He skillfully used the very scriptures they had misunderstood to verify his Gospel of grace. He also quoted David to draw on two of the most revered men of the Old Testament as examples of salvation by grace through faith.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him." It was Abraham's faith that pleased God. The Lord promised Abraham that his seed would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, and Abraham believed God. That pleased God so much that He counted Abraham righteous right then, even though Abraham had not yet fulfilled the rite of circumcision and was not living such a holy life.

According to Leviticus 18:9, it was an abomination (Leviticus 18:26) for a man to marry a half sister. Sarah, Abraham's wife, was his half sister (Genesis 20:12). Therefore, Abraham's marriage to Sarah was not what pleased God. Abraham had already lied about Sarah being his wife so that he could save his own neck. He was willing to let a man commit adultery with his wife with no objections from him. Immediately after this instance where the Lord counted Abraham's faith for righteousness (Genesis 15:6), Abraham tried to accomplish God's will in the flesh with Hagar (Genesis 16) and then repeated this terrible sin with Sarah again (Genesis 20).

Anyone who really looked at the life of Abraham and the favor that he found with God would have to conclude that it was Abraham's faith that pleased God. It's the same with any of us. The only thing that we can do to please God is put faith in Jesus as our Savior.

INPUTATION:

Romans 4:22.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

The word "impute" is an accounting term. It is speaking of recording our debts or crediting to our accounts. This is made very clear in 2 Timothy 4:16. One of the best examples of this is the way we use a credit card. When we purchase something with a credit card, we don't actually pay for the item at that time. But we give the clerk a credit card that has our information on it so he can bill us later. Then when the bill comes, we pay the charges. If the clerk didn't record the information, the sale would not be imputed to us. If he did, the sale is imputed unto us.

God reconciled the world unto Himself by not imputing our sins unto us (2 Corinthians 5:19). Actually He imputed our sins unto Jesus. That's like instead of having to show our credit cards and have our sins placed on our accounts, God gave His credit card so all the sins of the whole world would be placed on Jesus' account. If I gave my card to pay for your transaction, it would

be unjust for the vendor to charge you and me both. In fact, your transaction shouldn't even show on your account if I gave my credit card for that purchase. Likewise, since God paid for our sins by imputing them to Jesus, we don't have any charges shown on our accounts. It's just as if we'd never sinned. That's justified.