

## **Ephesians**

### ***Dead Works & Good Works***

*Ephesians 2:8-10*

*March 16th, 2025*

#### **I. Introduction**

Paul frequently discusses *works* throughout his letters. It is one of the significant theme we find. But if we are not careful we can forget that he speaks about works in two different ways. On the one hand, he clearly states that works cannot \_\_\_\_\_. And yet, he also \_\_\_\_\_ works. If we are not careful we can grab one side of Paul's teaching, and end up misunderstanding him.

The proper relationship between salvation and works is helpfully illustrated for us throughout the Gospels, where we find Jesus' mercy toward the sick, the oppressed, the wicked. We find that the mercy of God at work in the lives of sinners produces in them *life* demonstrated by good works

#### **II. The Text — Eph. 2:8-10**

*8 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.*

God is restoring in Christ Jesus His original purpose. He made mankind in the beginning to \_\_\_\_\_ (Gen. 1-2). And despite sin entering in and spoiling this (Gen. 3), sin did not eradicate this charge. God made us to work, and God \_\_\_\_\_ us to work.

Paul at once repudiates the idea that we can in any way earn our salvation by works. But this does not mean that he repudiates all works. Works have their proper place—and that place is *after* God's work. Good works flow from God's previous work of grace. God does not save us because of our works, but He does save us out of our sin so that we might work. When God saves a man, He recreates him so that he can work—so that he will work. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives. He works faith in us. He delivers us from the disease of sin and from the dead works we once walked in. He works in us life, and this life shows itself in holy fruit: in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

#### **III. The Workmanship of God**

We are the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus for good works. How does this re-creation fit us for the good work God has called us to?

**First.** To begin with, God's mercy in our lives frees us from \_\_\_\_\_. When God pardons a man, He takes all of our sin and debts, and by the blood of Jesus, atones for them in full. Those who are re-created in Christ Jesus, no longer have any debts. The Law's demands are abundantly satisfied. The wrath of God has been drunk down to the dregs, and we are forgiven.

This grace frees us from dead works. It frees us from a life of guilt-ridden, sin-soaked fear. The man whose conscience condemns him, he fears the rustling of a leaf. Why? Because his Debt-Collector is the Almighty. God Himself is against him. For the child of God who has been

pardoned, the fact that God is almighty, ever-present, all-knowing—these things are a comfort to him, for this almighty, ever-present, all-knowing God is his Father. But for the fugitive, this is a terror. Where can you go to flee from God? If you go up into the heavens, there He is. If you make your bed in Hell, there He is. But the man who rests in God's forgiveness in Christ is set free from having to run. He is set free from the anxious concern of "Have I done enough?"

- Martin Luther: "Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God . . . I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience."

A troubled conscience gives no peace. But when God recreates us in Christ Jesus, forgiving us of our trespasses, at last we know peace. And with this peace, we can serve God, not out of fear or anger or with anguish, but with joy and peace.

**Second.** God's gracious salvation of us makes us into a \_\_\_\_\_ people. We are a people created by the sheer mercy of God. And the man who knows himself to be graciously forgiven and saved through the sheer mercy of God must himself become merciful. Mercy produces mercy.

Israel, like the Church, was also deeply indebted to God's mercy, and their works were to flow from this mercy, not the other way around. That is why all throughout the laws given to Israel, the Lord constantly gives a reason like this: "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today" (Deut. 15:15-16). Israel was to show mercy because they are the recipients of *God's* mercy. See also Deut. 5:15; 24:22. And so it is with the Church. All who have received mercy from God are called in turn to show mercy.

**Third.** God's work in our lives binds our hearts to Him in \_\_\_\_\_. Like what Luther described of his own life, it is hard to love a hard master. You might respect him. You most definitely fear him. But you will hardly love him. The same is true of a harsh father, or a mean husband. You may obey him, you have to honor him. But you won't enjoy being around him. God's love and compassion in our lives turns us toward Him so that we do not merely honor and obey Him, but we do so out of a heart of love.

Mary Magdalene did not follow Jesus because she had to. She did not provide Him with whatever He needed, materially speaking, because He commanded her to. She did so because she loved Him. She wanted to. The Lord set her free from her misery; He did so compassionately and with a mighty hand—and so she freely gave herself to Him. The same was likewise true of Paul. The Lord stopped him by His mercy. He struck him blind, healed him, and then called him into His service. In response, Paul was compelled by sheer love for the Lord.

King Jesus' Kingdom prevails and spreads by the proclamation of peace. His followers offer themselves \_\_\_\_\_ to Him; they abandon everything to follow Him; they gladly die for His name.

#### **IV. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ**