

For by
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ye saved
through
faith ...

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. [Ephesians 2:8,9]

Generally, most individuals have a biasness for self preservation even when all seems against them. Circumstances however can often arise causing an individual to 'give up' the desire or will to live. Considering the important issue of the souls salvation, men always make it a matter of human effort and work: the Bible however declares it a matter of God's grace acting through faith in Christ. It is when we 'give up' on our own efforts that God can work. Although the above verses were written to those in the fullness of God's eternal salvation, it is good that we pause to reflect whether we ourselves are truly resting singularly and totally upon the work of Christ alone in this vital issue or hoping upon some other means. It is strongly possible we need challenging through neglect or disdain of such issues in a world fast ripening for God's judgment.

Grace Necessary due to our Condition

From God's viewpoint, man's fundamental problem is that he is ***"dead in trespasses and sins"*** (Eph. 2:1) meaning each one of us has overstepped and fallen short of that acceptable conduct that God originally created man to exhibit. Naturally, we walk ***"according to the course of this world ... in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"*** with a dreadful expectation as ***"children of wrath"*** (Eph. 2:2,3). The 'flesh' is that carnal, debase nature we possess with which it is impossible to please or merit God's favour and acceptance by a carnal system of works or religion.

Whilst the benevolent spirit that man is able to exhibit to fellow men is not to be despised, even with the most caring among us there is still within that morass of sin that contaminates all that we think is good. Man's only hope therefore lies not in his own 'good works' but in the 'good work' of another. It was God Himself who came to undertake that work in the Person of His Son as He moved out towards this sinful, undeserving world through grace.

Christ's, Grace seen in His Works

It should firstly be noted that Christ's life was characterised by good: He ***“went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him”*** (Acts 10:38). The gospel records are full of examples of His works proving His deity, His purity, His sinless character, His compassion and grace moved by a heart of sympathy as He lived among men emphasising His deeper interest in the moral condition of man prior to the greatest work of grace that He was to accomplish for God and men.

Some see Him as just a ***“good man”*** (John 7:12) setting His life as an example to follow or a ***“good master”*** or teacher (Mark 10:17) giving some credence to His teachings as good principles to embrace. Either way, both views fall far short of a true confession of who Christ really is, setting an emphasis upon man doing something for himself rather than upon the work that Christ came to do for man.

Christ's Greatest Work

It was the Lord Jesus who Himself said ***“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep”*** (John 10:11). The price of man's salvation to God was immensely great, necessitating the sufferings of His Son on the Cross outside Jerusalem's walls 2000 years ago. He was ***“bruised for our iniquities”*** and His life laid down as a sacrifice for sin, prior to His glorious bodily resurrection.

It is by this one act that we can be ***“justified freely by His (God’s) grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”*** (Romans 3:24) if we by faith readily accept Christ and His great work for ourselves. It is however a serious matter indeed to despise the work of Christ in lieu of our own boasted self efforts which can only be described as ***“dead works”*** that can never impart life to our dead souls. We will tragically face the consequences of our sin for ever in Hell.

God’s Grace changes Lives

Some who know not the truth or the power of God, falsely claim that salvation by grace gives license and liberty to sin. This could not be further from the truth. Those who genuinely repent and through faith in the Lord Jesus receive everlasting life as a gift from God will exhibit a change of attitude towards sin with their hope set heavenward in anticipation of being with Christ their Lord. They will be characterised by benevolent and righteous works that bring pleasure to the heart of God being motivated by the very love of God that He implants into the soul of a forgiven sinner by His Holy Spirit at their conversion as the following verses so clearly declare:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

In short, there is nothing we ourselves can do to merit God’s favour and save our souls from the fearsomeness of hell. We must accept gratuitously the work of Christ on the cross. His response to those who asked how they might work the work of God was: ***“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent”*** (John 6:29).