

The Relationship Between Faith and Works

A Comparison of James 2:24 and Ephesians 2:8-10

Part III

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To My Father
In Loving Memory

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Who Dedicated His Life To Loving His Family
“Family Comes First”

I Miss You!

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*“My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus’ blood and
righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But
wholly lean on Jesus’ name.”*

-Edward Mote-

General Background

Historical/Cultural

It is not known for certain to whom *Ephesians* was originally intended.¹ The words, “in Ephesus” of the address, are absent in the earliest and most authoritative texts.² Due to this omission, the most accepted view is that the Epistle was a circular intended for all the churches in Asia,³ of which only some were known by Paul.⁴ The address “in Ephesus” is likely since Ephesus was the prominent church in Asia where it would have been read first, but also because it was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia.⁵ This theory seems most likely due to the Epistle’s character. It is not as warm and personal, nor does it address specific problems or situations as Paul’s other Epistles, even though he was there for three years⁶ where ties of affection developed between the church and Paul.⁷

¹ D. A. Carson, Moo, and Morris, 311.

² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 13.

³ Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, and other cities.

⁴ Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1931), 13.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ D. A. Carson, Moo, and Morris, 311.

⁷ Charles R. Erdman, 12.

General Context of Ephesians 2:1-10

Paul contrasts the relationship between our former selves united to Adam,⁸ with those re-created in Christ Jesus united to Christ by faith.⁹ In Adam, man is a slave to the world, the devil, and the flesh and he does works of unrighteousness; in Christ as a new creation free from slavery, he is designed for the purpose of doing works of righteousness.

Ephesians 2:8-10 forms the third and final section of 2:1-10. Verses 1-3 depict man prior to salvation as dead in “trespasses and sins.” Verses 4-7 describe the believer’s union with Christ and its effect of converting grace. Verses 8-10 summarize Paul’s Gospel—the nature and purpose of salvation. “This last section is linked to the middle section by the repetition with some additions of v. 5b—‘by grace you have been saved’—at the beginning of v. 8 to provide a transition to the summarizing conclusion about the relationship of grace and works. This means that vv. 8-10 cannot be interpreted without reference to v. 5b and its context in the middle section.”¹⁰

2:1-3

The basic thought of the first section is that man is spiritually dead as a result of “transgressions and sins.” When Paul wrote, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,” he is referring to the broken relationship between God and man, which resulted from sin in thought, word, and deed. This verse parallels the outworking of what God told Adam in the garden—if you (Adam) eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die.¹¹ When Adam sinned, his relationship with God was broken—he was spiritually dead. Adam’s sin affected all his progeny; his sin was imputed to all men.¹² Man is not “lightly flawed” or just “sick;” he is in fact dead.¹³ Man is born naturally dead which demonstrates the imputation of Adam’s sin.

When Paul uses the term “dead,” he is referring to spiritual death, not physical death. Boice, thinking in this vein, describes people as “walking corpses” because they are spiritually dead and physically alive.¹⁴ Fallen man is like a spiritual corpse unable to respond correctly to God because he cannot “understand and appreciate spiritual things.”¹⁵ Like Lazarus, who was dead in his tomb and unable to get up and walk under

⁸ Eph 2:1-3.

⁹ Eph 2:4-10.

¹⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, “Ephesians 2:8-10: A Summary of Paul’s Gospel?,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983): 619.

¹¹ Gen 2:17.

¹² *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 6.

¹³ James M. Boice, *Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Rich. A New Testament Study—Ephesians* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1979), 40.

his own power,¹⁶ so is a sinner, prior to God “making us alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5) unable to move toward God. The whole life prior to being made alive is lived completely in the sphere of spiritual death.¹⁷ Lloyd-Jones describing the unregenerate writes, “...*life for the non-Christian is a living death.*”¹⁸

The unregenerate man is dead toward God and destitute of the powers of spiritual life,¹⁹ but is alive toward wickedness. Paul describes this by the words “followed” and “gratifying” in verses 2 and 3, respectively. He writes “when you *followed* the ways of the world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air,” and “All of us also lived among them at one time, *gratifying* the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.” Man will “follow” and “gratify” the sinful nature²⁰ because he is dead toward God resulting in a life according to the flesh. Since man is spiritually dead, he is a slave.

Paul tells us that man is enslaved to the world and the devil. Verse 2 explains how man formerly lived²¹ in his transgressions and sins; all of what man does is characterized by sin. Man is born depraved and enslaved to sin and cannot free himself from bondage. Being in a state of sin, man conforms to the world,²² which is a manifestation of his enslavement. When Paul wrote, “when you followed the ways of the world” he was referring to the depraved state of all mankind. Erdman describes this as “a life shaped by the godless standards and aims which result in moral ruin.”²³ Without Christ, man is captivated by the social and value system of the world, which stands opposed to Christ. Degenerate man necessarily follows the “pattern of life characterized by the world” in his pursuits apart from God.²⁴

Man is also a slave to the devil. Paul tells us that we “followed...the ruler of the kingdom of the air.” The devil has authority over the “kingdom of the air” and is ruler of those spiritual beings in the heavenly realm.²⁵ Satan has authority over those who live according to “ways of this world,” and when Paul adds, “the spirit who is at work in those who are disobedient,” he does not mean that the devil is at work in those who are

¹⁶ John 11.

¹⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 407.

¹⁸ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way of Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1972), 18.

¹⁹ Matthew Henry, 557.

²⁰ Sinful nature is translated from *sarx* literally “flesh.”

²¹ Eph 2:2 says, “you used to live” is translated from *periepatêsate*, literally “you walked.”

²² Matthew Henry, 557.

²³ Charles R. Erdman, 44.

²⁴ Arthur G. Patzia, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians* (San Francisco: Harper & Roe, 1984), 153-4.

²⁵ Eph 6:12.

disobedient. The term “spirit” is used similarly to when we say “the spirit of the age.”²⁶ The devil is the prince or ruler of that spirit. The term “disobedience” refers to the “obstinate opposition to the divine will.” And the “sons of disobedience” are those who are characterized by disobedience to God.²⁷ The devil exerts his power over the evil forces in “the air” and over the spirit that works in the wicked hearts of the disobedient.²⁸ “The air” represents the seat of the devil’s kingdom, as was the opinion of Jews and heathens that the air was full of spirits, and it was there that they used their powers.²⁹ God allows Satan to have some power over creation, but ultimate power is God’s alone. Unregenerate men walk according to the devil and conform to his will and pleasure; this is why he is the god of this world.³⁰

Unregenerate men are not only slaves to the world and the devil, but also to the flesh. The term “flesh”³¹ does not mean the human body. There is nothing wrong with a body of flesh. The term “flesh” refers to the sinful nature that all men are naturally born with.³² Paul writes, “All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts” (Ephesians 2:3). Man naturally seeks to satisfy the sinful longings. Everyone desires food, drink, rest, etc., which God made good. Paul says that the desire for these things takes control and drives us. There is nothing wrong with being hungry, but when a man lives to eat, it is wrong. If the desire for food controls you, then you are suffering from the desires of the flesh.³³ God gave us these desires, but they are supposed to be held in check, yet they have control. The flesh also controls the mind—“whole process of the thinking”—anything that governs our attention and activity is a desire of the mind.³⁴

This kind of lust reveals itself in jealousy, envy, malice, pride, hatred, wrath, and bitterness³⁵ and on a different level, ambition, lust for wealth, power, success, position, and social status. When we are driven and living for these things we are enslaved by them.³⁶ The flesh reveals itself in respectable as well as scandalous ways. Sin affects everything man does and thinks. Man’s will is not able to obey God or do spiritual good because it is contrary to man’s nature. The carnal mind is enslaved—“following its desires and thoughts.”

²⁶ Homer A. Kent, Jr. *Ephesians The Glory of the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 34.

²⁷ Charles R. Erdman, 44.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Matthew Henry, 577.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The term “flesh” is translated from *sarx*.

³² Warren W. Wiersbe, 42.

³³ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, 42.

³⁴ Ibid., 43.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 44.

As a result of man being depraved, he is by nature an “object of wrath.”³⁷ The objects or children of wrath choose to disobey God and serve the devil. Disobedience and enmity against God must result in God’s judgment. “The wrath of God is a holy displeasure against sin.”³⁸

2:4-7

The Greek text begins verse 4 with “But God”³⁹ which emphasizes the only solution to the condition of man described above. God initiated the redemption⁴⁰ of man. There was nothing in man that “provided the cause or impulse for redemption. It was based entirely on God’s mercy.”⁴¹ God the Father “made us alive with Christ”⁴² when we were dead in our transgressions. While man was “walking” in the desires of the flesh, there was nothing in him to make him worthy or attractive to God. Boice commenting on man’s fallen condition says:

...we are ‘dead in [our] transgressions and sins.’ This means that we are no more able to help ourselves spiritually than a corpse is able to improve its condition. Even when the Gospel is preached, we are no more able to respond to it than a corpse can respond to a command to get up—unless God speaks the command. Dead means hopeless.⁴³

Man could not be in a worse condition, but God’s great love⁴⁴ “made us alive” apart from our works and desires. God, out of His great love, loved us and poured out His mercy by sending Jesus to suffer and die both spiritual and physical death for those whom God predestined⁴⁵ to be saved. This love cannot be comprehended,⁴⁶ but those who receive it are compelled by it. The Greek is literally stated “through his great love, he loved you,”⁴⁷ and is stronger than the NIV text. When such a love is directed toward sinners, it is called mercy.⁴⁸ The manner in which salvation came was “by grace”⁴⁹ and

³⁷ “object of wrath” is translated from *tekna phusei orgês* which is literally “children of wrath.”

³⁸ Charles R. Erdman, 45.

³⁹ *o de theos*.

⁴⁰ The word redemption means to buy out of slavery.

⁴¹ Homer A. Kent Jr., 36.

⁴² The Greek word *sunezôpoiêsen* literally means “he [God] made us alive together with.”

⁴³ James M. Boice, 53.

⁴⁴ *pollên agapên* in Eph 2:4.

⁴⁵ Eph 1:4,5,11.

⁴⁶ Eph 3:19.

⁴⁷ *dia tên pollên agapên autou (ên êgapêsen) êmas*.

⁴⁸ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 117.

⁴⁹ *chariti*.

“not of yourselves.”⁵⁰ Henry writes, “Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation, are not the mere product of any natural ability, nor of any merit of our own.”⁵¹ Salvation not only delivers sinners from wrath but also brings them into the blessings of the Gospel. When Paul adds, “made us alive with Christ,” he is depicting that life is with Christ and no where else. This new life, free from slavery to the world, the devil, and the flesh is still imperfect. Those redeemed by Christ at the cross are being sanctified.⁵²

God also “raised us up with Christ”⁵³ and “seated us with Christ”⁵⁴ in the heavenly realms. When Christ was resurrected from the dead, all believers who were united with Christ were also raised from the dead.⁵⁵ Union with Christ has been called “the heart of Paul’s religion.” “Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.”⁵⁶ In union with Christ, Christ’s resurrection and exultation guarantees the believer a bodily resurrection from the dead with all its glory and is the basis for all present blessings.⁵⁷ Being united with Christ, the sinner can say, we are “tried, condemned, crucified, buried, but also made alive, raised and set in the heavenly places.”⁵⁸ Our position is not among the dead in “trespasses and sins” nor do we belong to the ruler of the “air” dominated by evil powers, we are in fellowship with God and live a new life in His presence.⁵⁹ Lloyd-Jones describes this new life:

The difference between the sinner and the Christian, the unbeliever and the believer, is not that the believer, the Christian, has certain faculties which the other man lacks. No, what happens is that this new disposition given to the Christian directs his faculties in an entirely different way. He is not given a new brain; he is not given a new intelligence, or anything else. He has always had these; they are his servants, his instruments, his ‘members,’ as Paul calls them in the sixth chapter of Romans; what is new is a new bent, a new disposition. He has turned in a different direction; there is a new power working in him and guiding his faculties. This is the thing that makes a man a Christian.⁶⁰

The purpose for uniting sinners with Christ is to “show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7). The word,

⁵⁰ *ouk ex umôn* literally “not by you.”

⁵¹ Matthew Henry, 557.

⁵² Sanctification is the on going process of being formed into the image of Jesus.

⁵³ *sunêgeiren* literally means “raised up together with.”

⁵⁴ *sunekathisen* literally means “seated together with.”

⁵⁵ This raising from the dead is in the spiritual sense not physical. The physical resurrection will occur at the *parousia*.

⁵⁶ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 170.

⁵⁷ William Hendriksen, 118.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Charles R. Erdman, 46.

⁶⁰ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, 79.

“show”⁶¹ denotes a continual and ongoing revealing of God’s grace demonstrated through Christ to all future generations. God’s purpose in salvation extends beyond man to God’s Glory, which is demonstrated to the whole creation.⁶² This grace toward sinners is infinite and cannot be fully revealed to finite creatures such as man and angels, but will be marveled at for all eternity.⁶³ God’s grace to man came through the kindness that He showed through the finished work of Christ.

Paul has described redemption by the phrases, “because of his great love for us,” “rich in mercy,” “it is by grace you have been saved,” “he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Verses 1-7 has contrasted the Christian’s past to the Christian present. Paul contrasts bondage and freedom, children of wrath to children of God, from living under the reign of sin to living in union with Christ where he is our Lord and ruler. The “But God”⁶⁴ of verse 4, the words, *sunezôpoiêsen*,⁶⁵ *sunêgeiren*,⁶⁶ and *sunekathisen*,⁶⁷ and the perfect form of *sesôsmenoi*,⁶⁸ in verses 5 and 6, mark the clear break between the Christians’ past and present. Verses 8-10 add to the contrast of 1-7 by adding that “walking”⁶⁹ in good works is contrasted with “walked”⁷⁰ in trespasses and sins.⁷¹

Terms Defined: Faith and Works

When defining “faith” (*pistis*) and “works” (*ergôn*), Paul’s context must be considered. What does Paul mean by the phrase “through faith?”⁷² What is “faith?” Salvation is by faith and “not by works,”⁷³ but why does Paul write that we were “created in Christ Jesus to do good works?”⁷⁴ What is the proper place of “works?”

Faith

The object of faith is Jesus Christ Himself as verses 4-7 points out. God, rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ and unites the sinner to Jesus. Faith is the mode by which

⁶¹ *endeixêtai* aorist subjunctive middle form meaning “show” or “prove” pertaining to the future.

⁶² R. C. H. Lenski, 420.

⁶³ Homer A. Kent Jr., 38.

⁶⁴ *o de theos*.

⁶⁵ made us alive together with Christ.

⁶⁶ raised us up together with Christ.

⁶⁷ seated us together with Christ.

⁶⁸ been saved (perfect participle passive is understood as a past action with a present effect).

⁶⁹ *peripatêsômen* aorist subjunctive meaning “walking” with respect to the future.

⁷⁰ *periepatêsate* aorist meaning “you (pl.) walked.”

⁷¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, 619-620.

⁷² Literally *dia pisteôs*.

⁷³ Literally *9 ouk ex ergôn*.

⁷⁴ Literally *ktisthentes en christô iêsou epi ergois agathois*.

salvation comes, not the cause. Lloyd-Jones commenting on these verses writes, “Faith is the channel, it is the instrument through which this salvation which is of the grace of God comes to me.” He further says that faith does not save nor does belief; only Christ saves.⁷⁵

Faith is a reliance on God for salvation apart from works. Lorenzen defining “faith” writes that faith is “man’s total response to and involvement with Jesus Christ. It means the acceptance of God giving Himself to us in Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶ Faith alone justifies the ungodly. The works of the law have no saving benefit. Paul was explaining the doctrine of justification by grace through faith against an understanding that one’s relationship with God can be achieved and maintained through the works of law.⁷⁷ Faith was more than just intellectual knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is the vehicle by which sinners are saved. Faith is a whole-hearted trust in God that the grace required for salvation is given as a gift apart from any efforts of works.⁷⁸

The gift of faith is given to those whom God re-creates. They are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” Faith results in a new life in Jesus characterized by good works prepared in advance for our doing.

Works

Paul uses the term “works” in two different ways: first, negatively, “not by works;” then positively, “created in Christ Jesus to do good works.”

Paul teaches that “works” contribute nothing toward salvation. He writes, “not by works, so no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:9). “Works” are antithetical to grace, “For by grace you have been saved...not by works.” God’s grace for salvation is a gift, and if it is a gift, then it is not by works. Paul militates against a justification that could be earned by performing “works of law.” Paul opposes performing ritual acts of the Old Testament for the purpose of a right standing before the judgment of God.⁷⁹ “Works” in Paul is commonly interpreted to be “works of law,” meaning ceremonial old covenant regulations or works done with a legalistic spirit.⁸⁰ Moo, rejecting this interpretation, concludes that the term “works” refers to “anything that is done.” Paul’s purpose is to eliminate all works, not just certain “works of law” or works done for the basis of justification.⁸¹

⁷⁵ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, 136.

⁷⁶ Thornwald Lorenzen, 233-4.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Robert H. Stein, 6.

⁷⁹ Robert H. Stein, 7.

⁸⁰ Douglas J. Moo, 101.

⁸¹ Ibid., 101-2.

Paul opposed “works” because it denied the adequacy of God’s gift of grace through faith, and because it puts man in the place of savior. Man’s salvation is for the glory of God, but works are for the glory of man.⁸²

Positively, “works” are a necessary result of the gift of salvation through faith. These good works are good because God prepared them in advance for us to do.⁸³ These good works are not perfect works. While moral and spiritual perfection is our goal, perfection will not exist until we enter the next life.⁸⁴ Paul wrote, “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). Good works are the result of being made alive in Christ. They flow out of a relationship with God and are a reflection of the character and action of God.⁸⁵ Having been “created in Christ Jesus,” believers are a new creation by God’s grace, living as Jesus did, reflecting the love of God in the world.

Content of Ephesians 2:8-10

These verses have been called “the most effective summary we have of the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.”⁸⁶ This summary unfolds the theological⁸⁷ and practical⁸⁸ elements of salvation.

In verses 8 and 9, Paul asserts that salvation is solely the work of God and man receives this salvation through faith. Salvation and all it encompasses is a gift in spite of our former life of sin. Paul emphasizes that salvation is by “grace”⁸⁹ and is independent of anything man has done or can do.⁹⁰ While we were dead in sins, having no ability to come to God on our own, that “God made us alive;” “By grace you have been saved...and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Can a dead man raise himself to life? No! Neither can man dead in sin raise himself spiritually. Lenski commenting writes, “Faith is not something that we on our part produce and furnish toward our salvation but is produced in our hearts by God to accomplish his purpose in us.”⁹¹ Faith has no merit in itself, nor do works.

⁸² Andrew T. Lincoln, 623.

⁸³ Literally God prepared the good works for us to “walk” in them.

⁸⁴ William Hendriksen, 125.

⁸⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. New International Commentary of the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 291.

⁸⁶ C. L. Mitton, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 268-9.

⁸⁷ Eph 2:8-9.

⁸⁸ Eph 2:10.

⁸⁹ *charis* (grace) found in v. 5 and 8 means “unmerited” or “undeserved favor.”

⁹⁰ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, 130.

⁹¹ R. C. H. Lenski, 422.

If faith were a work, then there could be boasting, but there is not; faith is not the cause of salvation. All “works” done prior to being united with Christ did not please God for they were performed under the dominion of the world, the devil, and the flesh. Prior to grace, man followed the ways of darkness in his mind and heart. Any work prior to salvation was not “good” because it did not come from a devotion to God. Everything the unregenerate man does flows from the flesh. There was nothing to boast about before God, either prior to Him making us alive with Christ or after. The entire life of a Christian is characterized by grace. Man has done nothing to promote his salvation nor do “good works” merit favor from God. The situation for all men was desperate; it took God’s infinite grace to save us. Grace would be excluded if salvation came from ourselves. In the same way, faith would be excluded if salvation were by works. Works and faith are complete opposites.⁹²

There is controversy surrounding the word “this” in verse 8. What does the word modify? If faith is self-generated, then boasting is possible, but it is not. The confusion surrounding the word “this”⁹³ divides into two schools. On the one side, “this” refers to faith. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this (faith) not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” But on the other side, “this” refers to grace for salvation. “For by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this (the position of grace) not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”⁹⁴ Lloyd-Jones claims that one cannot settle the dispute because it is not one of grammar, but of language.

In the first case, the word “this” referring to faith is neuter in Greek,⁹⁵ while the word “faith” is feminine.⁹⁶ Many interpret this difference to mean that Paul did not intend for the word “this” to modify “faith.” In light of this, Robert Countess wrote an article called, “*Thank God for the Genitive!*” in which he demonstrates that Greek does in fact leave “room” for words to modify other words of differing genders. He writes, “in languages which do have gender, gender is never completely linked with physical sex.” He gives a few examples and writes:

In view of this, one should not be surprised to find that where grammatical gender and physical sex conflict, *the gender of a pronoun may sometimes agree with the physical sex of its antecedent rather than the grammatical gender.*

Returning to the case in point, one may observe that since both *pistis* and *touto* are sexless, Paul would violate no propriety of physical gender at all by referring back to faith with *touto* instead of *aute*.⁹⁷

⁹² Ibid., 424.

⁹³ “this” in Greek is *touto*.

⁹⁴ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, 135.

⁹⁵ “this” *touto*.

⁹⁶ “faith” *pisteôs*.

⁹⁷ Robert H. Countess, “Thank God For The Genitive!,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 12 (1969): 119.

He demonstrated this by citing other works including Abraham Kuyper.⁹⁸ He concluded, “It appears to be that salvation with all its component parts is of God; even the faith with which a man subjectively appropriates the Gospel is bestowed by God.”⁹⁹

On the other side, the word “this” referring to the whole act of salvation is supported by Bruce,¹⁰⁰ Lenski,¹⁰¹ Hendriksen,¹⁰² Kent,¹⁰³ Wiersbe,¹⁰⁴ and Calvin, who writes:

And here we must advert to a very common error in the interpretation of this passage. Many restrict the word *gift* to faith alone. But Paul is only repeating in other words the former sentiment. His meaning is, not that faith is the gift of God, but that of salvation is given to us by God, or, that we obtain it by the gift of God.¹⁰⁵

This controversy is irrelevant because the point is clear—faith is not a work. Verses 8 and 9 say, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Lloyd-Jones claims that, “If it is my belief that saves me I have saved myself; but Paul says that it is not of yourself.”¹⁰⁶ Faith is never the cause of salvation. The grace of God through Christ is the cause of salvation.¹⁰⁷

While man is dead, he cannot produce faith that would be acceptable to God. Sinners are not capable to go to God and beg for the gift.¹⁰⁸ Why would man, an enemy of God in his mind and heart, try to obtain God’s favor? He would not, nor would he ask for life. If he could ask, he would already be alive. But God made us alive, salvation is wholly of Him, and therefore, boasting is excluded. Salvation is “by grace” and out of His “mercy;” man is apostate; he cannot will anything towards salvation.

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). Paul explicitly refers to God as active and He is the One who is working. Man is passive, dead in sin, until he is made alive. There is no activity of man that he could fill to assist God. It is man who died and God who followed him into death by dying and raising sinners to new life.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Robert H. Countess, 121.

¹⁰⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle To The Ephesians*, 51.

¹⁰¹ R. C. H. Lenski, 423.

¹⁰² William Hendriksen, 121.

¹⁰³ Homer A. Kent, Jr., 39.

¹⁰⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, 45.

¹⁰⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul To The Galatians and Ephesians* trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 228-9.

¹⁰⁶ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, 136.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ R. C. H. Lenski, 424.

Paul tells us that all good works are the fruit of regeneration¹⁰⁹ and therefore making any good work an aspect of grace.¹¹⁰ “We are God’s workmanship” refers to the new life in Christ, not the original creation in Adam. Being born of man, we are depraved and enslaved to sin and wickedness, but by the power of God, we are born from above by the Spirit for righteousness. The workmanship¹¹¹ of God is His creation of new beings out of the old. Bruce commenting says we are “His [God’s] work of art, His masterpiece.”¹¹² God created a “work of art” out of the old creation. Believers, who were dead in trespasses and sins, are made alive together with, raised together with, and seated together with Christ, created in Christ for the purpose of good works. Good works are the product of God’s grace, and not of us.

We do not do good works because they save or help maintain salvation. We do good works because we are already saved. We perform them by grace out of gratitude to the Father, to please Him. Jesus said, “If you love me you will obey my commands.” Erdman, writing of good works comments, “They are the fruit and result, not the root or cause, of salvation.”¹¹³ Only a believer can perform truly good works ascribed to grace because he is God’s workmanship created to do good works. Those who continue to “walk” in their trespasses and sins are not God’s workmanship, whatever they profess.¹¹⁴ Non-believers are not re-created to do good works; they are dead in trespasses and sins, which enslave them. All good works necessarily result from grace performed by those who are God’s workmanship.

Believers are created in Christ to do good works, of which he most certainly will perform because God has prepared them in advance. This display of good works is the “supreme manifestation of God’s power...making it possible for us, through faith, to live lives of holiness, of beauty, and of service.”¹¹⁵

Before performing a single good work, God prepared the good works, which he wanted us to “walk.” “What Paul says is not that God prepared *us* that we would walk in good works, but that he prepared the good works” that we might walk in them.¹¹⁶ All the works are ready; they wait for their doing by those for whom they have been prepared.¹¹⁷ While these works are of divine preparation, they are at the same time human responsibility. Jesus illustrated this principle when He said, “Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree

¹⁰⁹ Regeneration is God making us alive with Christ in Eph 2:4.

¹¹⁰ John Calvin, 229.

¹¹¹ The word “workmanship” is translated from *poiêma* literally “what is made.”

¹¹² F. F. Bruce, 52.

¹¹³ Charles R. Erdman, 47.

¹¹⁴ F. F. Bruce, 52.

¹¹⁵ Charles R. Erdman, 48.

¹¹⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, 427.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 428.

cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus by their fruit you will recognize them.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Matt 7:16-20.

Relationship between Faith and Works

Salvation by faith, independent of works, is an essential aspect of justification, but this aspect is not the whole picture of salvation. David Kuske claims the NIV translation of verse 10 is wrong. The NIV says, "...created in Christ Jesus to do good works." He concludes that the meaning of "*epi*" in verse 10 is better rendered "for the purpose of" rather than "to do."¹¹⁹ His understanding of verse 10 is to effectually mean, "created in Christ Jesus *for the purpose of* good works." The preposition *epi* unites faith with works.

Paul is teaching that while works never save or merit favor from God, they are a necessary result of one's faith. At the same time, Paul never defines faith as purely intellectual¹²⁰ or as a grasp of theological concepts apart from the "doing," but as the "total response to and involvement with Jesus Christ." It is an active—walking—reliance on God apart from all works, but works are a consequence of faith.¹²¹ Therefore, all true "good works" are by grace because they flow from God's initiative and His preparing them in advance.

According to Paul, faith has two aspects—the justifying aspect¹²² and the "being made alive with Christ"¹²³ aspect.¹²⁴ These two aspects are always present together and are never alone. If one is justified, he is regenerated, and vice versa. Those whom God created for doing good works will necessarily perform them.¹²⁵ It is by faith that we are justified and created in Christ for the purpose of doing good works. Lorenzen says faith is always obedient faith; salvation by faith apart from works never negates the necessity of works.¹²⁶ He continues:

Works are therefore the natural consequence of faith. Faith lives out of God and brings God's nature to expression. The Christian is therefore exhorted to become what he is; to let the fruit of the Spirit come to expression in his life. But this does not mean that man can relate to God by virtue of his own achievements. If that were the case, who could qualify? God loves man for what he is, not for what he does.¹²⁷

Faith justifies the sinner by uniting him with Christ, and it also certainly produces the good works that God prepared in advance to be performed. The entire Christian life is of grace. Justifying faith is a gift from God and all good works that flow out of faith are the

¹¹⁹ David P. Kuske, "Does Ephesians 2:10 Teach Sanctification or Not," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 92 (1995): 51-2.

¹²⁰ Sharyn Dowd, 202.

¹²¹ Thornwald Lorenzen, 233.

¹²² right standing before God.

¹²³ Regeneration.

¹²⁴ James M. Boice, 72.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Thornwald Lorenzen, 233.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

products of God's Spirit reflecting the nature of God as the believer is created to do. Man merits nothing for he is the conduit of the Spirit producing faith and good works.

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