

GRACE, FAITH, AND WORKS

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

by Alan C. Cole

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Grace, faith, and works are three terms which we must understand to comprehend the scheme of redemption. Misconceptions of these words have produced much confusion about how God saves men from sin. Three major errors have arisen because of the failure to "correctly handle the word of truth": the doctrines of "faith only," "grace excludes all law," and "grace and faith exclude all works."

In the Book of Ephesians, we can see the harmony between grace, faith, and works. Paul presented a fivefold description of redemption in Ephesians 2:4-7.

1. God loved us (v. 4).
2. God made us alive together with Christ (v. 5).
3. God raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ (v. 6).
4. God made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ (v. 6).
5. God showed the exceeding riches of His grace in Christ (v. 7).

Then in Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul summarized God's scheme of redemption.

"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." (Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV).

### WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE.

Grace (Gk.: CARIS) means "unmerited favor." It is God's doing good for someone who does not deserve it. Nothing in us merits salvation. God is gracious, full of mercy, love, and kindness for man; therefore, He has reached out through His Son Jesus Christ to save man.

The word "saved" (Gk.: SOZO) is a passive verb. It emphasizes what has been done to us. We do not save ourselves by meritorious works (2:9); God saves us. In the context of Ephesians chapter two, we can see what this involves. Before God saved us, we were

dead--completely cut off from God (2:1), under the devil's control (2:2), and doomed as sinners facing God's judgment. However, His grace brought us from death to life. Yet, grace alone does not save us.

#### WE ARE SAVED THROUGH FAITH.

The salvation that comes to us by grace comes through the channel of our faith (Gk.: PISTIS). We must have faith to receive God's gracious offer of salvation. God expects us to trust in and act on His Word. In other words, God bestows grace on those who faithfully obey His truth (Romans 6:15-18). Man's obedient faith does not cancel grace. The fact is that an obedient faith allows initial grace (Acts 2:38) and permits continual grace (1 John 1:7). Since belief, repentance, confession, and baptism are all works of faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26), and yet they are not works of merit which result in boasting (Luke 17:10). It follows that they are necessary in order for sinners to be saved by grace. Therefore, we are not saved by "faith only," but through faith that works and that keeps on working.

#### WE ARE SAVED FOR GOD'S WORKS.

Notice that we are God's workmanship. The Greek word for "workmanship" is POIEMA, from which we get our word "poem." It means "a work of art, a master piece." In Christ, we receive God's grace through our faith and become His work of art. We are God's workmanship to do His good works. God has saved us to serve. People should be able to see our good works and glorify our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:16).

They should see that we are:

1. Adorning ourselves with good works (1 Timothy 2:9-10).
2. Rich in good works (1 Timothy 6:18).
3. Thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:17).
4. A pattern of good works (Titus 2:7).
5. Zealous for good works (Titus 2:14).
6. Maintaining good works (Titus 3:8, 14).
7. Encouraging good works (Hebrews 10:24).

We can see that our good works are not meant to be limited to the church property. Good works must be a part of the Christian life. Peter wrote: "Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:12 NKJV).

God's wonderful grace has saved us through our obedient faith to do His good works. God has inseparably joined grace, faith, and works together in His plan for the salvation of man.

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