

Eph 2:8-9 God's Grace, Not Our Works

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For by grace you are saved through faith

Before we were saved, we who were dead in our trespasses and sins, were about as loveable as a corpse, cold and unfeeling toward God. We were all in need of a savior, and needed to put our trust in God for salvation. Rom 3:22-24 **22 but it is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus** Paul describes the means by which Grace was applied to our lives...“through faith,” Grace is the means, or basis of salvation, “through faith” is the conduit through which we are saved—it’s what allows grace to be applied to our lives. This is important, since the salvation that was purchased by Christ’s death is universal in its provision—there’s enough of Jesus’ blood to cover all of the world’s sin, but this grace is not applied to everyone’s life on earth, because not all people accept the provision for the remission of sin that God has provided in salvation through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. We are not automatically saved because Christ died for our sins, but we are saved when we put our trust in God’s gracious provision.

How Does Faith Act as a Conduit of Grace?

Because the law cannot save, but only condemn, we cannot be saved by the law, or by putting our faith in our ability to keep the law. Remember **Heb 11:1 Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen. 2 For by it the people of old gained approval.** So, saving Faith is complete trust that God will do what He said He would do in saving us—it’s proof, even though we haven’t yet seen the evidence, because we know who God is. We trust in what God has accomplished in his Son at the cross.

The righteousness that Abraham had was not credited on the basis of his keeping the law, but on the basis of His faith. Rom 4:16-22 **16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,** The only way that our salvation would be guaranteed, that we would be sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit, is if it were by God’s work of Grace, and not our works. Abraham was saved by grace through faith, just as we are. God gave Abraham Isaac, the child of promise, even against Abraham’s own wishes. And God made Sarah able to have children through a miracle. **17 (as it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed, that is, God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that do not exist.** God did the work miraculously, and Abraham believed in the miracle that God had promised. **18 In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” 19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb;** Abraham looked at the facts objectively, and said, YES, My God can overcome even this. **20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. 22 Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness.** Abraham’s faith in the God that He knew, from living his life for Him and trusting in God’s Character was what enabled Abraham to believe. And Paul is telling the Ephesians, and us that our faith isn’t in what we do, for then it wouldn’t be secure, or faith in faith, because it’s an illusion, but faith that the One True God will keep His Word. We trust in “the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation” It is through this faith that the Grace of God is applied to our lives. Eph 1:13 **13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise, Eph 1:19 **19 and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe.** These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might**

It all depends on God, not us. That's the lesson that Abraham learned, and that's the lesson that we all must learn and re-learn. We are justified through faith in Jesus. Rom 5:1 **Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**. And we are sanctified through faith in Jesus to live our lives walking by the spirit and not the flesh.

We live our lives not by pursuing a set of rules of the Law, which can only show us how far we fall short, but by following Jesus closely. And, if the law could save us, then our keeping of it (if we could) would mean that God would then owe us salvation. Rom 4:4-8 **4 Now to the one who works, the wages are not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,** We can't live a righteous life, therefore God would be unjust by calling our lives righteous! So, the only way that He could save us was to allow us to receive credit for Jesus' righteousness by the substitutionary atonement of Christ's death on the cross. And it is to those who do not work but believe in the one who justifies the ungodly that their faith reckons to them a right standing. Otherwise all of us would have come up short. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God! Gal 2:16 puts it **16 nevertheless, knowing that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by works of the Law no flesh will be justified.** The way that God has accomplished our salvation is the only way He COULD have accomplished it!

So, what is our relationship with the Law, and why should we understand the law of God? Because we need to know what pleases God in order to act in ways in which we can please Him as His children. God does not change, and commandments and principles of the old testament are useful to us to teach us. Gal 3:23-26 **23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being confined for the faith that was destined to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. 26 For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** The law was a teacher, a mirror to lead us to Christ, a mirror to show us how far we fell short.

Only on the basis of grace are people delivered from their desperate situation of sinfulness which separates them from God. And it is Christ's completed action on the cross that saves, and we can neither add to it, nor take away from it!

so that no one may boast

Since, salvation can't be achieved or obtained by us due to some inherent good in us, or by good works that we can do, but only by faith, boasting is excluded. Trust in ourselves, and confidence in the flesh can only harm us. But, this salvation is the gift of God obtained by faith and thus one can bring praise only to God and not to self or self-effort, and does us good, not harm!

We are delivered, we are justified, we are reconciled on the basis of grace by means of faith without any works.

So, is there any place for works? Not in salvation, but there certainly is in the Christian life. We have been created in Christ Jesus FOR good works which God prepared beforehand.