

“Not By Works, But Unto Good Works”

Ephesians 2:9-10

Sermon Series: “Be Rich”

Introduction: Are we saved by works? Are we saved by faith plus works? Are we saved by faith without works? Are we saved by faith that produces works? These are common and important questions in religious circles. It is vital that we are correct about how we actually are forgiven of our sins, have a relationship with God, and go to heaven so these are not just theoretical questions. I am going to attempt to show you how God’s Word actually answers this question of the role of works in salvation.

Main Idea: Salvation is not by works but unto good works through the work of Jesus in us.

1. It is impossible for us to be saved by our own works (v. 9). A work is anything we do that we are trusting to make us right with God. This statement includes the idea of Jesus + works. Why is it impossible for us to be saved if we are trusting in our works at all?

A. Salvation by works is incompatible with our spiritual condition (v. 1-3). How could a dead person do a good work?

B. Salvation by works is inconsistent with the purpose of salvation (v. 7). Salvation is by grace for the glory of God.

C. Salvation by works is impossible because grace and works cannot be mixed and it still be grace (v. 8, Romans 4:1-5).

D. Salvation by works inevitably would lead to boasting (v. 9). Good deeds done before salvation cannot make us right with God because the motive is about self and not the glory of God.

2. We are saved by the work of Jesus in us (v. 10a). We are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are not only justified, but we are also regenerated so we are spiritually alive and indwelt by the Spirit with a new nature. God supernaturally

transforms us from the inside out. He takes us from being dead, depraved, disobedient, and doomed to being His workmanship, which means “masterpiece” or “work of art.” We have a purpose now because He foreordained a plan of good works for us to walk in. Our significance and identity is rooted in being God’s “masterpiece.” We have value because of this that is not dependent on our performance.

3. Saving faith always produces good works (v. 10b). Martin Luther said, “Justification is by faith alone but not by faith that is alone.” We are not saved by works or faith plus works by but (genuine) faith that produces works. Good works are not the cause of salvation but evidence of salvation. The New Testament commends the importance of them in multiple places, including Matthew 5:16, Colossians 1:10, Titus 2:14, and Hebrews 13:20-21. They are inevitable because of the work of Jesus in us. James 2:14-26 is very clear that faith without works is dead. Faith is taking God at His Word and *ACTING* on it. Real faith is not merely words or mental assent to truth. Real faith produces works and works demonstrate faith. Paul and James are both teaching that they cannot be separated from one another, but faith is the root and works are the fruit. The common idea that someone can make a profession of faith in Christ and it be genuine apart from a changed and obedient life is a false and unbiblical idea.

Conclusion: Are you trusting in Jesus alone for your salvation or are you trusting in your works or Jesus + works? Luke 18:9-14 is very clear that we must stop trusting in ourselves and rely completely on the mercy of God to be saved. However, the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 teaches us that a changed life evidenced by repentance and good works is the result of genuine salvation.