

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Works Salvation

(Jerry Fite)

If you emphasize “DO” when speaking of your salvation instead of “DONE”, emphasizing the person and work of Jesus; you probably are advocating “works salvation”, to some, and perverting the truth of the Gospel.

Did not Jesus say from the cross, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30)? Did not Peter claim our salvation is “*in none other*”, but Jesus (Acts 4:12)? It is about Jesus and His sacrificial death. It is about God’s grace, not what we do. If not, salvation is no longer of grace, but a debt God owes us. Is this not what Paul teaches in Romans 4:4: “*Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt?*”

I do not know of anyone claiming to be a Christian who believes or teaches that our salvation is based upon our works, and not upon Jesus. The key word here is “based”. In Jesus, we are speaking about the foundation for our salvation. There is no other foundation that can be laid, but the foundation of Jesus as revealed in the Gospel through His apostles (1 Corinthians 3:10-11, Ephesians 2:20). When Peter speaks of Jesus, he is speaking of His “name” as the authority for

our salvation. But does this eliminate any work upon our part to be saved in His name?

Paul speaks of works that cannot justify us if salvation is by grace. They are “works of the law” (Romans 3:28, 4:4). To help us understand what Paul means by the works of the law not justifying us by grace, let us work back from the other end. How could one be rewarded with being right before God if it were “of debt”?

This could only be the case if we obeyed all the law perfectly. However, if we sin in one point of the law, we are guilty of all (James 2:10). Because we do not continue to obey all things in the law, we are under a curse (Galatians 3:10). The only wage we have earned under a system of law is death (Romans 6:23).

This is why our salvation is by grace and not works of law. We need a foundation we can trust in, for the foundation highlighting our perfect works is severely cracked. Jesus is the foundation, not our works.

But this does not mean that the question, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30) is irrelevant, or even contrary to the

truth of the Gospel. If so, why do not the Lord’s apostles’ instruct those who ask this question that salvation is about what has been “DONE”, not about what you “DO”?

Paul surely didn’t. He answered the inquiring jailor that he must “*believe on the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 16:31). Peter didn’t. He instructed the “what shall we do” multitude to “*repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins...*” (Acts 2:37, 38).

Salvation is not based upon a person merely working faith, repentance and baptism. It is “believe on the Lord” and “repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus”. People are connecting with the only foundation for their salvation, Jesus Christ. On the Lord and His saving work is the object of our work of faith. In the name of Jesus is authority we are trusting as we are baptized into Him for the remission of our sins.

In the Scriptures, you do not see people accusing people of “works salvation” when they obey the conditions to connect to the only foundation of their salvation: Jesus Christ.