

**GOOD NEWS**  
for the unsaved  
WORLD!

(#183)  
Visible evidence does exist.

1

I'M SAVED!

I BELIEVE IN GOD'S GRACE, LOVE AND FORGIVENESS!

I DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING TO RECEIVE HIS GRACE!

GOD LOVES ME THE WAY I AM!

This may sound good... and it may actually *be* good...

- If we are using these terms the way the Bible does, and not using them to deny other truth found in the Bible.
- When church-goers get their views from the world, comments like these often become an expression of a *false* gospel, filled with half truth and redefined words.

2

Today, many church-goers deny much of the Good News message.

- They deny the necessity of repentance – being either *opposed* to it, or considering it a merely *optional* "work."
- They connect "works" to "*an attempt to earn salvation or God's favor,*" and deny any connection to the "*fruit of salvation.*"
- They reject the idea that there will be visible evidence when a person is saved. They may even claim that it is a denial of "grace," and an attempt to *earn* God's approval.
- When describing the Good News, they often redefine the words used – so that, even when the "correct" words are being used, they actually mean something quite different.

★ People who reach this point may have started with half-truth; but it contained half-lie, and the lie has won out. ★

3

**WHAT does the Bible say?**  
Some observations related to works.

REPENTANCE RESULTS IN A VISIBLE CHANGE.

- ✓ People cannot be forgiven if they are unwilling to repent. Scripture connects these two concepts, and always mentions repentance *first*.  
(Sometimes baptism is also mentioned, since that was considered the first *visible* expression of the saving changes that were occurring in the person's heart.)

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins...**"  
Acts 2:38a (CSB)

- ✓ **DEFINITION: Repentance means changing the way we think and act.** It involves our thoughts and our conduct – and conduct has to do with our actions – *the things people can see*. This is "works."

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**THE WORKS THAT GOD REQUIRES: THE FRUIT (NOT CAUSE), OF SALVATION.**

In this matter, those who oppose "visible evidence" may be promoting a half-truth; because it is *true* that we cannot work for salvation.

The problem is the half-lie. In their zeal to promote "grace" and "faith" (sometimes poorly defined), they view "works" as an incompatible opposite. They fail to see that "grace" results in "works."

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**PEOPLE ARE NOT SAVED BY WORKS.**  
We must affirm this statement. (It's 1/2 of the "WORKS" issue.)

We must emphasize this fact!

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—**not from works**, so that no one can boast.  
Ephesians 2:8-9 (CSB)

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- ✓ More examples: Proof that people are NOT saved by works.

[God] has saved us ... **not because of anything we have done** but **because of his own purpose and grace.**  
2 Timothy 1:9a (NIV)

[God] saved us, **not because of righteous things we had done**, but **because of his mercy.**  
Titus 3:5a (NIV)

- We must acknowledge what these verses say: We cannot work to earn salvation or God's favor!
- But we must also acknowledge the place that works have in a saved person's life! *After all, Scripture tells us that this is why God saved us!*

Those who oppose works would benefit if they paid attention to the context of the verses they quote. Sometimes they would find statements that affirm the need for works ... connected to the very verses they use to deny works!

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**PEOPLE ARE SAVED FOR THE PURPOSE OF DOING WORKS.**  
 We must affirm this statement. (It's also 1/2 of the "WORKS" issue.)

Even verses mentioned by *those who oppose works* will sometimes say this!

Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us we *aren't* saved by works... but look at verse 10!

For we are God's handiwork, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.  
 Ephesians 2:10 (CSB)

2 Timothy 1:9a – When we quoted this passage, we focused on the cause of salvation." Here, we will point out a phrase that we skipped over, because it mentions the purpose for God saving us."

[God] has saved us and **called us to a holy life** ... because of his own purpose and grace.  
 2 Timothy 1:9 (NIV)

"Holiness" does *not* mean we go around thinking good thoughts or feeling "spiritual." It has to do with *how we live* – our visible conduct.

We are going to look at some of the verses where this concept is present. These verses are not hidden, but are plainly visible for anyone who is willing to look. So those who oppose this "works" concept have no excuse.

**EMPOWERED AND ENCOURAGED TO DO WORKS.**

1. Just as GRACE is connected to "salvation without works," it's *also* connected to "works after salvation."

The one who saves us and pours out his grace and love to us **also enables us to do good works!**

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who **loved us** and by his **grace** gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and **strengthen you in every good deed and word.**  
 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NIV)

The grace that saves also teaches us to do what is good!

People who aren't being taught don't have grace. "Grace" is not an excuse for denying one's responsibility!

For the grace of God ... **teaches us** to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age ...  
 Titus 2:11a, 12 (NIV)

2. Other ways God has enabled us to do good works:

**Jesus died ... to enable us to do good works... AND to change our attitude about them.**

[He] gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, **eager to do what is good.**  
 Titus 2:14 (NIV)

The Bible teaches us to do God's will – which involves good works.

This is the reason God gave us the Bible! It's not only so that we can be saved, but so that we can live!

... the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be **thoroughly equipped for every good work.**  
 2 Timothy 3:15b-17 (NIV)

3. We have an obligation to encourage *each other* to do good works.

And let us consider how to spur one another on to love and **good deeds.**  
 Hebrews 10:24 (BSB)

This encouragement includes: ✓ prayer to God, ✓ reliance on God's power and ✓ thankfulness to God.

The Good News was at work in the people at Colosse (vs. 6-7). So Paul prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of God (v. 9). He prayed this so that they would: ① show by their lives that they belong to God (v. 10a). This would result in ② good works (v. 10b), done in the power of God (v. 11), and would result in ③ joyful thanks to God (v. 12)!

VISIBLE EVIDENCE...  
 GOOD WORKS...  
 ENABLED BY GOD...  
 THANKS TO GOD!

We ask this [= prayer] so that you will live the kind of lives that prove you belong to the Lord. Then you will want to please him in every way as you grow in **producing every kind of good work** by this knowledge about God.

We ask him to strengthen you by his glorious might with all the power you need to patiently endure everything with joy.

You will also thank the Father, who has made you able to share the light, which is what God's people inherit.  
 Colossians 1:10-12 (GW)

4. Teaching others by what we do (= actions) and say (= instructions).

Paul told Titus to be an example that others could see and follow:

And you yourself must be an example to them by **doing good works of every kind.**  
 Titus 2:7a (NLT)

After giving Titus a list of instructions for the people, Paul tells him:

... I want you to insist on these teachings so that all who trust in God will **devote themselves to doing good.**  
 Titus 3:8b (NLT)

Then he points to an opportunity they have, for putting this into practice: They can provide for the needs of some visiting Christians.

Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.

★ Our people must learn to devote themselves to **doing what is good**, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. ★  
 Titus 3:13-14 (NIV)

### SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT OUR GOOD WORKS:

#### 1. To be able to do good works, we must pursue the right values (shown by an illustration):

It takes time and effort to develop the right values. We must make choices that *reinforce* those values (= human responsibility). The end result is that we will be ready ("prepared") to do good works.

2 Timothy 2:19-22+ tells us we have an *obligation* to *pursue* holiness. Paul uses a physical illustration to teach us our obligation. In a large house, some things will be designated for "honorable" (or "special") purposes, and others for "dishonorable" (or "common") purposes.

We must cleanse ourselves from anything that is "dishonorable," so that we can be...

... made holy, useful to the Master and **prepared to do any good work.**

2 Timothy 2:21b (NIV)

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#### 2. Being careful about motives.

Jesus warns us to NOT go around trying to impress others by our works. Yet even so, good works, if they exist, will eventually be recognized for what they are. *Consider the following two passages:*

##### DON'T TRY TO GET ATTENTION (AND PRAISE)!

"Be careful! When you do something good, don't do it in front of others so that they will see you. If you do that, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."

Matthew 6:1 (ERV)

##### GOOD WORKS WILL EVENTUALLY BE RECOGNIZED FOR WHAT THEY ARE.

(But if you're following Jesus, this won't be the *reason* you do them!)

Likewise, good works are obvious, and those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden.

1 Timothy 5:25 (CSB)

(SEE ALSO) →

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#### 3. Good works will be visible.

People will see them. In the end, people will glorify God.

Good works are *commanded*: They are an *obligation*. Our response to this command reveals our attitude toward the God who gave us the command. *This isn't a "private" living-out of salvation. It refers to something that is visible to others.*

Jesus, during the "Sermon on the Mount."

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that **they may see your good works** and **give glory** to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16 (CSB)

Peter, when writing about persecution.

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, **they may see your good deeds** and **glorify** God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

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#### 4. The rich: more opportunity, and more accountability to God.

Many Scripture passages warn us that most rich people will NOT have a part in God's kingdom, because they can't serve God with their focus on the things that this world offers. \* If you *do* have this world's goods, and *still* want to follow Jesus, you need to consider this obligation:

Instruct them to do good, to be **rich in good works**, and to be generous and ready to share, ...

1 Timothy 6:18 (BSB); see also vs. 17, 19.

In order to avoid a half-truth, we must also mention that there are *other* commands regarding those who are *poor because of laziness*. We are NOT to encourage the laziness of such people, by sharing with them! See 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14.

\* Compared to the people who originally heard what Jesus and the apostles said, we would have to conclude that, today, *nearly everyone in our society is rich* – even those who (compared to others) would consider themselves "poor."

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### Now suppose you claim to be a Christian, but are living a life of NOT doing these good things...

#### IF THIS DESCRIBES YOU, THEN CONSIDER THESE THINGS:

1. Scripture has something to say about such people. What it says is *proof* that "visible evidence" (or lack thereof) is a serious issue!

Such people claim they know God, but **they deny him by the way they live.** They are detestable and disobedient, **worthless for doing anything good.**

Titus 1:16 (NLT)

2. Some people think they *can* do *good* without *God*... Scripture explains why such people *cannot* see the truth about their corrupt nature. Here is a typical verse that explains their condition:

... because their minds and consciences are **corrupted.**

Titus 1:15b (NLT)

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3. Some people *claim* to have a changed life, but live as though their "changed life" has nothing to do with the way they live (i.e., what people *see*)! God says he *empowers* people to change... but these people aren't using that power! In fact, *they are denying it!*

... having a form of godliness but **denying its power.**

2 Timothy 3:5a (NIV)

4. **In contrast:** Here is a description of what happens when people follow God and *don't* have this denial – people who *trust* God for power and are willing to *obey* him by using that power.

It is God who **produces in you** the desires and actions that please him.

Philippians 2:13 (GW)

Glory belongs to God, whose power is **at work in us.** By this power he can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

Ephesians 3:20 (GW)

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### GOING BACK TO OUR STARTING COMMENTS...

I'M SAVED!

I BELIEVE IN GOD'S  
GRACE, LOVE AND  
FORGIVENESS!

I DON'T HAVE TO DO  
ANYTHING TO  
RECEIVE HIS GRACE!

GOD LOVES ME THE  
WAY I AM!

### > Does Jesus love us "the way we are"? <

- The answer is YES! But we need to go to Scripture to understand HOW this concept applies to us.

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### > Jesus *does* love us "the way we are"! <

- **BEFORE SALVATION:** There is nothing we can do to "better ourselves" before we look to God for salvation. We must come to God "as is," admitting our weakness and failure, our sin and corruption.

### > He also loves us "the way we are becoming"! <

- **AFTER SALVATION:** God doesn't save us so that we can stay in our sin. Rather, he empowers us so that we can change. He embeds within us the ability and desire to make this change. And those who belong to him will pursue this change, because their *hearts* have changed. They will pursue this, *even if it takes a lifetime to fully attain it!*

["The way we are" CHANGES when salvation occurs. Instead of loving and encouraging and reinforcing sin, we fight it.]

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## < Our MISSION >

- ✓ **DON'T DENY GRACE**, but learn what it means and what it does! (Don't *avoid* it, just because of the distortions of many.)
- ✓ **PURSUE GRACE**, knowing that God gives you the *power* to succeed.
- ✓ **ALSO PURSUE THE CHANGED MIND** – The values that grace uses to accomplish its purposes, *knowing that God gives us the power to succeed.*

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### DON'T USE "GRACE" AS AN EXCUSE to sin, as these people did!

They are ungodly people, who **pervert the grace of our God** into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Jude 1:4b (NIV)

- When people claim to know God... but deny him by what they do, *God has a "special" place for them... but it's NOT where they think it is.*

"Then he will say to those on his left, **Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels."

Matthew 25:41 (NIV)

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### Acknowledge that WORKS DON'T SAVE US.

But if they are done out of *love* for God and neighbor, *they show what type of life is in us.*

### Also acknowledge that WORKS ARE A PART OF THE GOOD NEWS!

This is what Paul preached.

I preached that they should repent and turn to God and **demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.**

Acts 26:20b (NIV)

Whoever tells you good news that is different from the Good News we gave you should be condemned to hell, even if he is one of us or an angel from heaven.

Galatians 1:8 (GW)

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In the Bible, we can learn what these "works" are. It doesn't mean "doing religious things," unless you define "religion" the way James does, in James 1:26-27: Love for God and neighbor, expressed in helping the helpless and pursuing moral purity.

## Credits

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