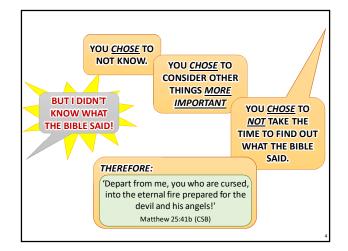


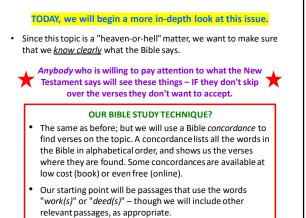
The Bible study method used last week:

- 1. Accepting the words what they mean and how they relate to each other.
- 2. Paying attention to the context.
- 3. Looking at cross-references, which take us to other passages that have a similar focus.

THIS CAN BE *EASILY* DONE WITH JUST ABOUT <u>ANY</u> BIBLE THAT HAS CROSS-REFERENCES IN THE MARGINS. *

- Today, there are so many Bible study helps available many being public domain and low-cost, or even free (online) – that we will have no excuse at the day of judgment.
- To speed up our research, we used "The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge," which is a book filled with cross-references for the entire Bible. It's low cost (as a book) or even free (online).
- * (You can also accomplish it by simply *reading* the New Testament.)







- In the New Testament, there are about 200 verses with these words. Most are relevant to our study. (A few occur in an unrelated context.)
- At a quick glance, the relevant verses fit into the following categories (numbers rounded off):
 - ✓ God's works (and related issues) ~ 4 dozen verses.
 - ✓ Salvation and works (how these concepts relate) ~3 dozen verses.
 - ✓ General statements about works ~2 dozen verses (most focusing on future judgment issues).
 - Evil works (i.e., what the unsaved do) ~3½ dozen verses.
 - ✓ Good works (i.e., what the *saved* do) ~4 dozen verses.

There are so many passages that affirm the Bible message, that the only way to reach a *different* conclusion is to reject the Bible, and choose to lie. Doing this is a <u>moral</u> issue, not a <u>fact</u> issue.

WORKS AND WHAT GOD DOES IN OUR SALVATION.

- We have looked at this issue before. The <u>world</u> views sovereignty and responsibility as being in <u>conflict</u>. The <u>Bible</u> describes sovereignty and responsibility as <u>working together</u> (but in separate realms).
- Here, we focus on God's role, as <u>Creator</u>. We cannot experience what God does on this level. We can only be told about it in Scripture, or learn about it (perhaps imperfectly) as we look back in history.
- Logically, what God does (sovereignty) comes *first*. But chronologically (in our human experience), it does not in any way interfere with, or hinder our choices – which occur on the <u>created</u> level.
 - (God also interacts with us on the created level, through Jesus Christ.)

When God reveals these things, it's <u>not</u> to interfere with our choices. Rather, it's to *encourage* those who follow him, and to *warn* those who don't. It's to tell us that <u>our choices matter</u>.

Salvation is by <u>God's GRACE</u> – not by our works.

- What <u>God</u> does in saving us is <u>NOT</u> determined by OUR works.
- On the human level, salvation involves *faith*; but ultimately, we are saved because of what <u>God</u> does (= grace), not by what <u>we</u> do.
 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)

See also: 2 Timothy 1:9 (= because of his own purpose and grace) and Titus 3:5 (= because of his mercy).

Working for salvation is a contradiction to receiving it by grace.
 Now if by grace, then it is not by works; otherwise grace ceases to be grace.
 Romans 11:6 (CSB)

Even the "work" of faith is a gift from God!

 The Jews asked Jesus what "works" they could do, in order to be saved. His response was that the only "work" people can do is to <u>trust</u> him and what <u>he</u> did. (<u>He</u> did the actual work.)

"What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." John 6:28b-29 (NIV)

 Yet even then, once we learn about God's role in salvation, we discover that our <u>faith</u> was actually a <u>gift</u>, received from God!

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)

Simeon Peter, [writing]: To those who have received a faith equal to ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:1 (CSB)

"WORKS" and "GRACE" <u>never</u> "work together" to save a person.

- There is a connection between the two, but <u>not</u> in the sense of working together to <u>cause</u> salvation. Salvation is <u>not</u> a joint effort between God and humans!
- Because of God's grace, we are saved by the *gift* of faith, not by works – as we saw in Ephesians 2:8-9. But Scripture doesn't stop there. If we keep reading, we discover that God not only enables our *faith*. He also enables our *works!*

For we are his workmanship, ... Ephesians 2:10a (CSB)

"Workmanship"? The following translation explains what it means... along with God's purpose for doing it:

God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would spend our lives doing the good things he had already planned for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 (ERV)

FAITH and WORKS are <u>both</u> made possible by GRACE!

Spiritually dead people do not come alive without GRACE.

- An unsaved person is *dead in sin* (Ephesians 2:1) and a *slave to sin* (John 8:34; Romans 6:16). There is no heart desire to <u>trust</u> God or to <u>obey</u> him.
- On our own, we would have *continued* to willfully choose to go our own way – perhaps wanting to "go to heaven" (to escape hell), but *not* wanting to submit to God and follow Jesus.

WRITTEN TO PEOPLE WHO ARE NOW SAVED:

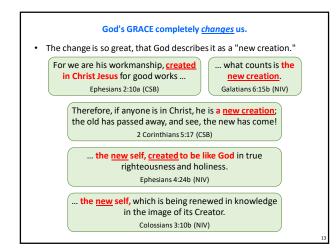
And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ... [<u>All</u> of us, according to v. 3] ... But God ... made us alive ... Ephesians 2:1a, 4a, 5a (CSB)

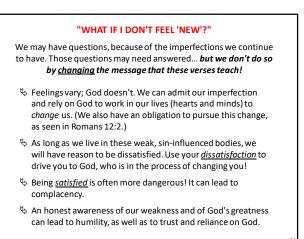
> ... though you once were slaves to sin, ... You have been set free from sin ... Romans 6:17b, 18a (BSB)

Why we <u>CAN</u> change:

- When we <u>do</u> exercise repentance and faith, and we <u>do</u> have works, it is because of GRACE.
- Initially, we might not realize the role of GRACE in our salvation (because we are focusing on what we need to do, in order to be saved – similar to what we see in Acts 16:30). Yet as we grow in understanding salvation, we grow in understanding GRACE.
- And so, <u>we give God credit for ALL of these</u>: our <u>repentance</u>, our <u>faith</u>, and even our <u>works</u>. We come to the realization that we would have NEVER made those choices, or even <u>wanted</u> to make them, if it weren't for GRACE.
- This GRACE-caused change is all-encompassing, affecting even how we live our "works."

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





"WORKS" AND WHAT WE DO IN OUR SALVATION.

• The New Testament has hundreds of verses describing the role of <u>faith</u> in salvation – and this includes verses that explain the relationship between works, faith and salvation.

How do works, faith and salvation interact?

- In some passages, they are in *conflict*; in others, they *work together*.
- To understand the specific relationships between these concepts, we need to look at the passages themselves, without using outof-context passages to "undo" what they say. (The words used, how they relate to each other, and the immediate context, will prove most valuable in understanding these verses.)

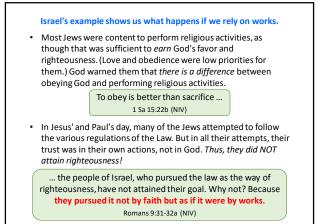
The "WORKS of the Law" cannot save.

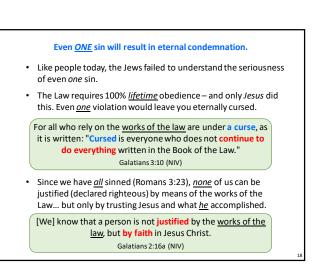
 If ANYONE could have been saved by their own works, it would have been the Jews. They had more revelation from God than did the Gentiles; for they had God's actual revealed Words.

> So what advantage does the Jew have?... First, they were entrusted with the very words of God. Romans 3:1a, 2b (CSB)

- This revelation from God showed them *more clearly* the difference between good and evil. It also showed them their need to <u>trust</u> God for the heart changes they could not achieve by their own efforts.
- Even so, most of Israel's history is one of NOT trusting God even after God did so much for them.

But even after all he did, you refused to trust the LORD your God, ... Deuteronomy 1:32 (NLT); see also Deuteronomy 9:23b.





Trusting Jesus is our <u>only</u> option.

 These facts leave us with *only one option: <u>trusting</u> Jesus.* Clearly no one who relies on <u>the law</u> is justified before God, because "the righteous will live by faith."

Galatians 3:11 (NIV)

(This "works of the law" concept is mentioned in a few other passages (such as in Romans, in chapters 3 and 4); but the message is *always* the same. Trying to get saved by "doing what the Bible says" <u>doesn't work!</u>)

 As we've seen in the past, our sin is just too sinful. Any attempt to earn salvation would be merely an expression of what the "flesh" (or "sinful nature") could do. We need the Spirit FIRST – and receiving the Spirit occurs at the point of salvation.

Consider Paul's testimony (Philippians 3:4-14). If anyone could have succeeded in working for salvation, <u>he</u> could have – and *he failed*!

Even so, there <u>is</u> some type of connection between salvation and works. James tells us this very clearly.

- This issue is described in James 2:14-26.
- If we were to deny this passage (or "reinterpret" it, based on what we <u>want</u> to believe), we would be deliberately lying about this passage!
- So, rather than <u>denying</u> it, we should try to <u>understand</u> it. After all, it is not safe to <u>lie</u> about what God says.

Some preliminary comments:

- James is NOT focused on "<u>works for salvation</u>"; but rather, on "<u>how saving faith operates</u>."
- He tells us that works are <u>a part of</u> saving faith.

There is so much for us to examine on this issue, that we will have to look at it next time!

OUR MISSION

Let us pursue an *accurate* understanding of Scripture, making it our goal to NOT change what it says! Doing this will influence our thoughts, our conduct, and our eternity.

People often "interpret" the verses they don't like "in the light of" the verses they do like. There <u>is</u> value in seeing what other passages say, but not for CHANGING the message of the verses we don't like – especially when the message of those verses is repeated in multiple places in the Bible! (If it was just <u>one</u> passage with that focus, perhaps it could be a "misinterpretation"; but when there are <u>many</u> passages with that same focus (even if mentioned in different ways), it is a "theme.")

Credits

- Scriptures marked "NLT" Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "NIV" Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.biblica.com)
- Scriptures marked "CBB" Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2020 by Holman Bible Publichers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are lederally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publichers.
- Scriptures marked "ERV" Taken from the HOLY BIBLE: EASY-TO-READ VERSION ©2014 by Bible League International. Used by
 permission. https://www.bibleleague.org/
- Scriptures marked "BSB" Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSB; Copyright @2016, 2020 by Bible Hub; Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved Worldwide. https://bereanbible.com/

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Megsphone roshellin / CC0; <u>https://openclipart.org/detail/167691/megafono</u>
- Page divider GDJ / CO0; <u>https://openclipart.org/detail/268262/vintage-decorative-dividence-di-dividence-dividence-dividence-divide</u>

Presentation - Dennis Hinks © 2023