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THE SURE WORD

By Jonnie Hutchison

ARE WORKS NECESSARY TO SALVATION? #1

Most of our readers have probably heard or read the scripture which declares, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Some have concluded from this passage that absolutely no kind of works on the part of a sinner are necessary to his salvation. It is believed by many that one is saved by “faith only” without any further action. In other words, when one comes to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, it is at that point that one is immediately saved. Is this what the Bible teaches?

The Bible speaks of different kinds of works. It speaks of the works of the law of Moses (the spiritual law given to God’s chosen people in the Old Testament). The Law of Moses was never intended to be universal in its application. It was given only to Israel and was taken out of the way when Jesus died on the cross to be replaced with the New Testament which is God’s universal spiritual law today (Deut. 5:3; Colossians 2:14-16; Ephesians 2:14-16). A careful study of the context of Galatians 5:4 indicates that it was this old law that Paul wrote about saying, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by **the law**; ye are fallen from grace.” No one this side of the cross can be justified by a law that is no longer in force. Thus, no one may be saved by the works of the Old Testament law. One who attempts to do so falls from God’s grace which is extended to mankind through Jesus as revealed in the New Testament.

Neither is it possible to be saved through “works” originated by men. If one originated his own plan of salvation which was effective he would have a reason to boast. However, Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly indicates that such human works will not result in one’s salvation. God’s original plan of salvation has already been revealed. There is only one way to salvation and that is God’s way! (Acts 4:12; Gal. 1:6-9; Matt. 15:8-9).

The Bible also speaks of the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21). It is clear such works will condemn rather than save. Scripture reads, “those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Yes, these are “works” which will not save. Yet, in Ephesians 2:10 the Bible tells us that God has ordained that we walk in “good works.” The Christians in Philippi were told to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). The inspired James wrote that “faith without works is dead, being alone” (James 2:20, 26). It should be obvious that there is a kind of works which are necessary to salvation. In our next article, we will address these works. Thanks for reading. Send questions to greenplain@greenplainchurchofchrist.org.