

# NOT OF WORKS

A brief study on the GRACE of God



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Divine Viewpoint

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**T**he GRACE of God in Christ Jesus comprehends the entire need of man for time and for eternity. But man is by nature stone blind. Man is so fully his own enemy that he cannot recognize the Divine Friend. It is horrible but true that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit."

The story of GRACE through the cross is the message of the Spirit. And this is the wondrous message that man needs. This is the stirring message to which man is stone blind. This is the message which includes every soul of man in its loving sweep, and yet excludes man's proud and pompous doings so fully from its program that human pride is not left with a single leg to stand on.

This is the message to the lost, the message of salvation to the lost, mercy to the downtrodden, deliverance to those in bondage, joy to the sorrowing, and victory to the defeated. And it rests altogether on the work of the Saviour, **and not one whit on the deeds of man.** It is the message of GRACE through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And surely God had made GRACE Truth plain enough in the Scriptures.

"For by GRACE are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, NOT OF WORKS LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST," Ephesians 2:8, 9.

"Being justified by His GRACE," Titus 3:7.

"The GRACE of God which is given you by Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 1:4.

"That He by the GRACE of God should taste death for every man," Hebrews 2:9.

"Being justified freely by His GRACE," Romans 3:24.

"It is of faith that it might be by GRACE," Romans 4:16.

"We have access by faith into this GRACE wherein we stand," Romans 5:2.

"The Gift of GRACE which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many," Romans 5:15.

"And if by GRACE then it is no more of works, otherwise GRACE is no more GRACE, but if by works then it is no more GRACE, otherwise work is no more work," Romans 11:6.

"By the GRACE of God I am what I am, and His GRACE which was bestowed upon me was not in vain," 1 Corinthians 15:10.

"His GRACE wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved," Ephesians 1:6.

God's sole method of salvation for sin-cursed man is GRACE unadulterated by the most insignificant taint of human works. It is pure, uncaused, sovereign GRACE. And God's book does not obscure GRACE. On the contrary, the Bible is the one Book that dares to declare man hopelessly helpless in his own strength, and consequently utterly dependent on Divine GRACE for salvation.

A careful study of GRACE set forth in God's Word reveals that while many facts are presented by the Holy Spirit, the one fact which receives the supreme emphasis and the most frequent repetition, is the fact that human works are completely ruled out when God's GRACE operates in bringing salvation.

**GRACE and works do not mix.** And no matter how godly the works may be, the GRACE of God eliminated them from the realm of salvation. "NOT OF WORKS" is Heaven's slogan when salvation comes into view.

Satan has a trinity of falsehoods on the works question, which he has used from the beginning of time. And these three lies are exceedingly familiar. In the hour of testing, the adversary comes to the soul of a man with at least one of these iniquitous misrepresentations of God, sometimes all three.

The lies are:

"You must be good to get saved."

"You must hold out to keep saved."

"You must do at least some good works to prove that you are saved."

These three master delusions of the enemy have kept many a soul from catching a glimpse of the meaning of the cross and the glory of GRACE. But God has forever put an end to these three wicked insults to His character in this remarkable statement in 1 Corinthians 3:15: "If any man's works shall be burned he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

Divine repudiation of human error on the subject of GRACE could not be more complete. The passage is the description of the coming judgment seat of Christ when the works of the believers are subjected to the fiery judgment of God. The apostle Paul suggests a condition which every child of God knows is a possibility, and the condition is, "If any man's work shall be burned."

The picture is sad, because it is a picture of a Christian who has lived out his life here upon Earth and has come before the judgment bar of God for the judgment of the deeds done in the body. And when the leaping flames of Divine wrath against sin test that Christian's whole life, the result is staggering. "His works are burned."

The inspired apostle has deliberately selected the worst kind of an instance that could arise to present in this hypothetical case. He selects the case of a Christian who on the judgment day has not one good thing to his credit. He has lived a life of sin. No "good work," no "fruit," no "gold, silver, and precious stones," nothing but "wood, hay and stubble." What a terrible picture, the Lord thrusts out His judgment fire to test that man's life and every deed, every thought burns up. Not a thing is left except the man's FOUNDATION, and that FOUNDATION is not the result of his works but was received AS A GIFT OF GRACE. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The Lord Jesus Christ cannot burn up. He has already passed through the fiercest of the wrath-flames of God in the bearing of the sins of a sin-cursed race and has come forth more than conqueror. And He shall die no more. He shall live forever. What a blessed and reliable FOUNDATION. **The be-**

**liever in Christ Jesus has a foundation which is infinitely fireproof.**

And now the apostle Paul states his astounding conclusion. He has made his suppositious case very clear. The man he is talking about has absolutely nothing of fruit to fall back on in the day of judgment. He is utterly empty handed. The momentous question is, WILL HE BE SAVED? Paul's answer is: "But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

Startling reply indeed. His works are burned but he is saved. This is what GRACE can accomplish. The man in the apostle's illustration is saved and yet it has been made clear that his works are burned. It does not say that part of his works are burned, nor does it say that his works were partly burned.

Those who indulge in such imaginations are guilty of thinking above that which is written. The passage simply says that the man's works are burned. The word "works" cannot signify less than his "works," that is, all of them. The word "burned" cannot signify less than "burned." **All of his works are completely burned.**

Thus we see that the man in this impressive passage did not have one work left to get him saved, nor one to keep him saved, nor one whereby to prove that he was saved, and yet he was saved, the apostle said so.

This fully and satisfyingly confirms the oft-quoted passage from Ephesians and shows that its meaning is absolute. "NOT BY WORKS LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST."

When God says, "NOT BY WORKS," He means "NOT BY WORKS," anyhow, anywhere, any time. **Salvation is by GRACE alone, GRACE only, and GRACE always.** And yet man has an awful time believing that God can do a real job of saving a soul without at least a little human help. "For by GRACE are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast," Ephesians 2:8, 9.

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