

Are We Saved by Living a Good Life - Or By God's Grace Alone?

Ephesians 2:8-10

1 Are we saved by living a good life or by God's grace alone? 2

One of the key Bible passages that relates to this question is Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8 through 10, For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The reason that this question is important is it has been argued for hundreds of years.

The first is presented by the Roman and Orthodox Catholic faiths and liberal Protestant denominations; which leaves some questions. Am I really good enough to be God's child forever? What if I willingly sin and fail to go to confession? Am I slam dunked? How can I really know from day to day if I'm accepted or not?

The second position is presented by a big chunk of the Christian world which call themselves Fundamentalists. If you believe Jesus is the Son of God and have asked Him to come into your heart you are saved. Case closed. No questions asked. Done deal! Don't worry about it. The way you live really doesn't affect your saved state.

Let me provide an historical context. Friedrich Schleiermacher, a German theologian and philosopher of the early nineteenth century, tried to blend the philosophy of the Enlightenment into Protestant Christianity. Having introduced higher criticism to Bible interpretation, he became known as the "Father of Modern Liberal Theology". Other Bible scholars joined the band wagon so that by the beginning of the twentieth century the liberal theology camp became fully developed.

Since the Bible could no longer be trusted as "the word of God" biblical texts became watered down. Scripture became largely irrelevant. The mission of

the churches of evangelism and discipleship was largely replaced with “The Social Gospel”; emphasizing the love of God by ministering to secular society’s economical and physical needs. Bible study was replaced with soup kitchens to feed the poor. This type of thinking took over the major Christian colleges and theological seminaries of that time.

The 1920s and 1930s saw a resurgence of biblical Christianity, calling themselves Fundamentalists, where the Bible was emphasized as the “word of God” and biblical texts were deemed to be literally “word for word” accurate. Proclamation of Bible doctrine took center place.

The positions appear to be diametrically opposed to one another with plenty of Bible passages to support both positions. Bible scholars of our Christian Churches have been unfairly criticized for not taking a firm stand in one of those camps.

There’s a reason for this. We believe these are both extreme positions. Because so many people accept

one of these positions, arguing against the other, I felt I needed to address this issue. ³

So, let me show you Bible passages for both positions and then share with you what I think they are saying. ⁴

I. We are Saved by Living a Good Life

We are saved by living a good life. ⁵ A good passage supporting this idea is Philippians, chapter 2, verses 12 and 13, **Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his **good purpose**. Sounds like salvation is something you continually work on and develop, right? ⁶**

Here are a couple of passages about living the good life. First Timothy, chapter 6, verses 18 and 19, **Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. in this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm**

foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.⁷ Then, again, James, chapter 1, verses 26 and 27, if anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.⁸

How about the verses that relate to salvation by enduring until the end? Lord Jesus stated, **All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved**.¹⁹ Second Timothy, chapter 4, verses 7 and 8, I have fought the good fight I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to those who have longed for his appearing.¹⁰ Second Peter, chapter 1,

¹ Matthew 10:22.

verses 10 and 11, **Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, "and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ¹¹ Finally, First Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 2, **By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.** ¹²**

There's a passage that appears to connect salvation to sharing your faith. Romans, chapter 10, verses 9 and 10, **That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your head that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.** ¹³

Then, there are passages that seem to support the concept that . . .

II. We are Saved by God's Grace Alone

We are saved by God's grace alone.

Consider the scriptures about salvation being a free gift. ¹⁴

Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8 through 10 (our passage today), **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.** ¹⁵ Romans, chapter 6, verse 23, **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.** ¹⁶ Then, Romans, chapter 11, verse 6, **And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.** ¹⁷

Then, there are the passages that state that you obtain salvation simply by believing. First Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 21, **For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.** ¹⁸ Of course there

is John, chapter 3, verse 16, **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** ¹⁹
Finally there's Second Timothy, chapter 3, verse 15, . . .
. **and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

So, who is right? Both have plenty of Bible to support their position. ²⁰

My position is . . .

III. Both Positions are Right - They Just Don't Exclude One Another

Both positions are right. They just don't exclude one another! ²¹

Salvation is spoken of in the Bible as a process, a future hope and as a state. ²²

“Works” meant working your way to salvation by obeying the rules and regulations in the Law of Moses.

Our Christian Churches have been criticized by our Evangelical brothers because we place more emphasis on the role of Christian baptism in God’s plan of salvation than they. They call our position a “work”.²³

A couple of comments deserve mentioning here. Christian baptism is not something you do but something that is done to you. It is simply your participation in a beautiful ceremony demonstrating what you are committing your life to; forsaking your old way of life and burying the old corpse so you can begin a new life obedient to Jesus as Lord from now on. You are also identifying with the very act that provided your salvation for you; the act of Lord Jesus dying, being buried and, then, being gloriously resurrected!²⁴

Your good life is lived as a result of being saved; not as a condition to get it! ²⁵ Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 10, **For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works**. Loving Lord Jesus is our motivation for living to please Him. ²⁶ Titus, chapter 2, verse 14, **Jesus Christ, who 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**.

Believing, having faith in our loving Savior, is how we get access to this salvation. ²⁷ But the biblical definition of faith requires works as its expression. Excerpts from James, chapter 2, verses 14 through 24 give us this explanation, **What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?. . . Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead**. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and **I will show you my faith by what I do**. You believe that there is one God. Good!

Even the demons believe that — and shudder . . . You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. 28

Don't be a part of one of these extremes! You don't have to continually worry if you are good enough to get to heaven. Lord Jesus made you worthy when He went to the cross!

But don't believe that just because you said a little prayer years ago you are relieved of the responsibility to live, grow and to serve either!

<http://biblelifemessages.org/>