

Ro 2:6–16 (ESV) He will render to each one according to his works: ⁽⁷⁾ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁽⁸⁾ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁽⁹⁾ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ⁽¹⁰⁾ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ⁽¹¹⁾ For God shows no partiality. ⁽¹²⁾ For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ⁽¹³⁾ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ⁽¹⁵⁾ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ⁽¹⁶⁾ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

1. Recap: Paul is showing why every man, woman, child needs the gospel

- A. Romans 1: The Atheist who have rejected God and his truth and are living in open sin
 - 1). They obviously need a Savior
- B. Romans 2:1-5 He puts the crosshairs on the Religious/moral individuals
 - 1). Those who have God's word – go to church
 - But are depending upon what they do for God rather than what God has done for them
 - a). Paul says you are just as lost as those in chapter 1 living in open sin
 - b). You need a Savior just as much as they do
- C. Now in Romans 2:6-16 – he specifically points out two areas man might trust in
 - 1). V. 7-11 He speaks to those who are trusting in their own works – what they do for God
 - 2). V. 12-15 He speaks to those who are trusting in their own morality

Point: The group in v. 7-11 depend upon their activities – all they do for God

- A. The group in v. 12-15 depend upon their morality – how they live

2. This is a difficult passage that we must handle carefully

- A. It has been misinterpreted many times creating a salvation by works rather than faith

Question: When we say salvation by works that just means

- A. A salvation you earn through what you do rather than in what Christ has done

I. SALVATION BY WORKS?

Ro 2:6–8 (ESV) He will render to each one according to his works: ⁽⁷⁾ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁽⁸⁾ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

1. On the surface it sounds like Paul is teaching salvation by works

- A. V. 6 God is going to judge each one according to his *works – what they have done*
- B. V. 7-8 here are the *works*
 - 1). Those who continue in *well-doing* will be given eternal life
- C. Sounds like God looks at our deeds – how we live – rewards us with eternal life

Question: But wouldn't that contradict what Paul just wrote? We are saved by faith

Ro 1:16–17 (ESV) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the *power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, *“The righteous shall live by faith.”*

- A. God gives the righteousness needed to get into heaven as a free gift to all who believe = **Faith**
- B. He leaves no doubt in Ephesians how a person is saved

Eph 2:8–9 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved *through faith*. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ *not a result of works*, so that no one may boast.

- 1). Clear – saved by faith NOT works – so that no one may boast = God gets all the credit
- C. Throughout the NT we repeatedly see that – salvation is by faith alone

- 1). This is a teaching everything hinges on in Christianity
“Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from any merit of man”

Thought: Why it’s important we are students of the Bible – know what our Bible says

A. The more Bible we know the more we are protected from heretical interpretations

- 1). Read this and think – sounds like its saying salvation is by works
Then immediately we are protected – “Can’t be because other passages say this”
- 2). So this can’t be salvation by works – the rest of the Bible won’t support that

William Gurnall: Compare Scripture with Scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves.

B. But these scriptures show that works are in some way tied to eternal life

Ro 2:6–7 (ESV) He will render to each one according to his works: ⁽⁷⁾ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, **he will give eternal life**

The Question we must answer: If works don’t earn eternal life how are they connected to eternal life?

A. We need to concentrate here – this is so vital to our understanding

2. How works link to salvation:

They are not the cause of salvation – they are the evidence of being saved

A. What we do – how we live provides proof that when we believed in Christ it was a saving faith

- 1). You can believe in Christ – believe the right things – but still not be saved
Just a mental assent that doesn’t affect the heart

Jas 2:19 (ESV) You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

Question: So how can I tell if my faith is saving faith? Maybe I just became religious?

A. One way – I see the evidence that God has done a saving work in me

- 1). There is proof that I have a **new nature** that desires God
And a new power that enables me to live for him = **I see the change**

B. Let’s return to Eph 2:8-9 and see how it works – look at the context

Eph 2:8–9 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- 1). Crystal clear – we are saved by **grace** – Unmerited favor – can’t earn it through what we do
 - a). The way we receive eternal life is by **faith** = trusting in Christ’s work not ours
- 2). But what happens next? What does salvation produce? What is a proof v. 8-9 are true of us?

Eph 2:10 (ESV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- a). 8-9 We are saved by grace through faith – nothing to do with us
 - 1a). We simply trusted in another’s work – another’s merit
- b). V. 10 The evidence we have become God’s children
- 3). We have a natural desire to serve him – Why?
 - a). The new nature is hard-wired this way – it’s part of who we are
 - b). The Holy Spirit is moving us in that way

Phil 2:13 (NLT) For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.

- 1a). Why? Because through God’s work in us that is who we become

C. Watch how Paul links grace, the change in behavior and works in Titus

Tt 2:11–14 (ESV) **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,** ⁽¹²⁾ training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ⁽¹³⁾ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ⁽¹⁴⁾ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession **who are zealous for good works.**

- 1). Saved by grace – unmerited favor – salvation is all of God NOT US – he gets all the glory
- 2). But the grace that saves us does something powerful in us – doesn't leave us where it finds us
 - a). It trains us – empowers us – to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions = Holiness
 - b). It creates in us a desire to serve God through good works
 - 1a). None of that is the cause of salvation = it is the proof of salvation
 - 2a). This is proof that the grace that saves is active in you
- 3). So grace is not an excuse to do nothing for God – it will move you to serve

Transition: With that in mind let's dig in a bit to see what Paul is saying to those who are trusting in what they do for God rather than in what God has done for them

- A. In v. 7 Paul teaches the importance of why serve God – the motivation
 - 1). It is different than the works of the unbeliever

II. THE EVIDENCE WORKS PROVIDE

1. The argument: God will judge us according to our works

Ro 2:6 (ESV) He will render to each one according to his works:

2. The evidence of salvation: Works done for the glory of God

Ro 2:7 (ESV) to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, *he will give eternal life;*

A. The pattern of the believer's life: *"Patience in well doing"*

- 1). A persistence in doing good – a life characterized by living in a godly way
- 2). Again – not to be saved – but proof you are saved and have been changed

Question: But why would we want to live this way? So important – exact opposite of the unbeliever

A. The motivation for living a godly life: *"Seek for glory and honor"*

- 1). The change that happened at salvation is seen in a desire to bring God glory and honor
- 2). This is hard-wired into that new nature – *an evidence of that internal God wrought change*

Lk 6:45 (ESV) The good person out of the good treasure of his heart *produces good*, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil...

- a). Your salvation is internal – but not invisible
There will be a change of behavior and a change of actions
- b). The motivation for those actions is a desire to honor God

B. The expectation of life (what we are looking forward too): *"Immortality"*

- 1). "Unending existence" How do we seek for something we already have as believers?
- 2). Again *attitude* – This is that delight of the believer – knowing what is coming – Glory!
 - a). We have a pull towards heaven. Why? Where our citizenship is

Php 3:20 (NIV) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Rom 8:23 (NLT) And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

- 3). The believer understands this earth is not our home – we long for something greater

Vance Havner: Christians are not citizens of earth trying to get to heaven, but citizens of heaven making their way through this world.

C. H. Spurgeon: I have a strong appetite for heaven.

- a). Not saying our mind will always be thinking about heaven – but there will be a pull
 - 1a). The new nature longs to be with God

Transition: So the evidence of being saved is a Godward bent – we are concerned about honoring him

- A. So our works are done with him in mind – to bring him glory
- B. It is the opposite with the unbeliever

Transition: Why does the one who is outside of Christ do what they do?

3. The evidence of the lost: Works done only for self-glory and exaltation

Ro 2:8 (ESV) but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

- A. This individual may be doing things in the name of God
 - But the motivation is wrong – they don't care about God and his glory – it's all about them
 - 1). Why? They are controlled by a sinful nature that produces the works of the flesh
 - 2). One of the tenants that drives the merely religious is pride
 - a). Their works aren't done to glorify God – they're done to glorify self
 - b). Jesus accused the Pharisees – “You do what you do to be seen by man”
 - 1a). All your religious works – you pray to be seen by others – all YOU
 - 2). “And do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness”
 - a). While the believer's life is characterized by obedience – wired for it
 - b). The unbeliever has no desire to obey the Bible – they love sin

4. Summary: Works

- A. They can't earn salvation but they are evidence that you've been saved
 - 1). That new nature is wired to be active for God – the Spirit moves us to do and to act
- B. Another important aspect of work: The effect of works doesn't end when we die
 - 1). God will graciously assess the works of his children and reward us for them
“What you weave now you will wear for eternity”
 - 2). God will weigh the works of the lost to determine the degree of their punishment
- C. The proper balance as we consider works

Timothy Keller: We mustn't misread Paul as saying that works need to be added to faith in order for us to be able to stand on the day of judgment. But equally, we mustn't allow our understanding of salvation by grace to diminish the challenge here. *If the works of our hands are not being changed and informed by the faith we profess to have, it is right to ask whether our faith is heartfelt and real.*

Transition: Paul says your works can't save you – they are evidence of being saved

- A. They also give evidence of being lost – how we can tell is what motivates us
 - 1). The child of God has God's glory in mind – the unbeliever is concerned about self-glory

Transition: Verse 9-10 basically repeats the teaching of vs. 7-8 with one difference

Ro 2:9–10 (ESV) There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,⁽¹⁰⁾ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

1. Twice he adds for the Jew first and also the Greek

- A. Simply saying this evaluation is true for everyone – God's judgment is impartial
 - Ro 2:11 (ESV)** For God shows no partiality. (favoritism)
 - 1). Whether you are Jewish, Christian, American, Hispanic, European, democrat or republican
Whether you are church going – or would never go to church
 - 2). God shows no favoritism when it comes to judgment
 - a). Nobody is good enough to earn heaven – your good works aren't good enough

Transition: So what you do for God can't save you – you'll never have enough works

- A. The only way to be saved is to trust fully in what Christ has done for you = **His works alone**

- 1). But after we are saved we will serve God because he works that into us
We will serve him for the right reasons – his glory - not to be seen etc.
 - a). If you’ve been feeling that tug to serve him – respond – that is who you are now!
 - b). He calls all his children into service

H. D. Ward: It is a truth that stands out with startling distinctness on the pages of the New Testament that God has no sons who are not servants.
- B. So Paul proves that you can’t merit heaven through your own works – your own activities
 - 1). Now he turns turns to those who think their own morality is enough to get into heaven
 - a). He speaks of those with the Word of God and those without it

III. CAN WE BE MORAL ENOUGH TO EARN SALVATION?

Ro 2:12–15 (ESV) For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ⁽¹³⁾ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ⁽¹⁵⁾ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

1. Those who have the law – the Jews – the religious person with a Bible

Ro 2:12–13 (ESV) ... all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ⁽¹³⁾ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

- A. Paul is saying to those who enjoy the benefit of having the law – be careful
“Don’t think that just having God’s word will help you out if you’re not obeying it. The only way to be right with God through your own morality is to obey his commands perfectly.”

Jas 2:10 (ESV) For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

- 1). I.E. you will never be moral enough – you can’t keep what the Bible says perfectly
- 2). Therefore you’re only hope is to be seen in the righteousness of Christ – the gospel

Transition: Now Paul turns to the Gentiles who don’t have the written law but are living moral lives

2. The Gentiles without the law but living moral lives

Ro 2:14–15 (ESV) For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ⁽¹⁵⁾ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

- A. Those people you meet – nice – honest – “Would make a great Christian. In fact, already more Christian than most, even though they haven’t trusted Christ”

- 1). These Gentiles were morally outshining the Jews who had God’s word

Thought: Again we must be careful in how we interpret this

- A. Paul is not showing how to be saved here – this is about falling short – needing to be saved
B. What how Paul works this out – brilliant – he probably links back to verse 11

Ro 2:11 (ESV) For God shows no partiality.

- 1). He proves God’s judgment will be for Jew and Gentile
For those who have the Word of God and those who don’t

The Argument: God’s judgment will be without favoritism and it will be fair

- A. Those who have the written law don’t keep it enough to merit salvation
B. But what about those who don’t have the written law? *It is written on their heart*
- 1). Paul says these gentiles “Do what the law requires...even though they don’t have the law”
 - a). I.E. all people know the principles of right and wrong
 - 1a). Why your kids try to hide the fact that they’ve lied – or....

- 2a). Why people do so much of what they do behind closed doors – unseen
- 2). **The problem:** We know what is right and wrong but we don't always so what is right
- Ro 2:15 (ESV)** They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts *accuse* or even *excuse* them
- a). Why would their conscience accuse them?
- Because they've broken the law written on their hearts
- 1a). They knew what was right and they didn't do it

Summary: Paul tells us the problem with those trusting in their own morality

- A. Those who have the Word of God – who read it and change – but trust in their own morality
- 1). They aren't keeping the word well enough to merit heaven – they break it
- 2). That is enough to be guilty before God – therefore they need a Savior
- B. The moral person who doesn't have the Bible – but tries to live up to their conscience
- 1). They may be great people – nice - honest
- 2). But there will be those times their conscience accuses them – they've broken that inner law
- a). That is enough to prove they are guilty and need a savior
- C. The one trusting in what they do for God – those trusting in their own morality fall short
- 1). Therefore – unless they do something to rectify that – they are heading into judgment

IV. WHEN THIS JUDGMENT TAKES PLACE

Ro 2:16 (ESV) on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

1. It will be a fair judgment – according to truth – all evidence

- A. If it were possible and we could put your life – all of it on a TV screen for us to see
- 1). You would say “No” – because we all have things we've done we are ashamed of
Or we know is really wrong!
- B. But when the unbeliever stands before God all that will come out
- 1). The idols hidden in the heart – masked by religious activity
- 2). Those secret sins you did behind closed doors
- 3). Those secret sinful fantasies you toy with in your mind

CONCLUSION: NOBODY CAN EARN THEIR SALVATION

1. We may do all kinds of works in God's name but they aren't good enough

- A. We must turn from trusting in any work we do for God to earn salvation
And put our hope in the work Christ has done for us

2. We may think we can earn heaven through our own morality

- A. We may be religious – hear the Bible and try to change our lives to comply with it
- 1). We can think we are now moral enough to earn heaven
- B. Or we may be without the Bible – but try to live according to our conscience
- 1). And think that is good enough to get into heaven
- C. We must be honest – we do things we know is wrong – we break the written law – the inner law
- 1). Therefore our only hope is to trust in the goodness of another – Jesus Christ
- 2). Only he lived a life that was good enough to earn eternal life
- a). Trust in him and God puts his performance into your account
And begins to view you through his perfection