Limited Atonement?

By Dr. John Hobbs

The third cardinal doctrine in Calvinistic Theology is the doctrine of “Limited Atonement.” It is the “L” in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Most Calvinists prefer the term “Particular Atonement” or “Definite Atonement.”

What Calvinists Believe About Limited Atonement

> *The Canons of Dort, article 8, states, ‘It was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and only those, who were from eternity chosen to salvation.’*
>
> *Henry Fish, a Baptist wrote in 1850, ‘Did the atonement, in its saving design, embrace more then the elect? The elect only; for whatever he designed he will accomplish, and he saves only his people from their sins.’*
>
> *David Steele and Curtis Thomas wrote, ‘But He came into the world to represent and save only those given Him by the Father. Thus Christ’s work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others.’*
>
> *WJ. Seaton said, ‘Christ died to save a particular number of sinners.’*
>
> *Lorraine Boettner said, ‘The value of the atonement depends upon, and is measured by, the dignity of the person making it; and since Christ suffered as a Divine-human person the value of His suffering was infinite … The atonement, therefore, was infinitely meritorious and might have saved every member of the human race had that been God’s plan.’*

> *Ralph Gore wrote, "Christ died for the elect. The extent of the atonement is identical with the intent of divine election."*
>
> *Paul Enns wrote, 'If God is sovereign (Eph. 1:11) then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved then God's plan is frustrated.'*
>
> *R. B. Kuiper said, 'God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect and that consequently all the elect, and they alone, will be saved.'*

The question may be put this way: When Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who he knew would ultimately be saved? Calvinists would answer the latter group.

> *Wayne Grudem wrote: The term that is usually preferred is particular redemption, since this view holds that Christ died for particular people (specifically, those who would be saved and whom he came to redeem), that he foreknew each one of them individually (cf. Eph. 1:3-5) and had them individually in mind in his atoning work.*

The Foundational Basis for Limited Atonement

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is based on the concept of double jeopardy (trying a person twice for the same crime). The argument goes like this: If Jesus died for the sins of all men, then the sins of all men are paid for and one has already been judged for those sins. On the Day of Judgment, if God would bring a man into judgment and commit him to hell even though Jesus had already paid for his sins, God would be

putting that person in double jeopardy. God would be unjust – something he is not (Deut. 32:4).

The argument is: Since we do not permit double jeopardy in our own legal system, surely we would not expect God to do something we would not do.

Calvinists argue therefore – Jesus actually died only for the sins of the elect, the chosen, the saved.

However, just because there is an analogy from a human viewpoint, this does not prove that it coincides with the truth of God's word.

Isaiah 55:8-9 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Proverbs 14:12 states, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." We are warned: "Lean not upon thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

We do not formulate doctrine by analogies or examples. They may illustrate doctrine, but they do not prove doctrine. We must determine truth from the Word of God and not human reasoning. There are some great truths of scripture which are beyond our comprehension and we accept because the Bible teaches them (such as, the Trinity, God's love, nature of sin, and such like), and therefore are not proved by reason, but are known by revelation.

Scriptures Used by Calvinists to Support Limited Atonement

> *Matthew 1:21 states, "For it is he that shall save his people from their sins."*
>
> *Jesus "loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph.*

5:25).

Romans 4:25 reads, "Who was delivered up for our trespasses."

Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:10 reveals, "We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son."

Romans 8:32 declares, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

Acts 20:28 states, "To feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood."

In John 10:15 Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep."

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Him who knew no sin he made to be [a] sin [offering] on our behalf."

Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave himself for our sins."

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

Titus 2:14 states, "Who gave himself for us."

Calvinists use the above Scriptures as proof texts that Christ died "only" for the elect.

Christ died for his people. That is the main point of these verses! However the Bible does not teach Limited Atonement – that Christ died "only" for the elect, "only" for a limited class.

Calvinists "twist" and "pervert" other plain Scriptures that clearly teach that Christ died for all men. They do so unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-17). When we come to the Bible, we must take all of it to arrive at total-saving truth.

Psalms 119:160 states, “The sum of all thy word is truth.” Matthew 4:4 says, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” It takes all of Scripture for the man of God to be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We must preach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

Christ died for all men. Christians appreciate the fact that Christ died for them. The verses used by Calvinists emphasize that point. Unbelievers do not appreciate that fact and therefore do nothing about it.

A True Story Concerning Hebrews 2:9

In 1980, I took second year New Testament Greek through Wheaton College at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. My professor was Dr. John Werner, an outstanding world-recognized Greek scholar. But, he was a Calvinist through and through. One day we were reading the book of Hebrews in class. When it came my time to read, I was to translate Hebrews 2:9. I translated the verse, “But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death *only for the elect.”*

My professor and the class laughed. After the laughter subsided, I added, “Excuse me – that should be – for *every* man.”

Brethren, if the grammar makes sense, anything else is nonsense. To deny that Jesus tasted of death “for every man” is to deny the plain and clear teaching of Scripture! Dr. Werner agreed that the verse should be translated “for every man.” But, he denied that is what it meant. He believed that it meant “every redeemed man” even though that is not what the text says!

We should not base biblical doctrine on “feeling” or “thinking.” Biblical doctrine is based on God’s Word!

If the Holy Spirit wanted to say that Christ died only for the elect, he could have easily done so. But, he did not do so. There is no “specific” passage in the entire Bible that teaches Limited Atonement.

Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, says, “Hebrews 2:9 is best understood to refer to every one of Christ’s people, every one who is redeemed.”

Grudem is reading the Bible with his rose colored glasses on and sees what he wants to see instead of what is really there! The text does not say that Christ tasted of death for every “redeemed” man. Grudem is reading into the text something that is not there. This is something that God’s Word explicitly forbids (Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:8-9; 3:15; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 4:4; Prov. 30:5-6; Deut. 4:2; 12:32).

The words *every man* in Hebrews 2:9 are translated from the Greek word *pantos* (in form it is a genitive masculine or neuter singular word from the adjective *pas, pasa, pan* meaning “all” or “every”).

Bruce says:

> *So far as the form goes, pantos might be masculine (“everyone”) or neuter (“everything”); but since our author’s concern is with Christ’s work for humanity, and not with cosmic implications of His work, it is more probable to be taken as masculine.*

Alford says, “The singular brings out, far more strongly than the plural would, the applicability of Christ’s death to each individual man.” Jesus died for each individual person (which equals all mankind). The singular *pantos* emphasizes his care and love and concern for every human being!

This fact is a strong factor for each individual person to give his life back to him and live a holy God-fearing life (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

This same Greek word, *pantos,* is found in Matthew 13:19 and is translated "when any one." It is obvious in Matthew 13:19 that the Greek word refers only to lost human beings.

It is interesting that the Greek New Testament uses the word *pantos* at least once specifically to refer "only" to condemned human beings. Calvinists say that the word *pantos* in Hebrews 2:9 refers "only" to saved "redeemed" people. If the word *pantos* in Matthew 13:19 refers only to lost people who will spend eternity in hell, does that mean that in Hebrews 2:9 that the same group is being considered? No!

Can the word *pantos* refer to all mankind including those who appreciate Christ's death for them? Of course! Christ "tasted of death for every man." It is important to understand that the meaning of *pantos* will have to be determined by the context. Therefore, we can conclude that in Hebrews 2:9, the Greek word *pantos* refers to all humans period – not just the saved, not just God's special people. Jesus died for all humans – those who are lost and those who are going to heaven. Calvinists deny the plain teaching of God's Word and add to it when they say Jesus tasted of death for every "redeemed" man.

An Examination of God's Word and Limited Atonement

The Bible is very clear that Jesus died for the sins of "all men" and not just for "the elect."

Consider these passages as to who Jesus died for:

1. John 1:29: "the one that taketh away the sin of the world" – i.e. all mankind

2. John 3:16: “the world” – i.e. all mankind
3. John 4:42: “This is indeed the Saviour of the world” – i.e. all mankind
4. John 12:47: “I came … to save the world” – i.e. all mankind
5. Romans 5:6: “Christ died for the ungodly”
6. Romans 5:8: “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”
7. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: “he died for all”
8. 2 Corinthians 5:19: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” – i.e. all mankind. Those who believe in Limited Atonement say this refers to “the world of the elect.” Again, they are adding to the Word of God.
9. 1 Timothy 1:15: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”
10. Timothy 2:6: “Who gave himself a ransom for all”
11. 1 Timothy 4:10: “Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe”
12. Titus 2:11: “bringing salvation to all men”
13. Hebrews 2:9: “He should taste of death for every man.”
14. 2 Peter 2:1: “Denying the Master that bought them” – Christ provided redemption for the false prophets but they refused to accept it.
15. 1 John 2:2: “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” – i.e. all mankind
16. 1 John 4:14 “The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” – i.e. all mankind

A Study of 1 John 2:2

One passage that must be the focus of our attention is 1 John 2:2. Here John wrote, “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”

Vine defines “propitiation” as “a means whereby sin is covered and remitted.” The text is very clear that sin covering has been provided “for our sins” – that is, Christians’ and “for the whole world,” or all humanity. If there was ever a verse in the Bible that taught the possibility of unlimited salvation – this is it!

Brown says that the word “world” is the “sphere of human beings and of human experience.” The apostle John uses the word “world” several times to refer to all humanity (John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:46-47; 1 John 4:14).

It is sad that some people “twist” the scriptures from their true meaning (2 Pet. 3:15-17). The same basis for forgiving one man’s sins is also the same basis for forgiving the sins of all men – the death of Christ.

It is not implied or taught that sins are forgiven unconditionally. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of Universalism, i.e. all men will be saved. The Bible does teach that only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 2:10; 7:14).

> *Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, writes, “The preposition ‘for’ [in 1 John 2:2] is ambiguous with respect to the specific sense in which Christ is the propitiation “for” the sins of the world.*
>
> *The Greek word translated “for” in this verse is peri, and means ‘concerning’ or ‘with respect to.” It does not define the way in which Christ is the sacrifice with respect to the sins of the world.*
>
> *It is consistent with the language of the verse to say that John is simply saying that Christ is the sacrifice available to pay for the sins of anyone and everyone in the world.”*

There are several problems with Grudem's twisting of Scripture:

(1) Grudem does not deal with the word *world* in his defense of Calvinism. It is obvious that John uses the word "world" in the verse and in the other verses cited to refer to all humanity. Jesus died for all mankind.

(2) It is true that the word *for* in the phrase *for the whole world* is the Greek word *peri*. I agree that it means "concerning" or "with respect to."

Robertson says that *pen* has a sense similar to *hyper* in the verse. The word *hyper* means "in behalf of." It must be pointed out that the word *for* in the phrases *for our sins* and *not for ours only* in 1 John 2:2 is translated from the Greek word *peri*.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to use the Greek word *peri* three times in 1 John 2:2. This word is sufficient to define the way Christ is the sacrifice "for our sins" but not "for the sins of the whole world."

Grudem says that the preposition *peri* "is ambiguous." He is straining the gnat and swallowing the camel in order to avoid accepting the clear truth. Grudem would say that its third use in the verse is ambiguous but not its first and second uses.

The emphasis in the verse is on Christ's "propitiation" – not the preposition "for."

John says Christ's propitiation is "for our sins" and "not for ours only" but also "for the sins of the whole world."

A Study of 1 Timothy 4:10

Paul wrote, "For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe."

This verse is important to the discussion. Here the apostle clearly states the salvation of all men. He does not teach Universalism. But, he does teach that salvation has been provided for all men, i.e. all humanity. However, that salvation is appropriated and appreciated by those who believe. All men are potentially saved by Christ's death, but only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved.

Grudem says:

> *He [Jesus] is referring to God the Father, not to Christ, and probably uses the word 'Savior' in the sense of 'one who preserves people's lives and rescues them from danger' rather then the sense of 'one who forgives their sins,' for surely Paul does not mean that every single person will be saved.*

Grudem misses it again.

(1) No, Paul is not teaching that every single person will be saved. No New Testament writer ever taught that.

(2) There is no problem with taking the word *Savior* as referring to God the Father. He is the Savior of all men in that He sent Jesus to die for all men (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10). The Father and the Son are one in purpose, aim, plan, and design (John 10:30).

(3) For Grudem to say that the word *Savior* does not refer to "sins" shows his theological bias. In Matthew 1:21, the child is to be called Jesus. Why? Because he will save his people from their "sins." The word "Jesus" means "Savior." Grudem does not want 1 Timothy 4:10 to refer to "sins," so he denies it.

(4) God desires "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). Salvation for "all men" has been

provided (1 Tim. 4:10). However, this salvation is “specially” for those who “believe.” This word does not imply that all will be saved. The Greek word *malista* translated “specially” is also translated “particularly” or “especially” in 1 Timothy 5:17 and “above all” or “especially” in 2 Timothy 4:13. Paul is saying that God is potentially the Savior of all men. For the individuals who “will” to come to the Lord, these individuals “will in no wise be cast out” (John 5:40; 6:37).

J.W. Roberts wrote, “He is the savior (potentially) of all men, but especially (or actually) of believers.”

Dr. J. C. Davis states, “God is the potential Savior of all men (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is the actual Savior of believers” (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 2:10).

J. N. D. Kelly wrote, “Paul is no doubt giving expression to his conviction that the certainty of salvation belongs in an especial degree to those who have accepted Christ.” True!

1 Timothy 4:10 is like Galatians 6:10. Christians are to “work that which is good toward all men and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.” We have an obligation to do “good toward all men” (even the ones who have not named the name of Christ). But, we have a special obligation to help those who are Christians. Christ died for all men but especially for those who believe.

An Invitation Is Given to All Men

In Matthew 11:25, Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The church, the bride as it is called, and the Holy Spirit perpetuate that invitation as shown by John in Revelation 22:17:

> *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

The invitation is given to all men. Why offer salvation to all if that is not possible? The text says “whosoever” will.

God Desires All Men to Be Saved

In (2 Peter 3:9) we read:

> *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

God wants “all” to come to repentance! Boettner, a Calvinist, denies that it is God’s plan for all to be saved. Seaton, a Calvinist, asks, “The over-riding question must always be the Divine intention; did God intend to save all men, or did He not?”

The fact that God desires that “all” should come to repentance implies that God has provided provisions for “all.” Christ died for all men. This verse teaches that if a man is lost, it is against God’s will because he wants “all” to come to repentance and be saved.

In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul wrote, “Who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.” Here again God’s Word is clear. God desires that all men be saved.

In (Ezekiel 33:11) we read:

> *As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

God desires that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live. God does not want or wish that any person be lost.

Paul Enns, a Calvinist, wrote, “If God is sovereign then His

plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved, then God's plan is frustrated."

God is sovereign, but his plan involves the free will of man. His plan is that those who by their free will elect to believe and become obedient will be saved.

God is "frustrated" or "grieved" when men do not respond to his saving grace (Gen. 6:5-6; Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41; Eph. 4:30).

God's desire and will is frustrated when men are lost. God wants "all" to come to repentance and "all men" to be saved. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). "God is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9).

But, some will perish – not because Jesus did not die for them. He died for each individual person to show his intense love. If an individual is lost, it is because he has rejected God's intense love. God does not desire it that way. But, he respects the right of a person to make his own decision.

Pardon for Sins Can Be Rejected

It is possible for pardon and salvation to be offered and rejected. In 1829 two men, Wilson and Porter, were apprehended in the state of Pennsylvania for robbing the United States mail. They were indicted, convicted, and sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the scheduled execution, President Andrew Jackson pardoned one of the men, George Wilson. This was followed by a strange decision. George Wilson refused the pardon! He was hung because he rejected the pardon.

Today, God has provided eternal salvation and pardon for all men. He has accomplished this by sending his one-of-a-kind Son to die for the sins of each and every individual person. However, this salvation can be refused.

If one chooses not to appropriate the blood of Christ over his

sins initially and continually, he is refusing and rejecting the salvation which has been provided for him by God Almighty. While we can recognize the foolishness of such a decision, we must be aware of the fact that the majority of mankind will refuse their pardon (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). How sad!

Why Did God Create Man?

A lady asked me, "Why did God create man if he knew so many would be lost?"

This is a thought-provoking question. I answer this with two thoughts:

(1) Whatever God does is right and just. We may not understand what he does but that is because we are human and finite while he is divine and infinite (Isa. 55:8-9). Deuteronomy 32:4 states, "For all his ways are justice: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he." God himself asked Job, "Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?" Job attacked and condemned the present righteousness of God. Job sinned by doing this. Job later repented Job 40:35; 42:1-6).

(2) I think the answer to this tough question is that God respects our free moral agency. If a man is lost, it will be his fault – not God's! God has done everything possible for the salvation of each person. God will not overtake one's will and force him to obey. Life is what we make it! We can avail ourselves of God's love or we can spurn it and reject it. The choice is ours (Deut. 30:11-15; Joshua 24:15; Acts 2:37, 40).

Seaton, a Calvinist, said, "If it was God's intention to save the entire world, then the atonement of Christ has been a great failure, for vast numbers of mankind have not been saved."

Seaton misses it. Christ's death was not a failure. The

failure is man's free moral will. Man by his own free will chooses not to obey. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9; cf. John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

On the Day of Judgment if a person is cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity, it will be his own failure – not God's! The failure lies with man not with God.

Calvinists say they focus on God's sovereignty while we focus on man's free will. I say it is not an either/or situation; it is a both/and situation. Both of the these concepts are respected in the scriptures. We must accept both.

Conclusion

To deny the Bible teaching that Christ died for all is to make God a respecter of persons – unjust and unmerciful. The doctrine of limited atonement is false. All men are potentially saved. If a person refuses pardon, death is not the fault of the one who offered mercy, but of the one who refused to accept it.

> *(Editor's Note: The word atonement means to cover or conceal. It is an Old Testament word and is not found in the New Testament. The sins of people before the cross could be atoned, but after the cross the sins of the obedient believer were forgiven. There is a dramatic difference. Under Moses there was a remembrance made of atoned sins year by year [Heb. 10:3 – the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins]. The blood of animals could cause God to overlook sins while remembering them year by year, but could not remove the sins. This was atonement. The blood of the Lamb of God is able not to merely cover or bypass sins, but to remove every transgression and disobedience. To receive the forgiveness available in the blood of the cross, one must obey [Heb. 5:7-8].)*

Do We Know God?

By Carl G. Hecker
Vol. 107, No. 02

A basic understanding of the true nature of our God can come only from the Bible. Our ideas of him develop over years of spiritual growth. If our fundamental understanding is wrong, we will never come to an adequate appreciation of what he requires of us. The following simple thoughts seem helpful in searching for deeper insight from the scriptures. See if you agree.

The Godhead

A clear, simple concept of the God of the Bible is essential to the proper faith and practice of the religion of Christ. The Hebrew word translated God *(Elohim)* in Genesis 1:1 is plural in number. It shows plurality in the persons of God. The New Testament also presents the same idea (John 1:1-14).

We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man’s device (Acts 17:29). Material representations of the Divine Being are idolatry (Exodus 20:4-6). God is spirit and we must not allow ourselves to think otherwise (John 4:24).

God *(Elohim)* has revealed himself as three persons. Each one in the Godhead is a distinct person but always one in action, thought, and purpose with the other two in the Godhead. These three persons always moved in perfect unity, with each having a specific identity and work apart from the others.

The Father is the designer. The Son, (also designated the Word) is the executor. The Holy Ghost is the organizer. When

we read of God in the Bible, it always helps to have these basic thoughts in mind: God, the Father, as Designer; God, the Son, as Executor; God, the Holy Ghost, as Organizer.

We see these three in the redemption of mankind. A proper understanding of their individual roles in this divine plan is essential to overcoming the often confusing and always conflicting denominational doctrines so prevalent today.

Our God in Redemption

We would expect to see the same unity of purpose and the definite assigned work in the revelation and enforcing of the scheme of redemption. The Father is the designer, the planner (Eph. 3:11; II Tim. 1:9). It was his eternal purpose. It was his grace and it was to be expressed in his gospel (Titus 2:11).

The Son is the one who executes by taking the form of a man (John 1:14) and dying on the cross to save all mankind (I Tim. 1:15). The Holy Ghost then did his divine part by revealing the reasonable and orderly plan in the New Testament. He did this by inspiring the apostles of Jesus.

Jesus gave the promise of the Father (infallible guidance) to his chosen apostles just before returning to the Father (John 14:25-26; Acts 1:4-9). The Comforter was to guide them into all truth. This he did. He then confirmed the word with gifts of signs and wonders and with divers miracles (Hebrews 2:1-4). The person of the Holy Ghost is always in the masculine gender (he or him). He is always singular in number. He revealed the word of God but he is not that word. The Holy Ghost has great influence but he is not merely an influence. The Holy Spirit is not some sort of “glorified it.”

The Holy Spirit possesses all the divine attributes equally with God, the Father and God, the Son. He is co-eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. He is a person of the

Godhead.

The term *Holy Ghost* equates with the expression *Holy Spirit.* They mean the same. The two English words translate one Greek word. He is a person and always functions as a person. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). The Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is one person the same as God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son are individual persons (Eph. 4:1-4).

Just as one individual cannot dwell literally within another person, so neither God the Father, Christ the Son, nor the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally. Such divine indwelling is a beautiful expression pointing to the closeness of our relationship to them. When one misapplies these scriptures by making them literal, he not only comes up with conflicting and confusing denominational doctrines but deprives himself of the real beauty of the revelation! The indwelling of the Godhead can only be effected by the words of the Eternal One. When this word is in the heart of the sincere individual it is God dwelling in us and we in him!

God dwells in us. Christ dwells in us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. We dwell in them, that close! Such a close relationship is described by this beautiful and satisfying figure of speech. Other figures express the close relationship, such as we walk with him; he leads us; we are his sons and daughters. These physical, worldly images are descriptive of the spiritual. Our God is spirit (John 4:24). If any one of them is taken literally, that conveys an unreasonable idea leading to confusion and often unwholesome superstition. Do not allow this to happen to you.

The Blood Of Christ

Neal Pollard

The topic above should cause one's mind to focus on some precise areas. Naturally, the blood of Christ implies thoughts of the "incarnation" of Christ (that Christ took on the form of man, while all God, and, thus, had blood coursing through His veins; Philippians 2:8). The blood of Christ further educes from one's thoughts the atonement Christ made for all mankind through the shedding of His blood at the cross (cf. Hebrews 9:12-14). The blood of Christ also elicits reflection upon the suffering and death of the sinless man from Nazareth (1 Peter 2:24). And on one might reflect.

The phrase, the blood of Christ, appears verbatim in the New Testament in four verses. With each reference one finds important lessons about the function and significance of His blood. Christ's blood is central in the Father's plan of salvation and life within His favor. What does the blood of Christ bring to needy man?

The Blood Of Christ Brings Redemption (1 Peter 1:19)

In 1 Peter 1, one sees the inspired apostle speaking to persecuted (1), predestined (2), purified (2), and pliant (2) people of God. What would cause a Christian to suffer wrong for doing right? What would cause a Christian to search out from the scriptures the terms of election, accept the terms of pardon, and follow the terms of Christian living? Simply, an understanding of redemption.

Perhaps the verse most loved and quoted is John 3:16. Yet, so beknown and familiar, this verse is sorely misunderstood and underapplied. Jesus, the speaker of the words recorded in this verse, foretells the act of redemption. With His divine

foreknowledge, Christ understood that the gift of the Father's only begotten Son (Himself) meant the shedding of His blood at Calvary. The purpose of that shed blood, He knew, was to redeem the lost race of man from the power and hopelessness of sin. Paul says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4,5). By inspiration, Paul reinforces this with Titus (Titus 2:14).

The Blood OF Christ Brings Removal (Hebrews 9:14)

The King James Version uses, in this verse, the word "purge" in translating the effect of the blood of Christ upon the conscience of one to whom that blood is applied. Purge means "to purify, especially of sin, guilt, or defilement" (The American Heritage Concise Dictionary, 1994). Thayer shows the original word translated "purge" in this verse means "free from the guilt of sin" (The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, 312). Clearly, the Spirit-guided writer of Hebrews speaks of the effect of the applied blood of the Savior. The audience of Hebrews, of which modern man is a part, needs some agent to remove the guilt of sin (dead works) from their lives. The blood of Christ is that agent. For the agent to be effective (to do the job it was intended to do), one must come in contact with it. Where does one come in contact with the blood?

Jesus shed His blood when He died (John 19:34). Paul writes "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death" (Romans 6:3). One cannot literally go over to Jerusalem to a hill called Mt. Calvary and find the man Jesus bleeding to death on a cross. Furthermore, because one cannot do this, one cannot in some literal way reach up to Him and take some of His shed blood and apply it to himself.

Thus, there is no literal, physical way for today's man or woman to contact the actual, shed blood of our Lord.

Yet, Revelation 1:5 reveals that Christ, on His cross, washed us from our sins in His shed blood. God would not allow His Son to shed His life-blood and then provide no means for mankind to contact that blood in some way. And, there is a way and only one way. In identifical terminology, Acts 22:16 says that baptism washes away sins. In summation, Christ shed His blood in His death. We are buried with Christ in baptism. Christ washed our sins with His blood. We wash away our sins in the act of baptism. The blood of Christ and baptism, inseparably joined, remove the sins of those who recognize and submit to the authority of Christ in being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21).

The Blood Of Christ Brings Return (Ephesians 2:13)

At the creation of man, there was no need for means whereby man could return to a right relationship with Jehovah. The idea in Ephesians 2 that, specifically here, the Gentiles were "far off" implies the need to return. How could they come back to God? Paul stresses the fact that Christ's blood was the only means whereby reconciliation could be made. Thus, Paul penned the glorious fact that Christ " made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Colossians 1:20). As if an inseparable gulf was crossed by Adam and Eve through their sinning at Eden, that gap of sin separated man from God (cf. Isaiah 59:1,2; Note: This is not to suggest that all inherit Adam's sin– the false idea of Hereditary Depravity – but rather that through Adam sin entered the world, Romans 5:17, and, consequently, all have sinned, Romans 3:23). Not with acts of goodness or meritorious works could man ever earn his salvation (Titus 3:5). Yet, there are conditions that God expects man to meet

in order to have past sins forgiven and the restoration of a right relationship with the Father (Titus 2:12; Hebrews 5:9; Ephesians 2:8). By shedding His blood, Christ paved a road of return (i.e., the "narrow road" of Matthew 7:13,14) to take us back to God. There was no access before and without Him and after sin was in the world (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6). How did Christ effect this return with His blood?

He took the first, old covenant God made with Moses and Israel out of the way by dying on the cross (Ephesians 2:12,14-15). He placed all believers in the faith into one body [the church](Ephesians 2:14,15,16; 4:4). He provided the message of reconciliation in commissioning the preached word to all men (Ephesians 2:17; Acts 1:8). He opened the avenue of prayer by His death on the cross, encouraging petitioning the Father to enhance our relationship with Him (Ephesians 2:18). He sets aside a place in the Kingdom [the church] for all the faithful obedient into which all spiritual blessings flow (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1:3; Matthew 16:18-19). To all who obey the commandments of God relative to entrance into His church, reconciliation and return to God are provided.

The Blood Of Christ Brings Remembrance (1 Corinthians 10:16)

As Eden shows the importance God stressed in mankind before the cross to anticipate that great event, this verse shows the importance God stresses in mankind after the cross remembering it. Those washed in the blood of Christ, contacted in baptism, are added to the church (Acts 2:41-47). Therein, those added [Christians] are governed by the Word of God in worship and conduct. A vital part of New Testament worship is the weekly participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). Why has God authorized that Christians do so, and with such frequency?

The answer is "communion." In connection with the Lord's Supper, this word is translated "communion" only once in the

New Testament. Yet, the original word from which it is translated is koininia, among the most recognized of all Greek words even among those who have little knowledge of that language. Most often, koininia is translated “fellowship.” “Fellowship” is also employed by the inspired New Testament writers to make reference to the “Memorial Feast.” The apostles and early Christians continued steadfastly in the fellowship of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42). The fellowship of the Lord’s Supper was not to be defiled by the presence of idolatry at Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:20), but rather the communion was to be exclusively with the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul stresses that there is communion. That fellowship is with the blood of Christ, which suggests a multitude of things. First, the blood of Christ places one into the one body (the church– Colossians 1:18)(Acts 20:28). Therefore, the fellowship of the Lord’s Supper involves corporate (collective) activity. Together, children of God are drawn closer to one another remembering the Savior whose blood purchased them from sin. This communion, then, is a means of expressing encouragement and thanksgiving together as the redeemed. The Lord’s Supper cannot, then, have significance to those not members of the body as there is no celebration and fellowship with Christians. Also, the Lord’s Supper provides a communion between the individual Christian and his Lord. Thus, Paul instructs each to “examine himself” (1 Corinthians 11:28). None other can obey the command of self-examination and remembrance for another in the Lord’s Supper or in any spiritual matter. Yet, the Lord’s Supper is special because of both the sharing with others and the individual responsibility. As an institution, the Lord’s Supper is, in both regards, a crucial means whereby Christians remember the sacrifice, suffering, and death of Christ in shedding His blood on the tree.

The blood of Christ purchased man’s pardon (1 Peter 1:19). The blood of Christ purges man’s conscience (Hebrews 9:14). The

blood of Christ propels man closer to God (Ephesians 2:13). The blood of Christ provides recollection of atonement (1 Corinthians 10:16). His blood was important in prophesy (Isaiah 53:3-5). His blood was important in physicality (John 19:34). His blood is important in perusal (Matthew 26:28; 1 Corinthians 11:28).

SALVATION IS BY GRACE BUT NOT BY GRACE ONLY

by Thomas B. Warren
Vol. 106, No 05

There is an enormous difference between affirming (1) that salvation is by grace and (2) that salvation is by grace only. The difference is of great importance.

Recently, I saw an article written by a brother in Christ which alleges that it "is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." (Rubel Shelly, *"Love Lines,"* October 31, 1990; Woodmont Hills Bulletin, Nashville. p. 3.)

It is quite serious to charge brethren with lying.

These statements remind me of the booklet (Sam Morris, *Do A Christian's Sins Damn His Soul?* [Sic] [No publisher or date indicated], pp. 1-2, written by a Baptist preacher) which affirms that all of the deeds which one may do in obedience to the Gospel of Christ "will not make his soul one whit safer." In so saying, he taught that loving obedience to Jesus Christ

has nothing whatever to do with his becoming a Christian or, finally, with his going to Heaven when Jesus comes again to judge the world.

In regard to the sins which one may commit, the same booklet teaches that "all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger. The justification of the human soul is through the atonement of Christ and not through the efforts of man. **The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul"** (emphasis mine. TBW).

Let us compare these two statements.

The Baptist said: "The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul."

Our brother said: "We do not contribute one whit to our salvation" and that it is an "outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity."

How do the statements compare? Is there a significant difference between them? I aver that there is not.

They both teach salvation by grace only.

Our brother taught that it is an outrageous lie to teach that salvation "arises from human activity."

The Baptist also taught that the way a man lives (this would include all of his thoughts and deeds) has nothing whatever to do with his salvation. So, this is a clear affirmation that after the moment when one believes in Christ. there is nothing he can do which would result in his eternal damnation. I even heard one Baptist preacher say. "Since I trusted Jesus as my personal Savior, I could not go to Hell even if I wanted to!" Also, during debates, I have heard Baptist preachers argue that John 6:28-29 teaches, not that man must do the believing, but that God does the believing for him.

Our brother eliminates all human activity from salvation. If he were right, then every human being will be saved, because God's grace is offered to all men (Titus 2:11)! So, if this false doctrine really were true, then there would be no need for the preaching of the Gospel (all men would be saved without it, without ever hearing it, without ever believing it, without ever obeying it) either to become a Christian or in the living of the Christian life. May it be remembered, that the brother whom we are reviewing also taught that "good works are the fruit of salvation." Given this doctrine, the things we do in becoming a Christian are not "good works." This he teaches in spite of such passages as James 2:24-26.

In contradiction to our brother's positions, the New Testament conditions both becoming a Christian and living a life which will result in eternal salvation on certain specified things. The Holy Spirit, in inspiring the writing of the New Testament, put the little word "if" before quite a number of conditions. Following are just a few of such passages: (1) Galatians 6:7-9: "… in due season we shall reap IF we faint not" (Gal. 6:7-9); (2) Hebrews 10:26: "For IF we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins" [emphases mine in the two preceding points]; (3) Galatians 1:6-9 clearly teaches that if any one preaches a gospel which is different from that of Christ, he will be under the curse of God.

There are many other passages which use "if" in this fashion. May all people be warned that there are works (acts of obedience which are required by Christ in the Gospel) which one must do in order to become a Christian. Also, there are works which one must do in order to go to Heaven when this life is over.

I want to lovingly affirm without reservation that no one can be saved without the grace of God—no one can earn his salvation. Every person who is saved is saved by grace! But—note this please—no one is saved by grace only! People are

saved by the grace of God when by faith they obey the relevant instructions of Christ, who taught that only those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). Our brother contradicts Jesus, His Apostles, and His prophets.

It should be clear that while the works of man cannot earn the forgiving of even one sin, it is nevertheless the case that salvation by the grace of God is contingent on man's faith in, and obedience to, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 5:8-9).

James 2:24-26 and Revelation 2:10, among many other passages, ought to settle it for all of us: (1) those who live and die in faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ will be saved eternally and (2) those who live and die in unfaithfulness to the Gospel of Christ will be lost eternally (cf., James 2:24-26; Matt. 25:46).

One is saved by grace but faith also has a part (Eph. 2:8-9). But Christ says, through His word, that men are saved by works and not by faith only (James 2:24-26).

The seed of God (His word) must be both believed and obeyed (Luke 8:4-15). Each person is free either to stay in the "mudhole" of sin or, by faith and obedience, to get out of the "mudhole" of sin (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Again, I kindly suggest, that ought to settle the matter for all of us.

The Blood of Christ (Outline)

By Victor M. Eskew
Vol. 111, No. 03

I. Introduction.

A. Jesus shed blood at Gethsemane, in the halls of Pilate, and at Calvary.

B. Christians remember his blood each Lord's Day.

C. Peter called it "precious" blood (1 Pet. 1:19).

1. The word precious means "dear, valuable, costly."

2. The blood of Jesus is invaluable.

II. The Precious Blood of the Lamb.

A. The blood was real.

1. While on earth, Jesus had a human body of flesh, blood, and bones (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Luke 24:39).

2. Jesus' blood, like ours, was composed of red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma. It was real blood.

B. The blood was royal.

1. He was of the house and lineage of David, whose dynasty continues to the end of time (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32-33).

2. His kingship was mocked during his crucifixion (Mark 15:16-20).

3. Jesus was raised from the dead to sit on his eternal throne (Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 2:32-36).

4. Jesus is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15).

C. The blood was innocent.

1. Jesus did nothing wrong (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

a. Judas said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4).

b. The wife of Pilate said, "Have nothing to do with this just man" (Matt. 27:19).

c. Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).

d. Pilate also said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (Matt. 27:24).

2. The people who knew Jesus best could not convict him of sin (John 8:46).

3. If the enemies of Jesus could not convict him of sin,

who can?

D. The blood was substitutionary.

1. Jesus gave himself for us (Titus 2:14).

2. Jesus "bare our sins in his own body" (1 Pet. 2:24).

3. Jesus "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

4. Jesus' stripes heal us (Isa. 53:5).

E. The blood is satisfying.

1. God is holy (holiness is a general term for moral excellence).

a. "The Lord our God is holy" (Psa. 99:9).

b. "Holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9).

c. His pure eyes cannot behold evil (Hab. 1:13).

d. Men fear God because he is holy (Rev. 15:4).

2. The holiness of God demands that sin be punished.

a. God is just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

b. God cannot tolerate evil.

c. God must judge and condemn sin.

d. God can justify sin only by the merit of a substitutionary sacrifice.

e. God can only be just if he forgives by a blood sacrifice, because "the blood of it is for the life thereof" (Lev. 17:14).

3. Jesus' blood satisfied the demands of divine justice.

a. Jesus was made a sin-sacrifice for us, though he knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

b. Jesus became an "offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph. 5:2).

F. The blood of Jesus was effective.

1. It cleanses from sin (Matt. 26:28; 1 John 1:7).

2. It redeems from sin (Eph. 1:7).

3. It gives life to the dead (Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 5:11).

4. It purchased the church (Acts. 20:28).

5. It was shed once, never to be shed again (Heb. 10:11-12).

III. Conclusion.

A. The blood of Jesus is precious.

B. His blood is real, royal, innocent, substitutionary, satisfying, and effective.

C. We remember his blood each Lord's Day.

Working the Works of God

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs
Vol. 121, No. 08

The Bible teaches that works have nothing to do with salvation, and it teaches that works are necessary to salvation.

Still, the Bible does not contradict itself.

How can this be? How can the Bible say two things that seem to be diametrically opposed and yet not contradict itself? It would appear to be self-evident that works cannot be both necessary and unnecessary to salvation.

Since the Bible is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), it must be true and therefore cannot contradict itself. Truth, in order to be truth, must be coherent. If two statements contradict, either one or both of them must be false, but there is no way they can both be true. How, then, do we deal with the fact that the Bible says works are not necessary to justification, and also says that we are justified by works?

Some assume a "take your pick" attitude and go blithely down the path not knowing how to reconcile the two statements – and, possibly, not caring. The honest person however cannot do this and must either reject the Bible or find a logical way to harmonize the two statements.

Various Works

To understand the Bible we must define its terms correctly. It is necessary to understand accurately how Bible writers use the word "works" (sometimes "deeds"), or we will be confused. A survey of how the Bible uses this word will help us to avoid the confusion of misunderstanding. A failure to understand something correctly leads to incomprehension and perhaps

unbelief.

Following is a partial list of “work(s)” mentioned in the Old and New Testaments:

- The work God does – Gen. 2:2; Judges 2:7; Ps. 71:17; 1 Cor. 12:6; John 6:28-29; John 10:37; John 14:10
- The work man does in providing food and shelter – Gen. 3:17-19; Exod. 23:12; Exod. 26:1; Eccl. 2:4; Matt. 21:28
- The work man does in obeying specific commands of God – Gen. 6:13-22; John 9:4; 1 Cor. 15:58
- Work of iniquity (evil) – Ps. 6:8; Ps. 14:1; Jer. 1:16; Ezek. 33:26; Matt. 7:23; Luke 13:27; John 3:19; Rom. 1:27; Eph. 4:19; Rom. 13:12 (“works of darkness”); Gal. 5:19-21 (“works of the flesh”)
- Work of righteousness (good) – Ps. 15:2; Acts 10:35; Matt. 5:16; Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 3:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; James 1:4; James 3:13
- Works that are worthy of repentance – Acts 26:20
- The mighty works (signs, miracles) of Jesus – Matt. 11:23-24; John 10:32; Acts 2:22
- Works of the Law of Moses – Rom. 3:20; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:2
- Greater works done by Jesus’ disciples – John 5:20; John 14:12
- Good and bad works by which all men shall be judged – Rom. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12
- Human works apart from works of God – Rom. 9:11; Rom. 11:6
- Converts to Jesus – 1 Cor. 3:14
- Apostolic signs, and wonders, and mighty works – 2 Cor. 12:12
- Work of sinless perfection – Eph. 2:9; Col. 2:21-23
- The power that works in the saved – Eph. 3:20; Eph. 4:12
- The word of God that works in the believer – 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 1:11; 1 Tim. 2:10; 1 Tim. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:21

- Works that justify – James 2:24; James 3:13
- Works of the devil – 1 John 3:8
- The ungodly works of ungodliness – Jude 1:15

This gives a sample of various “works” mentioned in the Bible. It is a mistake to suppose that the word work(s) always refers to condition of acceptance with God. It does not!

Even a casual glance at this list will convince the thoughtful Bible student this is a complicated subject, having many interrelated parts. It is difficult to deal with because of the need to take different relationships or points of view into consideration.

The mighty acts of Jehovah are works. Creation (Ps. 8:3-6; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 33:4; Ps. 92:5; Ps. 102:25; Ps. 104:24), redemptive acts in history like the Exodus (Judges 2:7-10).

Jesus is our perfect example in all things (1 Pet. 2:21). The Savior went about doing good (Acts 10:38-39; John 4:34; John 5:36; John 10:25-38; John 15:24; John 17:4). His words and his works confirmed his authority and mission.

Humans are sinless at birth, seeing that Jehovah is the Father and Giver of the human spirit (Heb. 12:9; Eccl. 12:7). As the child matures it comes to understand that some things are right and other things are wrong, but chooses to do wrong things and ignore right things. This is called sin – sin of omission and sin of commission. This is the something a person knowingly does to himself. Iniquity separates a soul from its God (Isa. 59:2). Those who die in sin cannot go where Jesus is; they “shall not inherit the kingdom of God (John 8:21; Gal. 5:19-21).

In his infinite compassion Jehovah sent Jesus to offer himself sacrifice for sins (John 3:16; John 10:18; Matt. 26:28).

We access the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb of God through belief (John 8:24).

“They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28-29).

Saving belief is a work that includes other works. Faith is shown by works (James 2:18). “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Abraham was justified by works produced by faith (James 2:21-22). Works make faith perfect (James 2:22). Sinners are justified by works and not by faith only (James 2:24). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Jesus said, “He that believeth (a work) and is baptized (a work) shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (James 2:22). In baptism the sinner, “is buried with Christ” and is “raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). In baptism we are buried “with” Christ and we are raised “with” him believing that God will keep his promise to save “he that believeth and is baptized.” Peter tells us that baptism saves (1 Pet. 3:21). In baptism our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

The spirit that is born again in the water of baptism (John 3:5) enters the kingdom of God, where faith continues to work, bringing glory to God (Matt. 5:16). The saved “work the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 16:10), abound “in every good work” (1 Cor. 9:8). Servants of righteousness “end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:5). The child of God is “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10); the saint is “fruitful unto every good work” (Col. 1:10). The Christian “works out his own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). Paul prayed that God the Father may “comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word” (2 Thess. 2:17). Women professing godliness are to adorn themselves “with good works” (1 Tim. 2:10). If a man desires the office of bishop, he desires “a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). Widows to be enrolled are to be “well reported of for good

works” (1 Tim. 5:10). The new covenant lauds the good works of some that are “evident, and cannot be hid” (1 Tim. 5:25). Those described as “a vessel unto honor” are “prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). “The man of God” is “furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17). Preachers are to be “an ensample of good works” (Titus 2:7), “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Followers of Jesus are to “be ready unto every good work” (Titus 3:1). Paul desired “that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:8). “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister” (Heb. 6:10). “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (Heb. 10:24). Our Lord Jesus “make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:21).

The “wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13). Behave seemly among the pagans, “that, wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12). “My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). Jesus knows and commends the works of his disciples on earth (Rev. 2:2, Rev. 2:9, Rev. 2:19; Rev. 3:8). Those who die in the Lord are blessed because “their works follow with them” (Rev. 14:13).

On the last great judgment day, God will render unto every man “according to their works, whether they be good or evil” (Eccl. 12:14; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12).

It is because of a present and future judgment that we must avoid the works of the flesh … the works of darkness … the works of the devil. Abstaining from all evil works is critical to the believer.

In the light of what the new covenant has to say about the importance of good works – works of faith – works that justify (James 2:24) – it seems strange that anyone would say that works have nothing to do with salvation … unless, of course, he is blinded by denominational dogma.

The Bible does warn us that we cannot live to maturity and be sinless (Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:2-6). "All sin and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). It also tells us the works of the Law of Moses cannot save us (Rom. 9:32; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:10). If eternal salvation could come by the Mosaic Law, then the death of Jesus was needless, because the people had that law for 1,500 years before Jesus was born of a woman (Gal. 2:21). We are also told that we cannot save ourselves by austerities (Col. 2:18).

Some honest person may be misled into wrongly supposing that when the Bible tells us we cannot be saved by our own works because it is not possible for us to live without sin – sooner or later all will sin and fall short of God's glory, that it is saying that even works of faith and righteousness – works of God – do not save. Also some will read Bible passages which say that the works of the Law of Moses cannot save, and mistakenly conclude that works have nothing to do with salvation. This study should clear that up because it gives indisputable proof that there is no justification without works.

It is indisputably true that works are necessary to justification (James 2:24), but it is also true that some works cannot save – the work of living a perfectly sinless life – the work of devising our own scheme of redemption – the works of the Law of Moses – the works of darkness, which are the works of Satan.

So, it is true that works both save us and have nothing to do with our salvation, depending on what kind of works you are talking about.

It is not possible for a reasonable adult to be sinless and therefore, in this sense, one cannot save himself by his own works. We cannot be saved by the works of Satan, nor by the works of the Law of Moses, nor by any human invention. Such works have no power to save and many of them are an offense to God.

Still, it is true that the work of faith (the works produced by faith, see Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26), bring the sinner into a right relationship with his Creator, help to maintain that relationship, and will one day be the reason for his promotion to glory (Matt. 25:31-46). To say that works have nothing to do with salvation is to fly in the face of Bible teaching.

P.O. Box 690192
Houston, TX 77269-0192