

Slide 2 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

This is the famous verse that believers use to show we can't save ourselves. That's completely true. We can't save ourselves. Yahweh grants salvation to whomever He wishes. Paul writes the same thing in Romans 9:18, that Yahweh hardens whom He hardens and has mercy on who He has mercy.

The challenge comes when folks focus on this topic to the extreme position that negates works with respect to salvation. The idea is that because works can't save, then one doesn't need to do anything to obtain or maintain salvation. This is a ridiculous concept.

Slide 3 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Yeshua the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Act 2:37-38)

Repentance means what we all think it means, to be sorry for what you have done, acknowledge it, and decide to not do it again. Peter is talking to the very people who had Yeshua innocently executed. Murdering people will prevent you from being in the kingdom, therefore not murdering people is required for salvation. Repentance covers sins, therefore one must acknowledge sins and repent of them to be saved. What are sins, pray tell?

Slide 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. (1Jn 3:4-6)

Other translations call lawlessness "the transgression of the law". Either way, John is talking about the Torah here. The Torah is where sin is defined. So in order to be saved, we have to confess our sins, repent, be baptized, and then are grafted into the family of God. We become part of Israel and then have to maintain that. It's not just a momentary repentance and baptism, we have to keep at it. And it's hard sometimes, and we fail sometimes, but we keep striving for the goal. Let's go back to Ephesians 2 and look at the context:

Slide 5 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we

were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Messiah (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Messiah Yeshua. (Eph 2:1-7)

These are the verses just prior to Paul telling us that we can't earn salvation. These verses are chock full of works and show the church at Ephesus had to put in effort to change. Just like Israel was delivered from Egypt while not knowing Him, and just like Israel was saved repeatedly in the desert while being sinners, He loved us while we were dead in our transgressions and provided a path for salvation through the works of His Son, Yeshua. We acknowledge Yeshua's sinless sacrifice as making the payment for our sins and then we decide to move forward, emulating Him, and living the way His Father intended for all mankind to live.

Our faith, our experience, is that faith produces good works. And it prevents bad works. We believe and that belief must manifest a change. That change will put us on a path toward learning about God and His Son, a lifetime journey, that will take us to places and to meet people we never would have prior. This change blesses us today and, as the verses state above, gives us the chance to join Yeshua in the presence of Yahweh.

What salvation by works really means is that people can earn salvation. As if there is a level where you've kept enough commandments and done enough good works where you've crossed a threshold and Yahweh has to let you into the kingdom. This is a merit/demerit system that came from paganism and is still employed by some churches to this day. In its extreme form, people who have done more good works than is necessary can use those to cover others, as if mankind is in some zero-sum equation. In these systems, the priests or ministers are given far too much power and often make up sins and good works in order to control people. This is not a biblical concept at all.

In our faith, as we already know, but for the sake of those listening for the first time, proper behavior is defined by the Torah. This means both good and bad works, i.e., what we're supposed to do and what we're not supposed to do. We keep Torah because we accept Yeshua as the Messiah and believe the bible is the Word of God. Nobody is telling us what to do but we are just reading the Bible and realizing these truths. Our ministers, our true ones, are here to help explain things, provide guidance, and be servants, not overlords.

Slide 6 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and

sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev 21:7-8)

This is a pretty stark list of things not to do but it's predicated with overcoming. Overcoming indicates effort, works. So let's keep in mind that our works are intertwined with salvation and keep striving toward that goal while we wait for the return of the Messiah.