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Salvation Comes To The Gentiles, Pt 6

Acts 10:24-35

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In this examination of the story of Cornelius and Peter we see how God uses the salvation of Cornelius and his household to show both the impartiality of God in salvation and the relationship between faith and works. This sermon focuses upon the idea of true faith produces works consistent with a changed heart.

I. Introduction.

A. Read vs 35.

B. Last week I began to unpack for you today is the relationship between faith and works.

1. First, we were reminded what saving faith looks like: facts, assent, and trust or love. This is the type of faith that is called by theologians a “living or vital faith.” As opposed to a dead faith.
2. Second, salvation and forgiveness of sin comes only by grace through faith alone.
 - a. But there is no salvation if having claimed to believe, there is no obedience or doing what is right.
 - b. You will hear people say that once you are saved, you are always saved. And this is true, assuming you are saved. But understand that to claim salvation is not the same thing.
 - c. Faith cannot stand by itself. Through faith alone you are justified but faith never is alone. Faith derived works/actions will always follow.
3. Third, if we are saved by grace through faith alone in Christ alone, then where do good works fit into the Christian faith?
 - a. Faith that is saving faith shall necessarily produce good works.
 - b. These are not actions that are defined by the person but the Word of God.
 - c. But keep in mind that you will never be saved because you did or did not do certain actions. But also, to claim faith and then to live

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in such a manner that defies that claim is simply evidence that there never was saving faith.

- C. And this balance is key and easy to confuse so today we will do a bit more of a detailed examination of the biblical teaching on faith and works.

II. Believe the gospel and do what is right.

- A. Faith for good works—Ephesians 2:8-10.

1. Vss 8-9 make the entire work of salvation be of God.

- a. We contribute nothing to this but faith. And that faith is a gift of God, not something we produce. Note the little word “that” in verse 8. To what is it pointing to as a gift? Some might say “grace” and others “faith” and others “saved” but actually it is all of them.
- b. This is why the final aspect of saving faith is so important to understand. We can know facts and agree to them, and yet nothing changes. Until that love for Jesus Christ and a resting and entrusting our very souls to Him occurs, religion can be born, but we are not yet made new and alive in Christ.
- c. We continue to embrace sin calling it everything else. We continue unchanged in any substantive way. But we claim Christ. But true, saving faith is a gift of God and it is a wholehearted trust and hope and fear of the Lord.
- d. But how do we see it? Just like James said, through works and that is what vs 10 says.
 - (1) Note the "for" again. This is finishing the thought of vs 9 about not boasting.
 - (2) We are not an image of our own workmanship. That is left for the one who rejects Jesus to their own ruin. We are an image of the work of God upon us as He conforms us into the image of His beloved Son.
 - (3) This new creation that comes through faith by grace is because God has made us for something. What? Good works.
 - (4) And who decides what is good? And from where do these good works arise? God.

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- (5) Are these being made up as we go along through life? Do these change with the times? No. They were already created beforehand. These are ancient works defined by our Creator.
- (6) So what is our responsibility? To walk, conduct our lives, comport ourselves in a way that reflects and acts on them.
- e. But let me develop this a bit more. Remember I spoke about the indicative and the imperative last time?
 - (1) Look at verse 8 and ask, indicative or imperative?
 - (2) Look at verse 9 and ask this again.
 - (a) Actually it is a subjunctive—which in the simplest form is speaking of what is potential. But it is connected to the negative and there is that “so that” that speaks to purpose.
 - (b) Why all of this grammar? Because it is quite fascinating and pride-destroying. Ask yourself, “Why does God make the entire act of salvation to be a gift from Him?” And a key part of that answer is found in verse 9.
 - (c) “for the purpose that” not one single person has the potential to boast.
 - (3) Now look at verse 10, indicative or imperative?
 - (a) So we are not commanded to walk in good works here.
 - (b) It is a simple statement of fact that we are God’s product of work, and that God has already made the good works ahead of time. For what purpose? For us to be walking/living/conducting ourselves in them.
- 2. Paul method of writing his letters.
 - a. First the facts and then the commands.
 - b. So here in Ephesians we see three chapters of glorious truths given to us to believe.

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- c. And only then do we begin to see the commands and expectations in earnest.
- B. So how should we understand good works?
1. John 14:15.
 - a. You can read this a couple of ways. The first is that through keeping Christ's commandments you then love Christ.
 - b. The second is the correct way, through loving Jesus Christ will result in your obedience in keeping His commandments.
 - c. Christ is telling His disciples a great truth. To love the Lord will result in holiness.
 - (1) How does this work? Remember to fear God is to love God and to follow and to hope and to trust and to come and to believe.
 - (2) And when you are a new believer you love Christ but it is often in a lot of ignorance simply because you are not well established on biblical truth. But nonetheless, things begin to change right away.
 - (3) As you grow in the Word of God you will learn more of God's expectations. And you will learn more of God Himself and therefore your love will grow. All of this results in an upward trajectory in your obedience.
 - d. The one thing you cannot say is that if you love Christ you "may" keep His commandments. His words do not allow for that.
 - e. And how does this work? Vss 16ff then introduces the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) He is your Helper or Advocate.
 - (2) Non-Christians will not and can not understand this.
 - (3) There is something very unique in this work of the Spirit. New affections, conviction, an inner compulsion, a discomfort regarding certain activities or attitudes, a softening of one's heart, and even a sorrow.
 - (4) There are the pangs of a growing realization that things are not right and yet everything is right. Like the old hymn says: *It Is Well with My Soul*

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When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.
Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.
But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!
And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

2. Galatians 5:16-26.
 - a. He is speaking to those who claim Christ. But he is also very concerned that many of them simply were professing Christ without truly trusting in Him.

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- b. There is a battle going on there about how a Christian should act and live. A lot of it centered around keeping the Jewish laws, especially circumcision (1-9).
- c. So he now gives us instruction on holiness not through law-keeping but through the Holy Spirit.
- d. Vs 16 is the key one to grasp. To walk by the Spirit results in not giving in to the flesh.
 - (1) To walk (imperative) is a term that speaks of ones habit and conduct. It is not mystical where you “feel” the Spirit or you get “impressions” and call that the leading of the Spirit. So much harm has occurred by thinking this.
 - (2) To walk by the Spirit is to conduct yourself in accordance to His truth and His will. And there is only **one** way this is done, through the Word of God. And as you submit yourself daily to what the bible teaches you find that the Holy Spirit strengthens you to press on.
 - (3) This leads to what is the “flesh.” This is simply the remaining presence of sin in the person. For a non-Christian this is their master. For the Christian, it is still present but the power to enslave is broken.
 - (4) But how do you know if you are conducting yourself in the power of sin vs the Spirit? Your works. Vss 19-21 give broad examples and a very serious warning.
 - (a) These break down into basic categories:
 - i) Sexual on a sliding scale (19).
 - ii) False spirituality (idolatry & sorcery).
 - iii) Relationships (enmities to envying).
 - iv) Lack of self-control, love of pleasure (drunkenness and carousing).
 - (b) Key to understand is that the focus is on what the source of these deeds are—sin, the flesh.
 - (c) We must put away the deeds but the way to do this is NOT by the deeds but the source.

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- (5) So, then we must ask how we know if we are conducting our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit? Again, our works. Vss 22-23.
 - (a) Love is likely the umbrella term. Remember that love is supreme.
 - (b) The others are an expression of how love operates in different situations.
- (6) Notice also how in 6:1 he addresses dealing with those caught in sin.
 - (a) Clearly they are in sin so we know they are walking by the flesh.
 - (b) Those walking by the Spirit are to seek to restore them. How? With gentleness? Why? Because we know that sin remains with us and we too walk by the flesh ourselves.
 - (c) An arrogant heart sets you up for your own failing.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Do not fail to understand the order given by the bible. Faith first then works.
 - 1. Keep these distinct but never separate them.
 - 2. True faith will produce good works. Good works over time will prove faith.
- B. So let me finish this whole thing by looking at 2 Peter 1:5-11.

Benediction

May the Lord answer you in your day of trouble. May the name of YHWH set you in a secure place on high. May He remember your faithfulness and prayers and may He grant you the true desires of your heart. Amen