



Devotional Study Guide Journal

January 29th

Created for Good Works

When we speak on grace and faith righteousness verses law and works righteousness, invariably the question always comes up, “Well, are you saying we don’t have to do any works?”

The answer is very simple. You don’t HAVE to do any works, but you will WANT to do them.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ NOT OF WORKS, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS FOR GOOD WORKS, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So, what is a good work? Is it praying for an hour, reading the Bible each day, and going to church on Sunday? Is it refusing sin and embracing holiness?

I believe that taking in the whole of Jesus life and the letters written by the apostles, good works are not completing a list of “spiritual disciplines” but rather what we do for others in Jesus name. This can take on many forms from being used by God in a spiritual gift or calling to giving of our time and money to help someone in need. Jesus’ commandment to His disciples before He left them was to “love one another as I have loved you.” This isn’t a mental or emotional love only, but one of giving to each other, just as He gave Himself for us.

We are also told to encourage each other in good works. This is not an obligation, but who we actually are now. We are CREATED in Him for good works. We are internally motivated to do good. They are the fruit of what God puts in our hearts.

When we allow works to spring forth from the life He has given us and as a response to His grace, we will find rest. But when we see works as a law, we will feel the weight of them.

The perfect illustration for me is from my teenage years. My parents would sometimes go away overnight. I would plan ahead what special thing I would do for them when they were gone and work so hard to accomplish that task and delight in their surprise when they came home. I would do things like scrub the grout in the tile or shampoo by hand the entire carpet. Once I even painted my bedroom. I loved doing these things that came from my heart.

However, my step-father finally figured out the pattern that when they'd leave, I'd work, and one day as they were leaving, suggested what I chore I might do that weekend. This completely deflated my motivation to work which was coming from my heart, and put me under the burden of obligation. I was a teenager then, not mature enough "to get over it" and be nice anyway. That weekend, I didn't do anything. I don't think I ever did anything again.

No longer a teenager, I know how to redirect my motivations when someone presents a task as an obligation. I often have to remind myself *why* I am doing certain projects. We've also discovered over the years not to obligate those with whom we minister and give room for the grace of God in their lives to give as He leads them.

I think this truth has significant applications for every relationship from marriage to family and friends to employment. Giving is so much easier when done cheerfully.

My point is that the works God has prepared for us to walk in them come from the heart (grace) are more powerful and enjoyable than works we are obligated to perform (law). When we know how greatly we are loved by God and that He is not demanding from us but giving to us, we begin to work motivated by His love and empowered by His grace. Even though this work may be physically exhausting at times, the joy that comes from sharing God's grace with others, overcomes the difficulties. We are saved by grace through faith and we do good works by grace through faith.

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

