

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 192  
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The Sermon: FAITH AND WORKS

Scripture: Romans 19:8-13.

The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart men believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

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For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Among the popular evangelists, salvation is made ridiculously easy. Quoting from Paul's letter to the Romans the evangelists say: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved..." Salvation is thus made a simple matter of accepting Christ, making verbal confession of him, shaking hands with the preacher, and eventually passing on to glory. There are several similar scriptures, such as "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast," and "A man is justified by faith alone without the deeds of the laws."

But there are other scriptures which place just as much emphasis on good works as these do on faith and grace. Outstanding among these scriptures is the second chapter of James, which states emphatically that faith without works is dead, and in verse 23 makes a statement which is directly contradictory to Paul's statement that we are saved by grace and not by works. James says: "Ye see then that by works is a man justified, and not by faith only." Who is right, Paul or James? And the confusion is made more confusing by the fact that in Titus 3:8 Paul writes: "I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

How are men saved, by faith, or by works? Is faith alone sufficient, through grace? Are works alone sufficient, without faith or grace? When one attempts honestly to find out what the Bible says about this subject, and gives up trying to prove some pre-conceived theory, the answer to these questions is ridiculously simple. We are saved by both. Both statements, though seemingly in direct contradiction, are right when the background of each is considered, and when they are understood together, in their total meaning.

Let us approach the answer to our question about faith and works by asking another question or two. When we speak of ourselves or others as being "saved," what do we mean? Saved from what, and saved to what? Many would answer glibly, "Saved from hell, and saved to heaven," but that answer is ambiguous, incomplete, and meaningless until we can agree on a definition of "heaven" and "hell." John the Revelator saw in vision on Patmos that at the end of time death and hell should first deliver up the dead which were in them, and then that both death and hell would be cast into the lake of fire. (See Revelation 20:13-14) What happens to the wicked who were in hell, but who were removed before it was destroyed? What happens to those saved in heaven? Are they all in the same place? Is the only requirement for admission a belief in Christ? What about the murder-

er who confesses Christ just before the gallows trap is sprung? Is he to occupy the same place as the saints of all ages? What of the murderer's victim who did not have time for a last minute confession. Will he go to hell, while his slayer goes to heaven? Reason and an innate sense of fair play tell us that our eternal reward or punishment is going to be based on much more than a last minute confession of faith in the Lord Jesus. How then are men saved? Saved from what, and saved to what?

Man in his natural, unregenerate state is a sinful and fallen creature, in rebellion against God. He is doomed to die sooner or later, whether he is good or bad. He has no power within himself to hold on to life, or to reunite spirit and body once they are separated. He has no power to venture into the presence of a God who cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. He needs a Savior -- someone who will lend his power to overcome death -- someone whose infinite atonement will pay the price for all sin -- someone who combined within one being the potentialities of man for sin, and the perfect sinlessness of Deity. Jesus was such a Savior. He was tempted in all points like as we, but yet without sin. God sent him to us, not because we were worthy, but because he loved us. It was a gift of grace. The best and strongest and most perfect man who ever lived might have worn himself out in doing good works without ever being able to overcome death; for sin is the cause of death, and no man since Adam -- save Christ only -- has lived without sin. It is therefore literally, strictly, and completely true that "by grace are ye saved, not of works, lest any man should boast." Good works have never rescued any man from the power of death, and never can, and never will.

Jesus paid and cancelled the debt of our sin. Suppose that I am bankrupt, without a dime to my name, and with millions of dollars owed in debts which I have no hope of ever paying. A wealthy and benevolent friend hears of my plight, and pays all my debts. Now, how much am I worth? I don't owe anything, but I am still not worth a dime until I earn some

money for myself. But note: whatever I earn now I have the privilege of saving and putting into the bank to my credit, whereas before, whatever I earned went towards the hopeless task of paying off my debts. Jesus pays the debt of our sin; that cancels the debt. But it leaves us without claim upon God's further bounty for a reward, unless we earn that reward by our good works. The Bible says again and again, clearly and plainly, that men shall be rewarded or punished according to their works. We are saved by grace, but rewarded according to our works.

It is now time to answer the question, "To what are we saved?" A reasonable and enlightening answer is to be found in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, verses 40 and 41, where Paul mentions several differing glories -- a glory of the sun, a glory of the moon, and a glory of the stars, and says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead!" Jesus expressed a similar idea in the verse, "In my Father's house are many mansions." A man is saved if through faith on Jesus Christ he is deemed worthy of being snatched from the second death which is reserved for the stubborn, obdurate, rebellious wicked, who reject God's grace even in the prison house of hell after death. The saved man is saved to that degree of glory which he has earned for himself by the works done in the flesh. Those who died without an opportunity to accept Jesus will have opportunity in the spirit world, but their reward will still be measured by the quality of their works.

Think not, then, that your faith alone is sufficient. It is essential; it will save you from the second death; but it cannot carry you to the heights of celestial glory without good works. Think not that good works alone can save you. Works may add to your reward, but only by the grace of Christ, through the exercise of faith in him can we be saved from that death which is the consequence and penalty of sin. Accept your Lord then in faith; lay hold of his grace; and then set forth determinedly and diligently on that program of good works which shall make your salvation full and complete, and your reward ample and sure.