

## Hijacked!

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The most famous hijacking that has ever occurred is probably the notorious 9/11 attacks. Four airliners took off on ordinary runs to predetermined destinies, only to be taken over by men with a mission to destroy. Within a few hours both of the World Trade Center towers lay in smoldering heaps, and the Pentagon was damaged. An intervention of passengers on the fourth jet thwarted the plans to ram the White House as well. By the end of the day, almost 3,000 souls had been stripped of bodily life.

Despite the notoriety of that quadruple hijack, there is another quadruple hijack that has destroyed its ten thousands. And instead of commandeering airliners and turning them into potent bombs, this hijacking uses mere words. By taking four words and turning them in another direction than where they were intended to go, many have been deceived and stripped of spiritual life.

Those four words are found in Ephesians 2:8-9:

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

Grace, saved, faith, and works. Let's look at these terms in the context in which they were written. With each word we will start with the hijacked definition and then strive to turn it back to its intended meaning.

### Grace

When it is used in the New Testament, [grace] refers to that favor which God did at Calvary when He stepped down from His judgment throne to take upon Himself the guilt and penalty of human sin. ...



“Grace” means “undeserved favor.” Even though you deserve to pay your own penalty for sin which is death in the Lake of Fire, God offers to pay your penalty for you through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus.

The above words represent a typical view of grace in a typical church in North America. But what is wrong with that definition? It reminds me of someone who takes a pie that is 12 inches in diameter, and cuts a slice one inch wide and eats it. Then he tells everyone he has eaten a whole pie. Not so!

The above view of grace takes one small aspect, the forgiveness of past sins, and makes that the whole of grace. And, that is not even getting into any debate about whether the viewpoint presented above about Christ's atonement is correct or complete. Is grace only about forgiveness of past sins? Let's look at what else grace accomplishes:

- Grace gives ability and power to missionaries. Acts 14:26
- Grace turns unjust men into just men. Romans 3:24
- Grace gives power to reign over sin. Romans 5:17
- Grace gives gifts to minister: prophecy, teaching, exhortation, etc. Romans 12:6
- Grace makes men to be wise architects in God's kingdom. 1 Corinthians 3:10
- Grace leads men to simplicity and sincerity. 2 Corinthians 1:12
- Grace moves the poor to give liberally. 2 Corinthians 8:1
- Grace moved Christ to live in voluntary poverty, to enrich us. 2 Corinthians 8:9
- Grace makes good works abound in men. 2 Corinthians 9:8
- Grace provides strength to the weak. 2 Corinthians 12:9
- Grace teaches us to deny self and live godly right here on earth. Titus 2:11-12
- Grace enabled Jesus to taste death. Hebrews 2:9
- Grace gives us the Spirit. Hebrews 10:29
- Grace enables us to serve God acceptably. Hebrews 12:28

To state that “in the New Testament, grace refers to that favor which God did at Calvary ...” definitely limits grace pretty severely! As can be deduced from the above verses, grace is *God's power working in humanity*. And yet, when people read Ephesians 2:8, I think it would be safe to say that a large number of them think only in that very limited scope of grace that deals with pardon for past sins. They eat a one inch slice of pie, thinking they are eating the whole thing!

## Saved

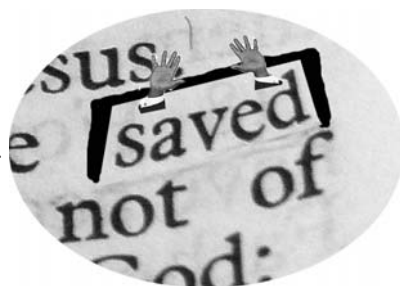
To be saved means “to be forgiven of all one’s sins.” At least that is what myriads of people seem to think. Has the word “saved” been hijacked?

Yes!

No one should think that I am indicating that “getting saved” (as a broad phrase often used in current church settings) does not include a total forgiveness of all past sins. However, the word “saved” in its *biblical* usage does not refer to the act of pardon, but rather *deliverance*. For a start, let’s look at the use of the word in the Old Testament. With a concordance or Bible software, check how the words “save,” “saved,” “salvation,” and “savior” are used in the Old Testament. What you will find is that those words are not expressly attached to the idea of forgiveness, not one single time! Yes, there are times when the context is not exactly given and the writer *could* be referring to the idea of forgiveness, such as in Psalm 6:4. *Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies’ sake.*

But in every case where the context is clear, “save” and its various forms always have the meaning of “rescue” or “deliver from danger.” A couple of examples from among the many available:

- And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? Judges 6:14 Gideon saved Israel ... not by a sacrifice for forgiveness, but by a deliverance from enemies.
- So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven. 1 Samuel 14:23 God’s saving act was not a pardon.
- Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. Nehemiah 9:27 Notice how that men are called “saviours” here!
- Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. Habakkuk 3:13 Notice that God’s salvation was accomplished by killing Israel’s enemies, not by pardoning them of sins.



Moving into the New Testament, the same basic pattern is seen. Note that I am not saying that the word salvation in the New Testament never includes the idea of pardon of past sins, but that is not what the word in and of itself centers on. In the New Testament, it also carries the idea of healing, so that sometimes the same Greek word is translated “save” and sometimes “heal.”

A few cases where “saved” is obviously referring to a rescue, rather than a pardon:

- But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. Matthew 14:30 It is obvious here that Peter was not asking for a pardon, but a rescue.
- For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. Luke 9:56 This was said by Jesus in the context of calling down fire from heaven.
- And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. Acts 27:20

The list could go on. The point is clear that in these cases “saved” has a clear context of “rescue.” Now let’s look at some cases where the context is not so clear:

- And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21 How will Jesus “save” people from their sins if they are only pardoned from the ones they have committed already? If there is no grace to conquer future sins, then we have not been saved from our sins.
- But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Matthew 24:13 Again we find the same dilemma; if we only have a reprieve from past committed sins, but no power to endure in the future, have we been saved from sin?
- For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Romans 5:10 How does the life of Christ save us? Does His life procure a pardon? No, his life, put within us, gives us power over sin.
- Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. 1 Timothy 4:16 Can we pardon ourselves of our sins before God?

**In biblical usage, “saved” always has a clear context of “rescued” or “delivered from.”**

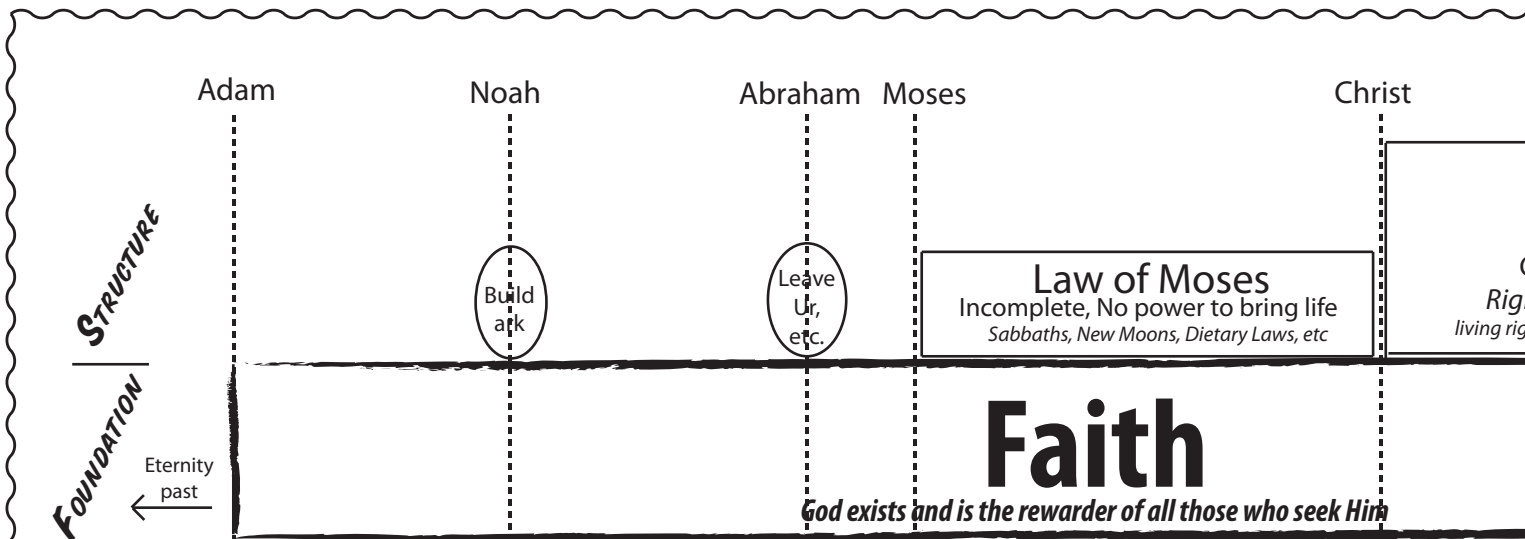
Obviously not. But by continuing in the teachings of Jesus, we rescue ourselves, not in the sense that we “lift ourselves by our own bootstraps,” but in the sense that we will continue to find grace to conquer, if we will but keep looking in faith to Him.

- Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Titus 3:5 In this verse, how did God accomplish our salvation? By a regeneration and a baptism of the Holy Ghost! “Regeneration” speaks of a remanufacturing, and “renewing” is a renovation. Both words speak of a transformation of character, not a pardon for past failures.
- Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. James 5:20 To save a soul from death ... does that mean to only pardon past sins? The only way a person can be rescued from death is if the past deeds of death are pardoned and the future is made alive. If not made alive, the dead spirit will continue to produce evil fruit.
- The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 3:21 A very controversial verse, I know. But let’s pull out

the words in parenthesis and reduce it to “baptism saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Let’s skip the point, for this article, of how and when a person should be baptized with water. The point to focus on is how the salvation is accomplished: by the resurrection of Jesus. In short, we have to experience the same death Christ did, and the same resurrection, in our own hearts. We have to die with Him to our self-centered ways (take up the cross), and be brought to a new life by Him (experience the “first resurrection”). Christ’s resurrection in us accomplishes this, and that saves us—rescues us—from the power of sin.

- To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins. Luke 1:77 Ah, salvation equals pardon for sins! Maybe ... The word “remission” means to release in some cases (See Luke 4:18 where the words “deliverance” and “liberty” are used) while in other places it does seem to refer specifically to a pardon (See Mark 3:29). Let’s stick the meaning of “deliverance and liberty” into Luke 1:77 and see what happens: To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the deliverance and liberty from their sins. That sounds like exceptionally good news!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lord willing, in a future article I want to address “remission” and show how that ties in with the Old Testament jubilee.



**By faith, not works ...** The above chart shows how that the kingdom of God has a foundation of faith. The kingdom of God is actually the outworking of faith, the structure that is now the valid expression of faith in God. Noah did not leave Ur out of faith in God. Moses taught and practiced the 10 Commandments out of faith in God. The kingdom of God is not “of works [of the Mosaic Law],” but rather “of faith and works” many times begins when people think that Paul was referring to “good works” when he wrote the chart to the right to compare Paul’s view (as illustrated above) with the view of the Judaizers.





Every time in the Bible that we are told to put faith in or believe in something, we are told to put that faith in a *Person*, not in *what that Person did*. Do you catch the difference? We are always told to believe on *Him*; never to believe on *what He did*. Check your Bible if you doubt that statement. It's revolutionary!

## The 1/3 Jesus

Here is what happens if you believe on *what* Jesus did, rather than on *Him* as a person. You end up separating His offices and worshipping a 1/3 Jesus. Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. That anointing made Him to be Prophet, Priest, and King.

If someone "trusts only in the finished work of Christ on the cross for his salvation," he ends up accepting Jesus as High Priest—a 1/3 Jesus—to the exclusion of Prophet and King. Some people have even coined the term "saving faith," which is not found in the Bible. While that term may not be wrong if used rightly, it is often used in the context of accepting Jesus' work as High Priest, but not including Jesus' work as Prophet (who proclaimed God's new law) and King (who started a new kingdom when He came).

Can we divide Jesus up? Can we be saved if we trust in what He did, rather than who He was? Can we accept some parts of His life, but not the whole? Can we say, "I accept Jesus as my personal Savior (Priest)," and then not accept Him as our Prophet and King?

No! We cannot say, "I will drink His blood, but not eat His flesh." John 6:53 Furthermore, we need to consider Hebrews 5:9:

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

Jesus became the Author of Salvation unto all that obey Him. All who disobey Him are without salvation. Jesus will certainly not be your High Priest if you do not submit to His kingship and His rules and do what He says.

## Back to Ephesians 2:8

We have established that we must trust in the Man Christ Jesus—the whole Jesus—to access grace. That should be sufficient when we think of defining faith, but unfortunately the idea of faith has been hijacked in another area, commonly called "faith alone." The idea is perpetuated that true faith is tainted if it is mixed with any works that a man might do. And, supposedly, only the faith which has no strings attached to any sort of human works will open the door so grace can forgive us. Is this so?

James asks one of those "ouch" questions. In his typical straightforwardness, he asks, "Can faith save?" James 2:14 Can raw, naked faith, stripped of any works, save a man?

"Absolutely! That is the only kind of faith that can save!" says the modern Evangelical.

"No!" says James.

Raw, naked faith, stripped of all works, is dead. However, we don't take raw, naked faith and add some random works to it either. If the faith we have isn't producing good works, we should throw that faith away and get a faith that works. The solution is neither "faith without works" nor "faith and works." The solution is "faith which worketh by love." Galatians 5:6

## Does faith save?

Notice also that Ephesians 2:8 does *not* say that faith saves us. It says "through faith." Faith is simply a means to an end. The preposition "through" is the Greek preposition "dia," which we will recognize in English words such as *diameter* (measurement by means of going *through* the middle), *diagnosis* (a conclusion achieved by looking through knowledge we have gathered), and other words with *dia-* as a prefix. Greek *dia* has the idea of what one must *go through* to get to arrive elsewhere—the channel used to get somewhere.

Faith in and of itself has not power to save us. Faith is simply the *channel through which one goes to find grace, God's power working in man*. What happens if you stop in the channel, and trust in the channel to get you to the other end? Well, just take a trip to England and visit the Channel Tunnel between England and France. Enter a few steps into the Channel and stop there. Then trust the Channel to take you to France. The Channel Tunnel is a means to get to France, but it in and by itself has not power to get you there.

Thus it goes for those who somehow think that faith in and of itself will save a man. "Through (by means of) faith" we are saved, by grace. Grace does the actual liberating; faith is simply the channel through which grace—God's power—can flow.

## Works

"God doesn't look at our performance."

"Your works have nothing to do with your salvation."

"I could shoot you dead, brother, and still go to heaven if I died right afterward."



“Salvation has nothing to do with obedience.”

Yes, I have heard all of the above statements. Such erroneous ideas stem from a hijacking of the phrase, “not of works.”

We have seen that grace is the propelling force which liberates us from sin. We have seen that faith is the access channel to this power. Now Paul tells us something about the origins of it all. He does this by the use of another preposition, “of.” The Greek form is another recognizable prefix, “ex.” We might say, “ex-President,” or “ex-race car driver,” or “ex-Mormon.” All of these indicate the origin of a person—where he came from—but tell us nothing about where he currently is, nor where he will go. “Not *of* works” tells us that this whole thing of salvation does not originate from works.

The question is, what kind of “works” does Paul refer to? The works of God’s hand? Dead works? Works of the law? Works of love? Good works?

The confusion is understandable. The immediate context of Ephesians 2:8 really doesn’t offer any clear answer. But when we look at the context in which Paul uses the same phrase, in Romans and Galatians, we can determine that he is referring to “works of the law.” (See Romans 9:32 and Galatians 3:2,5 for examples.) The context of Romans and Galatians is that of the Judaizers, who declared in another place that “it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” Acts 15:5

### Why some Jews were confused

The confusion of the Jewish believers is understandable. For centuries it had been pounded into their psyche that one had to keep the Law of Moses, with all its ceremonies and rituals, to have a relationship with God. And that was so.

Except they forgot one very important fact . . .

The foundation of a relationship with God is faith, trusting in God through what He has said. The Jews, or

at least some of them, forgot that underneath the structure of the Mosaic Law was the foundation of faith. And in his letters to various churches, Paul has to repeatedly remind the Jewish believers that, although the Mosaic Law was a valid structure *for a certain people in a certain time frame*, the foundation (faith) under that structure extended both before and after the Mosaic Law.

Paul used Abraham as a way to get the Jewish believers to understand the foundation of faith. He starts out by asking them a simple question (not directly, but by inference): Was Abraham a righteous man?

Of course, not a Jew in the whole world would deny that Abraham was righteous! Then Paul moves to his next question: How did Abraham become a righteous man?

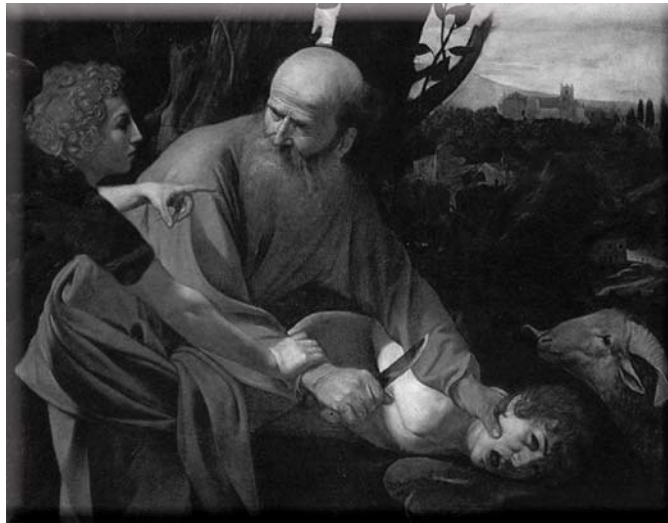
At this point, the Jews probably began to see his point. Abraham lived several centuries before Moses, so obviously Abraham didn’t become a righteous man by doing the Mosaic ceremonies and sacrifices. But perhaps Abraham became righteous by getting circumcised?

No. Paul points out that Abraham was righteous *before* he was even circumcised, which the Jews would have probably agreed with upon thinking about the matter. So just how did Abraham become a righteous man?

Simple. Abraham took what God said and swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. If God said it, Abraham threw his whole life on it *and acted upon it*. And that is called “faith.” And when God saw that faith, He marked it down on Abraham’s account that Abraham had acted righteously.

### One foundation; four structures

In Noah’s day, the making of the ark was done on the foundation of faith in what God had said. And Noah was a righteous man for taking what God had said and acting upon those words. In Abraham’s day, faith meant pulling up the tent stakes and moving out of Ur, not knowing where he would end up. In Moses’ day, faith meant living by the precepts of the Mosaic Law. In our day, faith means acting on what Jesus has said and taught.



**If God said it, Abraham acted upon it.  
That is called “faith.”**

Thus we see four different constructions built upon the same foundation of faith in God. Paul didn't destroy Moses' Law by preaching faith; in fact he validated the Mosaic Law as a genuine expression of faith ... *in its proper time and place*. Paul explained that a better structure—the kingdom of God—was now being built on that same foundation of faith that extended from Adam into the future. Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christians all build on the same foundation: faith. But each of the four had different structures to build on that one foundation.



**If one could earn a baptism of the Holy Ghost by his having kept the Sabbath, new moons, and dietary laws so perfectly, he could boast that he earned it.**

The problem with the Judaizers was their thinking that the Mosaic Law was the foundation, and Christ's teaching should then be built on top of that Law with all its Sabbaths, new moons, and dietary laws. Paul then explained in Romans and Galatians that Christianity is not "ex" (originated from) works of the Law, but "ex" (originated from) faith in God.

In another of those "ouch" questions, Paul asked the Galatians:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Galatians 3:2

Quite bluntly, Paul asks them how they got their baptism of the Holy Ghost. Did you get a baptism of the Spirit because you kept the Sabbath so perfectly for seven times in a row, or the new moon ritual for 10 times, or because for one whole year you kept all the dietary regulations so perfectly?

Of course not! They knew that they had been baptized with the Holy Ghost in the moment in which they had made Jesus to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of their life! Paul then reminded them that the Law of Moses was a valid structure for time past, but now the kingdom of God was to be built upon the foundation of faith in God.

### **Ephesians 2:9 again**

Paul is reminding the Ephesians of the source—the origin—for the grace that delivered them from sin. Did that grace come from keeping the Mosaic Law? No! If one

could earn a baptism of the Holy Ghost by his having kept the Sabbath, new moons, and dietary laws so perfectly, he could boast that he earned it. But the grace of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, given to those who receive Jesus as the Prophet, Priest, and King of their entire being.

### **But wait, there's more ...**

We have looked at the four words that have had their meaning hijacked. But that is not the end of the story. Ephesians 2:8-9 really isn't the end of Paul's thought. Verse 10 continues with:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Continuing the thought that Christians didn't become holy and righteous by their own strength, Paul calls the believers "God's poem." Yes, "workmanship" is a translation for the Greek word *poiema*! **He** made us, not we ourselves. And what did He remake us for?

So that we should walk in good works! Producing good works is an ordinance of God!

### **The fallout**

So what is the fallout of this quadruple hijacking of Ephesians 2:8-10? We see it daily all around us. Men and women are told that they can be "saved" if they will put their trust in one act that Jesus did while on earth. They can accept a 1/3 Jesus, which then becomes another Jesus than the one the Bible reveals to us.

We see it daily in "gospel" tracts of the "fake \$20 bill" type. First, you make a person feel guilty for disobeying the 10 Commandments. Next, you quickly throw out the "grace" of a hijacked version of Ephesians 2:8-10 as a way to relieve that guilty conscience. "Presto!"—you have another "convert."

But sadly, too often not a word has been said about the Messiah also being Prophet and King; about the necessity of taking up the cross daily and following that King in His kingdom ethics—actually *doing* them here and now. The gospel that Jesus preached in His sermon on the mount is totally neglected, and replaced with a hijacked version of Ephesians 2:8-10.

I am reminded of the words of the Anabaptist Hans Denck, who during the Protestant Reformation days asked the Reformers some of those "ouch" questions:

**Producing good works is an ordinance of God!**



You [the Reformers] say that the Lamb of God has taken away the sins of the world (John 1:29). How is it then that your sins are not gone?<sup>2</sup> ...

Do you wish to have Christ the Son of the living God for a King (John 6:15); yet He should not rule over you (Luke 19:29ff)? ...

You dishonor the Son if you avoid and ridicule His way, which He Himself has walked unto life, and on which He desires to lead us too.<sup>3</sup>

So goes the fallout from a hijacked version of what it means to be “saved by grace through faith.” Yes, some who may pick up and read a typical “get’em feeling guilty and then quick get’em saved by trusting in the finished work of Christ on the cross” tract will actually come through to a genuine new birth. But more people have probably been deceived by that theology than have burst through into the kingdom of God by a total renovation of the Holy Ghost.

And then we have the altar calls ... “Raise your hand and say this prayer with me if you want to be saved. ‘Dear Jesus, I have sinned and I accept your free gift of salvation that you purchased on the cross. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me.’”

Again, there have been some real mighty conversions by people saying such a prayer, because the heart was in a true state of contrition, and the speaker of those words also let Christ be the King and Prophet of his life in that moment and started following Jesus from there on out. However, for the other 95%,<sup>4</sup> they walk out of the church building after saying

2 Meaning, their sins were not taken out of their lives; they had no freedom from sin. It is a known fact that the morals of Germany were worse after the Protestant Reformation than before.

3 Hans Denck, *Selected writings of Hans Denck* (Pickwick Press, 1976), 91–92.

4 I, of course, do not know the actual percentage of people that do get converted by saying the “sinner’s prayer.” I am probably being very charitable to say that even 5% of those

that prayer without their sins having been taken away from them.

It’s called inoculation. Inoculation happens when something is injected into a plant or animal to keep it from contracting a disease. But in this case, a hijacked version of Ephesians 2:8-10 is used to inoculate a person from contracting the “disease” of a Jesus-following, obedient-to-the-King, separated, sin-killing, good-works-producing, radical Christianity.

## In summary

It sometimes amazes me how some folks seem intent on making sure that good works and Christianity are shown to be eternally allergic to each other. Not so! Beginning with faith as a channel to access grace, the believer is liberated from the power of sin by grace, so that he may glorify God thereafter with a life of abundant good works. God delights in good works! Hebrews 13:16

Yet, Ephesians 2:8-10 has suffered a quadruple hijack to make it appear that salvation consists only of a pardon for sins, made possible to a person if he/she will trust in what Jesus did on the cross. Good works mixed in with faith in Jesus’ work on the cross will jeopardize the believer’s purity,

and perhaps even cause the person to totally miss being saved by grace, because faith mixed with works is not “faith alone” ...

What a hijack! ~



**A hijacked version of Ephesians 2:8-10 is used to inoculate a person from contracting the “disease” of a Jesus-following, obedient-to-the-King, separated, sin-killing, good-works-producing, radical Christianity.**

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saying the “sinner’s prayer” actually do get born into the kingdom of God while saying it.