Works of Faith

(by Doy Moyer)

Works won’t save us, but failure to engage in them can condemn us. Likewise, being moral won’t save us, but being immoral will condemn us (**1 Corinthians 6:9-10**).

This is a consistent message throughout Scripture. Salvation is ***“by grace through faith,”*** and faith means that we will trust God and seek to do what He says. Even so, it is ***“not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”*** (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Yet, let no one think that obedience is unimportant, for disobedience and disbelief are held as parallels (**Hebrews 3:18-19**). Failure to obey is a lack of faith, and without faith there is no pleasing God (**Hebrews 11:6**).

Grace, then, while beyond our full understanding, is not a *“do what you want”* license to sin (**Romans 6:1-4**; **Jude 4**), and it informs what it means ***“to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age”*** while we await the blessed hope (**Titus 2:11-14**). Grace makes us zealous for good works even while we know that those works are not earning our salvation. Works are expressions of our faith as we diligently make it our aim to please God.

In other words, ***“by grace through faith”*** is meaningful when faith is present, and faith is present when we trust God enough to submit ourselves to His will. The danger in any work we do, however, is that we get puffed up and boast as if we deserve some kind of honor for it rather than to recognize our humble state. As the Lord taught, ***“when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’”*** (**Luke 17:10**).

God’s grace should spark within us the desire to seek Him, obey Him, and thank Him for what He has done through Jesus Christ. Be reconciled to God! ***“Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, ‘In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation”*** (**2 Corinthians 6:1-2**).

**Jesus, the Lord of Sabbath**

(by Doy Moyer)

The gospel accounts highlight the fact that Jesus worked miracles on the Sabbath. This, of course, was intentional on His part, but it also brought much criticism. For example, he was asked, ***“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”*** The text says they asked this ***“so that they might accuse him”*** (**Matthew 12:9-14**). Jesus then healed a man with a withered hand and ***“the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.”*** On another occasion Jesus healed a disabled woman, and the ruler of the synagogue was ***“indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath”*** (**Luke 13:14**). When Jesus healed a lame man, telling the man to take up his bed and walk, ***“the Jews said to the man who had been healed, ‘It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed’”*** (**John 5:10**). They considered this as Jesus breaking the Sabbath, and that, coupled with His claim to be working as the Father works, was the reason they were ***“seeking all the more to kill him”*** (**John 5:18**). **John 9** also records Jesus healing a blind man on the Sabbath, and ***“Some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath’”*** (**v 16**).

Jesus deliberately taught and healed on the Sabbath, and this exposed faulty views of the Sabbath and, at the same time, taught what the Sabbath was truly about. In doing these miracles and teaching as He did on the Sabbath, He demonstrated the truth of one of His amazing claims: ***“For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath”*** (**Matthew 12:8**). Who can possibly be Lord of the Sabbath except the One who made it, fulfills it, and brings the meaning of it to life through His actions and words? To claim to be Lord of the Sabbath is to claim divine status. No mere man could do this.

Yet it is interesting that Jesus, in making this claim, says that ***“the Son of Man”*** is the lord of the Sabbath. Here is a phrase that certainly has implications for His humanity. He became a human being and suffered in the flesh. But the phrase is greater than that. ***“Son of Man”*** is also pulled from the context of **Daniel 7** wherein the son of man figure comes in the clouds, goes before the Ancient of Days, and was ***“given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him”*** (**Daniel 7:14**). To claim to be the Son of Man was more than claiming to be human, though it included this. He was claiming to be the promised Messiah with dominion and a kingdom. He is the One worthy to carry out God’s plans so that ***“every tribe and language and people and nation”*** would worship and serve Him (**Revelation 5:9-10**). He is the fulfillment of all that God had planned and purposed. He is the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the Lord of the Sabbath who brings to fruition God’s intentions.

What, then, is the meaning of Sabbath? God established Sabbath as a day of rest, and this served as a pattern for the Sabbath rest He desired for His people (**Genesis 2:1-2**; **Exodus 20:11**). When God finished creation, He was not tired, but rather His rest was an indication that all was good and operating the way He intended. He ruled from His throne over an orderly creation and dwelled with the people whom He made. Sin brought in the chaos and disrupted what was good. Yet God would remind the people through the Sabbath command that He is holy and they needed to reflect deeply on this truth. To remember the Sabbath was to remember the holiness of God who made all things for His glory and by His power.

Sabbath is about rest, and rest encompasses the freedom from oppressive forces that wage war against our souls. Again, when Jesus healed the disabled woman on the Sabbath, He said, ***“Woman, you are freed from your disability”*** (**Luke 13:12**). When challenged, Jesus showed that it was appropriate on the Sabbath to loose her from the bond of Satan (**v 16**). Yet how much greater to be loosed from the bondage of sin, set free and repurposed in Christ!

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, and, indeed, He is our Sabbath. ***“Remember the Sabbath”*** is a great messianic message because it finds its fulfillment in Jesus, who sets us free from our bonds and gives us the rest we seek. We find this echoed in His great invitation, ***“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”*** (**Matthew 11:28**, which also pulls from **Exodus 33:14**).

There is, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God (**Hebrews 4:9-10**). When we come to Jesus, we are coming to the Sabbath rest, first seen in **Genesis** and finally realized in God’s eternal presence. For us, ***“Remember the Sabbath”*** isn’t about a single day of the week, but rather is about the rest and freedom we gain through Christ both now and in eternity.