

26-0322a Transcript

26-0322a - *Merit or Grace?*, Steve Cain

Bible Readers: Mike Mathis and Tom Freed

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Merit or Grace?

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 1:21): Mike Mathis

Romans 9:30-33: (0:04) The first scripture reading this morning will be taken from Romans, the ninth chapter, (0:12) verses 30 through 33. What shall we say then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness (0:25) have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith. But Israel, (0:34) pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. (0:44) Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. (0:53) For they stumbled at that stumbling stone, as it is written, (1:03) Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on him (1:15)

Continued

will not be put to shame. That completes the reading. (1:21)

2nd Reading (1:28 - 2:10): Tom Freed

Romans 4:16-17: (1:28) I'll be reading Romans 4, 16 and 17. (1:33) For this reason, it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, (1:40) so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only those who are of the law, (1:48) but also to those who are the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (1:55) As it is written, Father of many nations, I have made you in the presence of him whom he believed, (2:03) even God, who gives life to the dead and calls in the being that which does not exist. (2:10)

Transcript (0:04 - 23:55), Preacher: Steve Cain

(2:15) Yes, hello. It's good to see everyone this morning. (2:20) My lesson today is maybe answering questions that aren't asked.

(2:27) I've been known to dedicate myself to answering questions that aren't even asked, (2:33) because I like sometimes to deal with the subject matter itself, just for the subject matter. (2:41) And so this morning, the topic is basically merit versus grace. (2:51) And so as we reflect upon that, the merit oftentimes is referred to as works.

(3:01) And one of the things that I find that we have a problem with often is trying to deal with (3:09) the subject of works, what is works, and what kind of works do we need to do. (3:14) We know that as Christians, we need to be involved in works. (3:18) And so the question begs, you know, just why is it works? (3:24) The passage that was read in your hearing this morning from Galatians, (3:30) or not Galatians, from Romans, and of course I deal heavily with Romans (3:35) as I'm teaching it right at the moment, is that why has the Gentiles found (3:44) the gospel and righteousness when they weren't seeking it? (3:49) And why has the Israelites, who were seeking it, have not obtained it? (3:57) And then Paul goes on and points out the fact that it's because of an attitude (4:01) that they were doing it, their ulterior motive.

(4:05) And he says they were seeking it because of works and not by faith. (4:10) And so we can find the fact that we're looking for salvation based on works and faith together. (4:20) But we have to

figure out exactly what is the attitude that we—and I want to address the (4:28) attitude—what is the ulterior motive that we have, or are we self-seeking? (4:33) And so it's in this respect that we have the concept.

(4:38) When we look at James, the second chapter in particular, he finishes out that chapter (4:45) where he's discussing faith and deeds. (4:48) Let's take a look at it. (4:49) I'll be reading from the New International Version.

(4:52) One thing about the New International Version when it gets down there talking about faith (4:56) without deeds, other versions, no matter what the other version might be—New King James, (5:02) King James—most of them will refer to the deeds as works. (5:11) So let's take a look at it. (5:16) What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith that has no (5:21) works or deeds? (5:24) Can such faith save them? (5:27) Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.

(5:31) If one of you says to them, go in peace, keep warm and well fed, and does nothing about (5:38) their physical needs, what good is it? (5:42) In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action or works, is dead. (5:52) But someone will say, you have faith, I have deeds or works. (5:58) Show me your faith without works or deeds, and I will show you my faith by my works or (6:04) deeds.

(6:05) You believe that there is one God? (6:07) Good. (6:08) Even the demons believe that and shudder. (6:12) You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? (6:18) Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac (6:25) on the altar? (6:27) You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete (6:33) by what he did, and the scripture was fulfilled that says Abraham believed God and was credited (6:42) to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend.

(6:48) You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. (6:54) In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when (7:02) she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? (7:08) As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. (7:17) Let's reflect back again to Romans, the ninth chapter, I believe it's the passage that we (7:23) were looking at and where Paul is talking about.

(7:29) Down to this pickup of verse 30, which is the beginning of the paragraph in my version. (7:35) What then shall we say that the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have obtained it, (7:41) a righteousness that is by faith, but the people of Israel who pursued the law as the way of (7:49) righteousness have not attained their goal. (7:52) Why not? (7:52) Because they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were by works.

(7:59) They stumble over the stumbling stone as it is written. (8:03) See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, (8:12) and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame. (8:16) So what is the difference here? (8:18) We're talking about an attitude.

(8:20) We're talking about an ulterior motive type thing, a misunderstanding. (8:26) And as we're thinking about it, we're looking at what works is. (8:33) Let's take a look now at Romans, the eleventh chapter.

(8:39) I believe this is going to be the passage that I want. (8:42) Let's pick up with verse one. (8:45) I

asked then, did God reject the people? (8:48) By no means.

(8:50) I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham and from the tribe of Benjamin. (8:55) Did God not reject his people whom he foreknew? (9:00) Don't you know that Scripture says in the passage that about Elijah, how he appealed (9:06) to God against Israel, Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. (9:11) I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me.

(9:14) And what was God's answer to him? (9:17) I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to all. (9:23) As to the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace. (9:28) And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works.

(9:33) If it were grace, if it were based on works, grace would no longer be grace. (9:43) What then? (9:45) What the people of Israel sought so earnestly, they did not obtain. (9:49) The elect among them did, but the others were hardened.

(9:55) As it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that (10:01) could not hear to this very day. (10:04) As we reflect upon what he's trying to tell us here is the fact that (10:11) the Israelites were looking at the things that they were doing and what God wanted them to do (10:17) as being works. (10:20) They were trying to earn their way.

(10:24) I liken it to that particular attitude and position as if you were dealing with a balance (10:32) sheet, debit and credit. (10:35) And as we would see that we were having sins, so the Israelites would recognize they were (10:41) falling short of the law and the law was not declaring them to be righteous. (10:49) They were falling short of the law.

(10:50) So they knew they had to do something to make up the difference between their shortcoming (10:56) and what they needed to do. (10:58) So they thought that they could earn or merit the fact that they could get the righteousness (11:06) that God would recognize. (11:08) The fact is that the law could not give them that credit that they were looking for.

(11:15) The law could only give them to declare them to be righteous or to condemn them. (11:21) So what we have is a balance. (11:24) Visualize this, if you will.

(11:26) The debit and the credit. (11:27) Of course, you could be looking on the other side if you were a bookkeeper, an accountant. (11:33) So a debit and a credit.

(11:36) So whenever we would sin, we'd show up here on the credit. (11:41) So we would want to offset that credit or that sin by doing something good. (11:50) And so whatever that something good is, we're going to do it hoping that it pays the debt (11:57) that we have over here and balance that off.

(12:01) And therefore, we would be even board and being righteous again. (12:05) But the thing is, when you have a sin, what is the debit or what is the good that is going (12:15) to pay for the sin that you have? (12:19) How much good do you have to do in order to pay for it? (12:23) But let's assume that during the day, the average person, I'm just making this up. (12:30) The average person, let's say, sins seven times in a day.

(12:39) What does that make? (12:41) You have to do seven good things to balance it off. (12:48) How many good things can you do in a day? (12:53) What good are you going to be doing in a day? (12:57) In other words, you're trying to earn your way into heaven. (13:03) You're trying to offset

the sins by doing good, which will negate the sin, and therefore, (13:11) you're even with the board.

(13:13) But if you sin seven times in a day, and that's not unreasonable, how many good things can (13:20) you do in a day? (13:22) How many old ladies can you help cross the street? (13:26) How many times do you go to the hospital to visit somebody who's sick or in the nursing (13:30) home? (13:31) How many times do you give somebody some money that's been begging on the street? (13:37) How many times do you have the opportunity to do good, but you have to offset the sins (13:44) that you did in that day, let alone the next day, and the next day, and the next day? (13:53) So, Paul's trying to point out to us that we cannot merit our salvation. (14:03) There is no way that we can do it, and as I pointed out, you can't appeal to the law (14:09) because the law cannot give you credit. (14:13) The law cannot give you credit for the good that you do.

(14:17) Only the law can say, you did this, and you got to pay the penalty for it, period. (14:23) And so, if you go through the day without breaking the law, you're righteous. (14:29) But if you break the law, then you're a sinner.

(14:33) What does the word sin mean? (14:36) If you look at the word sin, it basically is an archery terminology, if you will, or (14:43) a target. (14:44) You have a target out here, and in the old days, they used to shoot the arrows at the (14:50) target, and they would have a fellow down at the other end next to the target, and (14:56) as that arrow would come to the target, you hit the target. (15:00) If it didn't hit the bullseye, if it did not hit the bullseye, he would say, sin, and (15:09) then he would say, up or low, right or left.

(15:13) He would tell you how you sinned so you could make the adjustments so that you could make (15:18) another shot at it. (15:19) And then you keep shooting at it, hoping that you hit the bullseye. (15:24) But every time you would shoot it, you didn't hit the bullseye.

(15:28) He would say, sin, in other words, you missed the target. (15:33) What is the Christian's target? (15:35) What is the person's target? (15:37) The person's target is to live a day without sin. (15:44) But we miss the target, don't we? (15:47) And as we go through a day, we cannot offset that.

(15:53) So what is Paul telling to tell us about the Israelites and why they did not obtain what (16:00) they were going after? (16:02) They did not obtain it because of their attitude, the position that they were taking. (16:08) They were saying, okay, I got sinned, but I got to offset it with something good. (16:14) And Paul says they never achieved it.

(16:18) But why did the Gentile, the person who was not a Jew and was not under the Jewish law, (16:26) over here, find it? (16:28) Because he was introduced to the gospel. (16:34) What does that mean? (16:38) He was introduced to the fact that God wants to credit him by grace without merit. (16:46) What is the word grace? (16:49) Unmerited favor.

(16:52) That's what the word means, unmerited favor. (16:56) So God wants to give man, by his grace, unmerited favor, salvation, righteousness. (17:07) He wants to provide us with the righteousness.

(17:10) And that's what Paul starts out with in Romans, the first chapter, when he talks about exaltation. (17:15) Not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God. (17:22) Take a look at Romans, the first chapter, and we pick it up with verse 16.

(17:29) I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation (17:35) to

everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. (17:40) For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. (17:45) A righteousness that is by faith, from first to last.

(17:49) Just as it is written, the righteous live by faith. (17:54) So, the Jewish person is presented with the gospel, does he believe it? (18:04) It has to be accepted by faith. (18:07) Yes, I believe that God wants to reconcile me to him through Jesus, (18:14) and he wants to provide me with righteousness that I cannot obtain through the law.

(18:21) He wants to give it to me. (18:24) It's a free gift, and he wants to give it to me. (18:28) So, he's not asking us to work for it.

(18:33) He's not asking us to do anything special except his son as the propitiation for our sins. (18:43) And so, he's asking us to do that. (18:46) Is he asking us to do something special by works? (18:50) No, but one might anticipate that being baptized is a work.

(18:58) But is it a work? (19:01) It is a work, but there's something special about that work. (19:05) And what's special about that work? (19:09) We are being encouraged, and I believe it's in Ephesians, the second chapter. (19:15) Let's take a look at Ephesians, chapter 2, and verse 5. (19:44) Yes, let's start up with verse 1. (19:49) I like to keep continuity, and I like to keep in context.

(19:54) So, let's pick up at verse 1, reading again from the New International Version. (19:58) As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you (20:05) followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit (20:11) who is now at work in those who are disobedient. (20:16) All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following (20:24) its desires and thoughts.

(20:26) Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. (20:32) But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, (20:40) even when we were dead in transgressions. (20:44) It is by grace you have been saved, and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with (20:52) him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show (21:02) the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

(21:11) For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, (21:20) it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. (21:28) For we are God's handiwork. (21:31) Notice what he says.

(21:33) We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for what purpose? (21:42) To do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (21:49) What are good works? (21:52) There definitely are good works, and they're not works for merit. (21:57) They're works that are that which shows our obedience to God.

(22:03) They are works that shows that we love God and that we care for God. (22:08) And so, as we pointed out in our class this morning, and as Scott pointed out in the bulletin, (22:17) I wanted you to read some scriptures concerning circumcision and the purpose of circumcision. (22:27) What is circumcision all about? (22:30) Circumcision is asking us to have our hearts dedicated to God and not going off after (22:41) some other things.

(22:43) He wants us to have our hearts dedicated to God. (22:46) He wants us to do things because we love God. (22:50) He wants us to do things because it is what a Christian does.

(22:55) A Christian is good. (22:57) A Christian does good. (23:00) A Christian will go to the nursing homes and the hospitals.

(23:04) The Christian will give money to those who are asking for it. (23:08) The Christian will do good. (23:10) And we're told in the Galatian letter in the sixth chapter to be ready to do good unto (23:15) all people, especially to those of the household of God.

(23:21) And so we're asked to be ready to do good. (23:25) We have a relationship with God that is to be recognized. (23:30) We are dedicated, and we are going to be His child, His person.

(23:38) I would like for us to take a look at a relationship that is given, and especially it's here in (23:44) Ephesians. (23:45) And it's in, I believe, the fourth chapter, perhaps? (23:52) Let's take a look at the fifth chapter. (23:55) It's in the fifth chapter.

(23:57) I want to pick up with verse 22, where he's talking about how a family needs to be conducting (24:04) itself. (24:06) And one of the things that I'm not going to read at all, per se, because I just want to (24:12) make a particular point. (24:17) He says, "...submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (24:23) We respect God and Christ.

(24:27) Then he goes on and he says, "...wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands." (24:34) Notice here, "...as you do to the Lord." (24:40) What is he asking us? (24:42) What kind of reverence is she giving to God that she may not be giving to her husband? (24:50) I don't want to focus in on that particular negative things. (24:53) I want to focus in, what kind of reverence is she doing that Paul is saying? (25:02) She respects God, and she gives her whole life to God, and she honors Him. (25:10) And this is the things that she's doing.

(25:12) This is what Paul is expecting. (25:15) This is what Paul wants us to acknowledge, is that a person acknowledges God and looks (25:23) to Him. (25:24) We know that God has dedicated Himself through Jesus' teaching in Matthew, the sixth chapter, (25:30) where He talks about how we're not to worry about what we're going to eat, what we're (25:35) going to wear, where we're going to live.

(25:38) How can we do these things? (25:40) Because we're going to rely entirely upon God's provision. (25:46) So what does that call for? (25:49) It calls for a special love, a special affinity to God. (25:56) And with that special love and with that special affinity, you're going to do what? (26:03) You're going to do good.

(26:05) You're going to do worse that are accepted by God, because it's not trying to merit your (26:14) faith, it's trying to demonstrate that you love God and that you expect Him. (26:23) So He gives us the illustration of Abraham. (26:26) And that's what James does.

(26:29) He gives us the illustration of Abraham's faith. (26:32) Also gives us the illustration of the woman in Jericho. (26:39) Can't think of her name.

(26:41) But anyway, they did good. (26:46) So Abraham then obeyed God because he completely respected God and honored Him. (26:57) And that's what we're being asked to do.

(26:59) We're not being asked to earn our way into heaven. (27:03) We are being asked to recognize the fact that God is giving you. (27:13) It's a gift.

(27:15) He's giving you heaven. (27:20) It is that which He expects us to honor. (27:27) So if we can recognize the fact that we are not earning heaven, (27:34) we're getting heaven because God loves us.

(27:37) We're not earning our way into heaven. (27:41) We're going to be going to heaven because we have obeyed the instructions that God has given us. (27:50) God is offering us righteousness and heaven if we will accept His Son as perpetuation for our sins.

(28:03) He's not saying to us, you've got to earn it. (28:07) You've got to maintain your status. (28:11) He is saying, be my child, be my wife, be my husband, be truthful and faithful to me.

(28:26) That's what He's asking. (28:29) And so when we have the opportunity to do good, what does James say? (28:37) When you know to do good and do it at none, it is sin. (28:45) So as Christians, being a child of God, we're not earning our way into heaven.

(28:54) He's giving it. (28:55) It's a free gift from Him. (28:58) He's not asking us to swim the widest ocean.

(29:03) He's not asking us to climb the highest mountain. (29:07) All He's asking us is to come to Him through His Son (29:11) and allow His Son to pay the debt that we owe in order to get out of the law. (29:20) The law has to be satisfied.

(29:23) No matter how you're going to look at it, the law still says you sin, you die. (29:30) And so if you have sinned, you are going to die. (29:35) But Jesus is paying the debt.

(29:37) He's dying for us. (29:41) He is to perpetuation. (29:44) And so then as our high priest, He ascends into heaven.

(29:48) He offers His sacrifice, which God accepts. (29:52) And He says, you are my child and I'm dying for you. (30:02) I'd like to faith.

(30:04) I'm Steve's representative. (30:08) But anyway, I'd like to use your name too. (30:13) That's what is being offered.

(30:15) So what kind of works are we doing? (30:19) And the works is good works. (30:23) Works that God expects His children to do. (30:28) We're not earning our way in heaven.

(30:32) We are walking the walk. (30:36) God wants us to walk. (30:38) And what does 1 John say? (30:41) As long as you're walking in the light, as He is in the light, (30:45) His blood will continue to cleanse you.

(30:49) So yes, you see an individual who needs clothes, as James would say. (31:00) Let's take a look at that one more time. (31:02) Let James tell us what he is saying.

(31:06) James, the second chapter. (31:10) What good is it? (31:12) My brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith, but has no deeds or works, (31:20) can such faith save them? (31:23) Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. (31:29) If one of you says to them, go in peace, keep warm and well fed, (31:34) but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? (31:42) In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

(31:52) Someone will say, do you have faith? (31:55) I have deeds. (31:57) Show me your faith

without deeds and I will show you my faith by my deeds. (32:03) Do you believe that there is one God? (32:06) Good.

(32:07) Even the demons believe that and shudder. (32:12) You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? (32:18) Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac (32:24) on the altar? (32:26) You see that his faith and his actions were working together. (32:30) His faith was made complete by what he did.

(32:35) And the scripture was fulfilled that says Abraham believed God (32:41) and it was credited to him as righteousness. (32:45) It was called God's friend. (32:47) You see that a person is considered righteous for what they do and not by faith alone.

(32:57) God is freely giving us salvation. (33:03) And salvation is contingent upon us accepting the sacrifice that he has provided for us through (33:10) Jesus. (33:12) God wants us to be his children.

(33:14) God wants us to be in heaven with him. (33:18) As Peter would point out, God does not desire that any should perish, but that all should (33:24) come to repentance. (33:27) And so as we reflect upon the fact that that offer is there, all we got to do is to take (33:35) him up on it.

(33:36) Have the faith that coming to him through Jesus and being baptized for the remission (33:41) of our sins, the rise of walking in newness, which is accomplished by Jesus on that cross. (33:48) He enters into heaven with his sacrifice and that sacrifice is for all whosoever will. (33:56) If there's anyone here that needs to respond to Jesus' invitation to come unto him, (34:04) all ye who are heavy and laden, and I will give you rest.

(34:09) It's contingent upon us being baptized for the remission of our sins, the rise of walking (34:13) in newness of life. (34:15) If you need to respond, won't you come? (34:18) Well, together we stand and sing the song of courage.