

Saving Faith Is Relational, Not Transactional

Ephesians 2:8-10

Some aspects of life are *transactional*—like going to the grocery store, or a restaurant

- This is good. But I'm so glad this is not *all* of life.
- Question: What can you offer God in a transaction?

Quick summary of The Parable of the Vineyard Workers (Matt 20:1-16)

Our passage today:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is **not your own doing**; it is the gift of God, 9 **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (The Apostle Paul, Ephesians 2:8-10)

Are (good) works truly good?

- Eph 2:8-9 should make you say "No, not really!"
 - They don't have transactional value with God. Can't trade them for God's favor, gifts, salvation, etc.
- But Eph 2:10 should make you say, "Yes, absolutely!"
 - Because they are not transactional but relational activities; that is, done within a real, trusting relationship with God
 - They are not instrumental ("I do this so I can get something else more important to me") but ultimate activities.

Saving Faith => Good Works

- "Faith is pregnant with good works."

- Both are relational, not transactional:
 - When Saving Faith is misunderstood as transactional, then it becomes mere "fire insurance." Once it is secured, it can seemingly give cover to living a self-directed life apart from an ongoing relationship with God. Read Romans 6, James 2.
 - When Good Works are misunderstood as transactional, then they become acts that seemingly secure God's obligation to deliver certain goods. Apart from performing these acts, the rest of life can be self-directed, self-defined, and lived apart from God. Against this, see Romans 3-4.

No boasting in ourselves, but salvation rebounds to the Glory of God!

Questions for further reflection and application:

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-10, and especially note 2:8-10.
2. Why is the concept of a "gift" important? What is it contrasted with in 2:8?
 - a. Following the language of the sermon, is a gift "transactional" or "relational"?
3. Explain how works are 'bad' in 2:8-9, but 'good' in 2:10.
 - a. Most people naturally appreciate one of these two teachings, but perhaps not both. Why is this? Consider how personality, biography, as well as church background might come into play.