

Faith Made Complete

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BY Guest Writer

Scripture Reading: James 2:14-26, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Romans 3:23-26, Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

I love that Christian freedom is based on this principle: free, radical grace exists for the undeserving through Jesus. There's nothing we can do to receive it; there's nothing we can do to reverse it. Incredible, wonderful, scandalous grace.

That's why reading James' words can feel confusing. Is he contradicting grace, saying we're justified by our works—that without those good works, our faith is as good as dead?

I've spent a lot of time grappling with these passages, asking God to open my eyes to what He was saying through these two disciples. On the surface, it seems like they are contradicting one another. Then He reminded me of a breakfast I shared with a friend recently.

I've known this friend since I was ten years old. She's gorgeous, extremely athletic, and was always popular in school. Over the twenty years we've known each other, we've stayed loosely in touch. Over coffee and eggs, she shared the circumstances of her life—mostly that it hadn't turned out like she'd planned.

As we talked, I felt God pressing me to speak. It felt strange, so I hesitated, afraid of sounding cheesy or trite. I knew things between us could get awkward. But then I didn't really feel like I had a choice. So I said it:

"I don't know why, but I really feel like God wants me to tell you that He loves you."

I cringed after saying it, wondering if I'd gone too far. But in that moment, something softened. Tears fell down her cheeks. Rather than turning awkward, the entire moment felt sacred.

Hebrews chapter 11 recounts the spiritual giants whose faith in God was counted as righteousness. But that faith wasn't void of action. A quick perusal of the list and you'll see it over and over again: verbs.

By faith Abel **offered**.

By faith Noah **built**.

By faith Abraham **obeyed**.

Our God is a God of action. So if you have faith in Him, get ready to move.

This is the beauty of Christianity: our faith in Jesus saves us, and it also frees us from striving to be enough, trying to earn approval, stature, or recognition through what we do. I can do good works without having to worry about measuring the outcome. **Faith in Jesus' final, finished work gives me the security to do good without worrying that I'm doing enough.**

This is where it gets crazy. My friend called me a few weeks later to tell me something had radically changed in her heart. From that moment we shared at the breakfast table, she'd felt God in hot pursuit of her. Since then, she's been spending every morning in His Word, falling in love with Him again.

Is it possible God can use us like that? Is it possible that I'd just experienced a good work He'd prepared for me in advance, one He'd planned for me to do all along? After all, the work isn't really mine. I'm just His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). I'm an instrument in His hands, playing an essential part in His eternal symphony.

What a gift.

To be saved by grace.

To be invited into God's work.

To see that, in the end, it's all His.

Claire Gibson is a freelance writer and editor whose work has been featured both locally and nationally in publications including The Washington Post, and Entrepreneur Magazine. An Army kid who grew up at West Point, New York, Claire is currently growing roots in Nashville, Tennessee. She loves her husband, Patrick, and their dog, Winnie.