



## A Transformation—Not a Transaction

**E**phesians 2:8-10 teaches us that we are saved **BY** grace **FOR** works—contrasted with the completely erroneous idea of the virus of legalism, alive and well within so much of Christendom. The performance-based legalisms of Christ-less religion propose and insist that we are saved **BY** works **FOR** grace. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2:8-10 that we are saved **BY** grace **FOR** the works that God determines for us, so that we may become his workmanship. To underline this critical truth of the gospel—we are saved **BY** God's grace, **FOR HIS** works—not by **OUR** works.

Our salvation is a *transformation* of grace, not a *transaction* of works. God's grace and the *transformation* he works and produces in our lives is not a spiritual reality we earn, as if by a transaction. Our *transformation* is a gift of God's grace. We don't make Jesus Christ our identity as a result of a *transaction* whereby we do, produce or earn something of eternal and lasting value. Christ is given to us by the grace of God—we are *transformed*.

The *transformation* we receive by the gift of God's grace happens to us—it is not something we do for ourselves. We are the recipients of God's *transformation*—he is the active agent. Children don't do anything to determine or earn or guarantee their birth. No *transaction* on the part of an unborn child is a part of their birth. God does the work from the start to the finish.

Here's the problem we must always watch out for: *transactions* are part of the foundational teaching and superstructure of religion.

*Transactions* are the glue that holds the entire religious building together. Christ-less religion is not really about *transformation*—it is about a *transaction*. *You do this and then God will do that*. Christ-less religion is all about control—it's an illusive mirage we are promised providing we undertake the necessary *transactions*.

*Transactions* are the substance of what it means to be human. In order to live, one must breathe, one must drink and one must eat. In order to live one must avoid serious injury and harm. Physical life is entirely transactional. But our *transactions* have nothing to do with the grace of God. One of the best illustrations of how far Christendom has strayed from the grace of God and the *transformation* he alone can give is the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ, when understood in a Christ-centered perspective, is reconciliation with God that happens when he freely forgives us. His reconciliation is revealed in the love of God, poured out for us on the cross.

But listen carefully, **here's how Christ-less religion has turned the cross of Christ into a transaction:** within Christendom at large, most of the emphasis on the cross of Christ is about a *transaction*—it's about repayment, reparations and satisfaction achieved through the violent punishment of an innocent victim—that is Jesus Christ. This *transaction* is often called “atonement” within Christendom. It suggests the imagery of a heavenly courtroom presided over by God, the judge in which the offended party (who happens to be God, the judge) receives reparations to

compensate his wounded honor (that is, our sins).

In the old covenant there was one day a year, a day of Atonement, (called *Yom Kippur* in contemporary Judaism) when the shedding of animal blood was believed to appease God so that he would forgive all the sins of the past year. However, since humans are absolutely imperfect, the old covenant accounted for human enslavement to sins and dysfunctions. The Day of Atonement had to happen every year—once-a-year bloodshed was necessary so that God would once more be satisfied and appeased.

With that very imagery of the old covenant Day of Atonement in mind, the ninth and tenth chapters of the book of Hebrews assure us that our relationship with God as his children is completely based on the love and mercy and grace of God. Hebrews says that Jesus has invalidated all the *transactionalism* of the old covenant—he came to us once and for all.

Jesus does not offer himself on his cross once a year. Rather, as we read in Romans 8:9, Christ lives in us, by the grace of God—nothing we can do, nothing we can earn can pay for such an eternal, priceless gift.

Jesus has come once and for all, *transforming* us by the love and mercy and grace of God. This is the love of God that passes all understanding. □

—Greg Albrecht

Join us for the complete message “A Transformation—Not a Transaction” at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of May 27, 2018.