

A dramatic painting of a man's hands resting on an open book. The man's face is partially visible in the upper left, looking down at the book. The background is a dark, cloudy sky with a bright, glowing light source, possibly the sun or moon, creating a strong contrast and highlighting the man's hands and the pages of the book. The overall mood is solemn and contemplative.

THE WORK
OF GOD IS THIS

JOHN 6:29

Faith Is the Work of God

“What must we do to be doing the works of God?”

It's the question *every* religion asks. And it's the *wrong* question.

Because Jesus' answer eliminates the concept of what *'we do'* entirely:

**“*This* is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”
(John 6:29)**

At first glance, it sounds as if Jesus is giving them a single item to accomplish - believe! But the phrase He uses carries a meaning they could not have anticipated. In the Greek text, the key words are to *ergon tou Theou* - literally, “*the work of God.*”

The word *ergon* means “**an act, deed, or accomplishment**”. It is something done or *brought about*. In this verse, it signifies an actual doing, not a mere intention or offer. When Jesus calls believing “the work of God,” He is saying faith is God's own doing, His accomplished act within the human soul.

The little preposition “of” (tou) makes all the difference. It does not mean “the work you do for God.” It means “the work that belongs to God,” as source of the effect - believe. It is the work done by Him.

✚ So, when Jesus says, “This is the work of God, that you believe,” He is not assigning a task to human effort. He is unveiling a miracle of divine grace. The faith that brings us to Christ is not our offering to God; it is God's *own act* within us.

The Grammar of Grace

Language here becomes theology. The genitive form *tou Theou* (of God) tells us that the *source* of this “work” is not the believer but God Himself. The crowd had asked for a verb - “What must we do?”, but Jesus gave them a noun that redirects all action back to God. He answers their doing with God's doing.

This is entirely consistent with the wider witness of Scripture. Paul would later write to the Philippians, “To you it has been granted to believe in Him” (Phil 1:29). The verb *echaristhe* - “has been granted”, comes from *charis*, grace. Faith is a gift, not an achievement. Likewise, to the Ephesians he wrote, “By grace you have been saved through faith - and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). Even the believing that receives Christ is included in the gift – *Sola Gratia!*

✚ **This is the only view consistent with the meaning of the word “Sola” and keeps it fully intact, with no redaction of its meaning in practice or principle.**

The “genitive of source”

Grammatically, the phrase “to *ergon tou Theou*” uses what Greek grammarians call a **genitive of source** - the genitive showing where the action *originates*.

If Jesus meant “the work you do *for* God,” Greek gives Him simple ways to say it. For example,

- *ergon eis ton Theon* (work toward God)
- *ergon enantion tou Theou* (work before God)
- *ergon touto poieite* (do this work)

✚ **He uses none of those. Instead, He uses a genitive of source/origin, meaning: “the work that comes *from* – *of* God” as the source.**

For example: The New Testament *has* a phrase for “faith directed toward God”: *pisteōs epi ton Theon* (Heb. 6:1), “faith toward God.”

If Jesus wished to say, “This is the work you offer to God,” He had clean, simple Greek available to use. **Except He did not!**

He chose none of those forms. Instead, He used the genitive of source or production - “the work that comes *from / of* God.” Thus, Jesus is not redirecting them to a simpler work—He is removing human work entirely.

When added to the Greek word “*ergon*” (doing, act, accomplishment) or “work” in English, the complete idea is – “The doing, act, action, accomplishment of God is to believe on the One whom He has sent.”

This therefore shows why “the work of God” that the most reasonable option and therefore, credible interpretation is to reject the idea that this phrase means “the work *for* God.” Or “work God *requires*.”

Faith as Divine Accomplishment

When Jesus said, “This is the work of God,” He was describing the inner operation of grace - the unseen act by which the Father draws a sinner to the Son. Just a few verses later He explains, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44). The verb *helko* means “to draw, to pull,” used elsewhere for hauling a net full of fish. It describes effective action, not mere invitation.

Then, in verse 65, Jesus closes the circle: “No one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father.” Faith, in the language of John’s Gospel, is the visible result of an invisible granting. **God acts first; the soul responds because it has been acted upon.**

2 Peter 1:1 - This divine accomplishment runs like a golden thread through all of Scripture. Peter opens his second letter by addressing those who have “*obtained* like precious faith” (2 Pet 1:1). The Greek verb *lachousin* means “*to receive by allotment,*” as in drawing lots - something received, not produced.

Lydia, in Acts 16:14, believed *only after* “the Lord opened her heart.”

And Luke later says that Apollos “helped those who *through grace had believed*” (Acts 18:27). Grace did not merely accompany their believing; it *caused* it.

- **When considered collectively, these are all substantial evidence supporting the reading of genitive of source – “the work of /from God.”**

A Probing Question Exposes the Structural Weak-spot

- ✚ **At what *precise* point does “east” cease to be east and become west? Likewise, where precisely does the influence and power of grace cease and the will of the sinner takes over?**

The Faultline in Preventive Grace (PG)

There is no observable boundary. Because it is always in fixed position relatively. The synergist claims that preventive grace (grace coming before faith) was necessary to remove the disabling effects of sin and restore the sinner to a place of renewed ability or moral neutrality. But if this is so, then why don't more people say “Yes” to Christ as it is so often phrased? IF the deterministic power of sin – meaning the power of sin that previously determined the negative result, was supernaturally removed by God, shouldn't we expect more believers than non? Is free will really an answer here? Or is it slight of hand? An evasion which either ignores because it honestly doesn't see the obvious problem here, or misdirects the focus because it does?

To put it another way. Is unbelief a sin? Yes,

“Whatever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23).

“Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6).

“This is His commandment, to believe on the name of His Son” (1 John 3:23).

“When the Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin - because they believe

not on Me” (John 16:9).

So, clearly then, unbelief is a sin. That means it is defiance – rebellion. So, here then is the faultline: **IF PG supposedly removed the deterministic power of SIN, yet unbelief IS a sin, then PG in fact has done nothing at all!** For we are back to sin still holding sway over those who remain in unbelief. In other words, the unbeliever’s state is no different after PG than it was before!

Is Christ and the glory of His promise of eternal life in absolute joy and peace so repulsive on its own merit, that most people restored to a supposed state of neutrality still reject it? But if that be so, why do those who embrace it do so?

IF the answer here is not 100% in the “of God” the way Jesus phrased and this writer confidently asserts, meant it, then the answer must lie in the person his or herself. If it lies in the person – then welcome back to Pelagianism!

Pelagian /Semi-Pelagian – All Reduces Down to the Same Result

Replying, “We reject Pelagianism. We are semi-Pelagian” answers *nothing*, for it ultimately places the decisive cause in the same place that Pelagianism did – in self. **It simply relocates it a little further down the road freshly paved by their invention of Prevenient Grace but still ends up at the same end of the road – self is the decisive element, not grace.** The Synod of Dort saw through the smokescreen of jargon put forth by the Remonstrants (the modern day Arminians) and condemned their teachings as the error of Pelagius pulled out of hell. Even the Roman Catholic church condemned Pelagius and his teachings as heresy.

So, again I will ask the question: **Where officially, precisely does the East stop being the East and become the West?**

The analogy is perfectly appropriate here. **For I ask the same question of grace and free will: Where exactly, precisely did the influence and power and illumination of grace come to a dead stop and the human will take**

over? At what precise point in the process, is the baton handed off to human will by the hand of grace?

“At the point of choice itself,” says the synergist...while still avoiding the actual question.

Ok, so at the actual point of the choice itself. Well, thank you, but that is an evasion of the real - deeper question; *why* do some say “Yes” and most reject? If the answer is not grace – and it *cannot* be per their doctrine, then the answer *must* be in the self. There is no third alternative in scripture. Why did *you* do so, and your neighbor does not?

IF the answer lies in self – exactly what element in self is it, that is somehow superior, wiser, humbler, more spiritual than the rest who do not see and believe as we do? **In short, what self-congratulation do they merit who chose to say “Yes”, as opposed to those who said “No.”?**

The effect may be gradual, but the reality shifts at a single, decisive moment - the turning point.

Faith works the same way.

A person may feel the “dawn” of interest, conviction, thoughtfulness, or struggle progressively over time or in a moment of epiphany—but the moment of believing has a single, non-negotiable cause.

 **Either the human will is the decisive cause of that turning *or* God is. There is no third category.**

Another Illustration: The Light or the Switch?

Imagine a room flooded with light. Someone asks, “What caused the light?”

Was it the bulb?

The wiring?

The light itself?

No.

All those things *respond*.

The *cause* is the hidden action of the switch.

Light is the *effect*, not the cause.

➤ **Faith is the light. God's work is the switch.**

Jesus points not to the light shining in the soul, but to the unseen action that made it shine:

“This is the work of God...” - The One who turns the light “on” is God!

John 3:21 – The Synergist's Proof Text Backfires

“But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” - John 3:21 (ESV)

The Question at Hand

Does John 3:21 support synergism (human cooperation with divine grace) or does it undermine that position? The key phrase is: “works have been carried out in God” (or “by God” / “through God”).

The Greek Construction

The phrase in question: ἐν θεῷ ἐργασμένα (en theō eirgasmena)

ἐν (en) + dative = typically “in,” but can indicate sphere, means, or agency

ἐργασμένα = perfect passive participle of ergazomai (“to work/accomplish”)

The preposition ἐν has semantic range and can express:

Sphere: “within the realm of God

Means/instrumentality: “by means of God”

Agency: “by God” (less common; Greek typically uses ὑπό with genitive for direct agency)

The Translation Debate

“In God” (ESV, NASB, KJV) — emphasizes sphere or union

“Through God” (NIV) — emphasizes means

“By God” (NLT) — emphasizes agency

The Key Insight: Practical Convergence

Here is where the argument becomes devastating to synergism: What meaningful distinction exists between these options when discussing what God accomplishes?

If someone’s deeds are wrought “in” God:

Then they don’t originate from autonomous human ability

- **They occur within God’s enabling sphere – “Sola Gratia” God is the essential context without which they couldn’t happen**

In short, for all practical purposes there is no real, perceivable difference between saying done “in” or “by” God. They are functional equivalents. And theologically, even more so.

The Synergistic Problem Re: John 3:21

Synergists often appeal to this verse arguing: “See! We do the work of ‘coming to the light’ – it’s just done in connection with God!”

But this interpretation collapses under scrutiny:

The passive participle (εἰργασμένα) already indicates the works are done to/in the person, not autonomously performed by them

The purpose clause (“so that it might be seen...”) shows the intent is to reveal *God's agency*, not human cooperation

The entire context (John 3:19-21) contrasts those who love darkness with those who come to light - and the distinguishing factor is what has been accomplished in/by/through God

The Monergistic Reading

The verse essentially says: “The one coming to the light comes specifically so that it will be made manifest that his deeds have been God's accomplishment (whether we say in, by, or through God).”

This isn't describing cooperation - it's describing attribution or causation. The person comes to light precisely to show that God gets the credit for what was done.

Summary

Whether “in” “through,” or “by” - the *practical* theological meaning converges on divine causality. The text emphasizes that true spiritual works have God as their essential source, not autonomous human will.

A Parallel Case: Philippians 2:12-13

This isn't the only example of such irony. Consider Philippians 2:12-13:

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

The verse that begins with an apparent call to human effort *immediately explains that God is the one working both the willing and the doing*. Paul anticipated the objection and answered it in the same breath—yet the debate continues as if verse 13 doesn't exist! Or verse 13 is redacted to the point of irrelevance by those eager to assert self where scripture has grace alone – Sola Gratia!

The pattern is clear: Scripture consistently attributes salvific work to God's agency, even when describing human action as its result. The question is

whether we submit our theology to the truth? Thereby not paying not mere lip-service affirmation to “Sola Gratia” while denying it in persistent practice by testimony and teaching on what we *add to it*, or whether we’ll extract half-verses to support predetermined conclusions.

Faith as the Echo of Mercy

Paul, in Romans 9, presses this truth to its ultimate point: -

“It depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.”

The verbs he uses, “*He* has mercy, *He* hardens”, are both *active* and divine. God is not a spectator responding to human initiative; He is the Author writing human history. The mystery humbles us, yet it also comforts us. If faith were the one good thing we managed to produce, our salvation would rest on the most fragile ground imaginable - our own constancy. But if faith itself is the work of God, then its permanence depends on His faithfulness, not ours.

From Revelation to Worship

Peter’s confession, “You are the Christ,” was not born in the cleverness of his mind. Jesus told him plainly, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matt 16:17). The word *apekalypsen* - “revealed” means to uncover, to unveil. **Faith is what happens when God pulls back the veil.**

That is why the elect are called “blessed.” Peter was not congratulated for his insight but blessed for revelation. God had opened what no man could open. Faith, then, is not a medal to wear; it is a miracle to worship.

Because faith is God’s work, the believer’s assurance does not depend on how firmly he can hold Christ, but on how firmly Christ holds him. When doubts rise and faith feels small, remember that the smallest spark of true belief still burns with divine origin.

Conclusion

Jesus did not redefine religion that day; *He revealed reality*. **The greatest work done “for” God is the work God Himself does *in* us.**

Sola Gratia – Soli DEO Gloria