

Saved by Grace

*“For by **grace** are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”* Eph. 2:8. *“For the **grace** of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,”* Tit. 2:11-12. *“That being justified by **grace**, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life,”* Titus 3:7.

It is a Bible truth. The sinner is saved by grace. It is as Paul expressed it, *“...where sin abounded, **grace** did much more abound,”* Rom. 5:20. One has to deny the Bible and ignore the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross in order to deny that the sinner must depend upon the grace of God for his salvation.

The grace of God has been defined as “the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, lovingkindness, or goodwill...” (Vine’s **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, p. 170). Briefly, “*grace*” could be defined as “unmerited, divine favor.” It is unmerited in that it is undeserved. It is divine in that it proceeds from God. It is favor in that it blesses and saves the recipient thereof.

Not Saved by Grace Alone

To say that we are saved by grace is not to say that we are saved by grace **alone**. Salvation by grace alone would be salvation without love (on the part of man), without faith, and without obedience. If as many as one additional item must be present for salvation, then the sinner could not be saved by grace alone, or grace only. Grace, accompanied **by anything else**, is not grace alone. The apostle Paul clearly expressed this truth when he wrote, *“for by **grace** are ye saved through **faith**...,”* Eph. 2:8. It is readily apparent that the grace which saves is the grace that is accompanied by faith — the grace of God coupled with the faith of man. God Himself “*joined together*” grace and faith, and this heaven-organized and heaven-recognized union must not be “*put asunder*” by man. Cf. Matt. 19:6).

Neither Grace Nor Faith is Inactive

The grace (i.e., the lovingkindness and goodwill) of God is active, not passive. The love, grace, or favor of God was demonstrated in the sending of His son to save man, Jesus Christ being “*the gift by grace*,” Rom. 5:15; John 3:16. It was by the “*grace of God*” that Jesus Christ tasted “*death for every man*,” Heb. 2:9. The Gospel, “*the power of God unto salvation*,” Rom. 1:16, is “*the gospel of the **grace** of God*,” Acts 20:24, and it was made possible by reason of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I Cor. 15:1-4. The grace that made our salvation possible was of necessity, living, active, vibrant, sacrificial, loving, and persistent.

“Can two work together, except they be agreed,” Amos. 3:3? This question might well be asked of grace and faith. Did God intend that His moving, working, active, sacrificial grace be joined to a dead, lifeless, inactive faith? No, a thousand times no! As God coupled His grace with activity in behalf of man, man must couple his faith in

active, loving obedience toward God. “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not** by faith only,*” Jas. 2:24. It is significant that the only time “*faith only*” is mentioned in the Bible the inspired writer plainly stated that we are **not** justified by “*faith only*.” Could language be made more plain? For this reason Peter pleaded, saying, “*save yourselves from this untoward generation,*” Acts 2:40, and Paul wrote, saying, “***work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,***” Phil. 2:12.

Answering Quibbles

“But,” someone says, “Paul wrote, saying, ‘*for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest an man should boast,*’ Eph. 2:8-9. That’s right. He did. However, there is a vast difference between what Paul wrote and the absurd conclusions men have reached. It behooves us therefore to do more in-depth study and less superficial conclusion jumping.

Note: “*that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*” refers neither to grace nor faith, but to the whole divine plan whereby man is saved by grace through faith. Man did not; yea, man **could not** devise a plan of redemption that would redeem him, or a plan of salvation that would save him. “*It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,*” Jer. 10:23. “*Not of works*” does not nullify scriptural obedience, but it does nullify the kind of works of which man could “*boast.*” If man had conceived and devised the plan of salvation, then the “*works*” inherent in his plan would have been works of which He could “*boast,*” and the salvation enjoyed would not have been “*the gift of God,*” but a meritorious system of human works by which man could earn his salvation. The system by which salvation is made possible is a system that redounds to the praise of God (Eph. 2:7), and not to the praise of men.

The “*works*” of the law of Moses will not justify, Gal. 2:16. The works of human righteousness will not save, Eph. 2:9; Tit. 3:5. But the works of God’s righteousness will save, Acts 10:35; Jas. 2:24. Even faith itself is a “*work of God,*” John 6:29, because faith is that which God (not man) has required.

When Is Man Saved by Grace Through Faith?

When his faith moves him to obey “*the gospel of the grace of God,*” Acts 20:24; I Peter 4:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-9. The “*gospel of the grace of God*” was preached on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. Three thousand precious souls who **heard** the gospel preached, **believed** the message proclaimed, **repented**, and were baptized, thereby receiving “*the remission of sins,*” Acts 2:22, 36-38. Through this means they were saved by “*grace through faith,*” becoming children of God and members of the church which Jesus built and purchased with His blood, Acts 2:47; Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28).

Friend, do you want to be saved by grace? Then obey “*from the heart,*” Rom. 6:17-18 the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is, indeed, “*the gospel of the grace of God,*” Acts 20:24

**** —Bobby Witherington

Respect for Each Part

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty,” James 2:10-12.

In the first chapter of the epistle of James, we are informed that as Christians we were begotten *“with the word of truth,”* v. 18. Throughout the remainder of that chapter, James depicted the **attitude** that we should have with reference to the word of God; that we should *“be swift to hear,”* receive it *“with meekness,”* be *“doers of the word,”* and demonstrate the proper attitude toward those in need and toward our fellow man. Now in James 2:10-12, we are told that obedience to the whole law is reflected by our obedience to **every part**. To illustrate it in the physical realm: if a man steals an automobile, he can’t escape the penalty of the law by claiming that he is a good husband and father, and is in general, a good man. He will be tried and convicted by the law as a **thief!**

So it is with the word of God; we must speak and act as *“they that shall be judged by the law of liberty,”* the whole law, which includes the sum of its parts. In these verses, James is teaching that God’s law is so interwoven and so inter-related that we cannot violate a part without violating the whole. Our respect for the whole of God’s law is no greater than our respect for each part and particle!

Some people admit that they do some things in matters religious for which they have no authority, but they excuse themselves on the plea *“it’s such a little thing,”* and *“besides, I follow the Bible on most items, especially the more important points.”* In Numbers 20:7-12 we find a Biblical example that illustrates the folly of this attitude. Moses came to the right rock, had the right purpose in mind for the right people, but he *“smote the rock”* instead of **speaking** to the rock, as God had commanded. This *“little thing,”* as some would term it, kept him out of the promise land.

Friend, everything we do in service to God, whether in *“word of deed,”* Col. 3:17, must be done *“in the name of,”* or by the authority of Christ. It is a fact: our obedience to the whole law and our respect for the whole law is reflected by and is no greater than our obedience to and our respect for **each part** of the law. Let us read and heed! —Bobby Witherington
