



How can you gain access to the benefits of God's grace? The Father revealed His love for us in sending "his Son to be the propitiation (payment of the

penalty - KS) for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10). Jesus' blood will take away the guilt of our sins (Matthew 26:28). God's spiritual blessings for us are "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), in "the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Is salvation is "wholly by grace"? If we do anything to obtain salvation, have we have earned it, rather than receiving is as a gift? (Ephesians 2:8) If salvation is wholly by grace, then either God has selected a specific group of people to be saved without regard to anything they might do (as Calvinists teach), He will save everyone (as Universalists believe) or He will save no one (which no one believes). We know the merciful Father has not, without a reason, decided which individuals will be saved, for His grace is for all men (Titus 2:11). Also, we know that not everyone will be saved (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Finally, Jesus promised that some would be saved (Matthew 25:34). Thus, salvation is not "wholly by grace."

When Israel took Jericho, they had to march around the city thirteen times, they had to shout with a great shout, and the priests had to blow on rams' horns for the walls to fall (Joshua chapter 6). Yet God told Joshua, "I have given Jericho into your hand" (verse 2). Certainly they had to do something to obtain the city, for this was a conditional gift. The fact that salvation is a gift does not prove that God has not set conditions we must meet to receive the gift.

Through Faith

What are the conditions upon which God, by His grace, will give the gift of salvation? Paul says it is "through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

The faith of which the apostle speaks includes conviction based on evidence (Hebrews 11:1) and trust leading to obedience (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith is the means by which we gain "access" into the grace of the loving Father, whereby we may "rejoice in hope" of eternal glory (Romans 5:1-2).

What kind of faith saves? Saving faith stands upon "the word of

God" (Romans 10:17) rather than human philosophy, men's opinions, our parents' religion, church creeds and teachings, or our own good deeds. Furthermore, the faith which "avails" is "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

But, didn't Paul say that salvation was "not of works, lest anyone should boast"? (Ephesians 2:9) Why, then, did he say that faith, to benefit, had to work? In spite of denominational doctrine, Jesus declared that faith is a work that we do (John 6:28-29). Did Paul contradict both himself and Jesus when he taught salvation is "not of works"? No, the Scriptures, being truth, never contradict themselves. Rather, as Paul shows in Ephesians 2:9, he is eliminating the possibility that boastful works will save a person.

What works could lead a person to boast of having earned salvation? If we could be saved by keeping the Law of Moses, we could boast (Romans 3:27-28), for we would have to be sinlessly perfect to be saved by the Law (Galatians 3:10). Salvation by keeping the Mosaic law is eliminated in Ephesians 2:9. Also, if a person, by his own human wisdom, could create a plan of salvation, he could glory. Thus, salvation is not by a plan devised by human wisdom (Romans 10:1-3).

But, are works of obedience to God also eliminated as conditions of salvation? No, the New Testament plainly teaches we must obey Christ to be saved (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8-9). When we obey, we still do not earn salvation (Luke 17:10).

Thus, Paul explained that our salvation by God's mercy is the result of "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:3-7). Scholars of every age recognize "the washing of regeneration" as baptism.

Conclusion

Friend, you must be saved by God's grace. But His grace would never benefit one person had God not demonstrated it through an act of grace - the giving of His Son (John 3:16-17).

By your faith you have access into God's grace. But it is through an act of faith, water baptism, that one gains entrance into Christ where the benefits of God's grace are enjoyed (Galatians 3:26-27).

Have you been saved by grace through faith? "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16)

Review Questions

I. True/False

1. _____ We must be saved in the same way the Ephesians were.

2. ____ The Parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates God's wrath.
3. ____ You do not need the grace of God.
4. ____ Salvation is by grace alone.
5. ____ The grace of God is for all people everywhere.
6. ____ God chose before the world began what individuals will be saved, and everyone else will be lost.
7. ____ Jesus' blood will take away the guilt of our sins.
8. ____ Salvation is a conditional gift.
9. ____ Saving faith is based on the Word of God.
10. ____ If we do anything to be saved we earn our salvation.
11. ____ Salvation is by faith alone.
12. ____ Faith is a work.
13. ____ Saving faith is obedient faith
14. ____ We must keep the Law of Moses to be saved.
15. ____ When we obey the gospel we do not earn salvation.
16. ____ We are saved by grace when we are baptized into Christ.

II. Matching

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| 1. ____ Grace | A. conviction and trust |
| 2. ____ Faith | B. payment of the penalty |
| 3. ____ Washing of
Regeneration | C. kindness which bestows upon
another what he has not deserved |
| 4. ____ propitiation | D. Baptism |

Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson Six

By Grace You Have Been Saved Through Faith

In Ephesians 2:1-10 the apostle Paul discusses the salvation of the Ephesian Christians. They had been "dead in trespasses and sins" (verses 1-3). But God has made them "alive together with Christ" (verses 4-7). Thus, having once been spiritually dead, with only the dreadful prospect of a devil's hell before them, they are now alive with the blessed hope of eternal bliss in heaven. How did this wonderful change take place?

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Since we live under the New Testament, just as the Ephesian Christians did, must be saved in the very same way they were. What does it mean to be saved by grace through faith?

By Grace You Have Been Saved

"Grace," when used of our salvation means "kindness which bestows upon another what he has not deserved." (J.H. Thayer, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 666). Thus, the apostle Paul explains:

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.... (Romans 4:4-5)

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) well illustrates God's saving grace. In this parable the Master paints for us a beautiful word picture of the love of God for lost sinners. Who can forget the tender scene of the loving father receiving back his wayfaring, undeserving boy and restoring him to a position of honor which he had forfeited and did not deserve to regain? But the matchless love of that daddy looked past the sins and mistakes to see a repentant boy whom he loved with all his heart.

Do you need God's grace? You have sinned (Romans 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Since you deserve spiritual death, it is only in God's grace His hope can be extended.