

## Salvation by Grace through (the) Faith

Barry O'Dell

**P**aul reminded the Ephesians, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:8-10). This passage has been interpreted in a variety of ways, based on various approaches to theology. There are those who rephrase it to say that man is saved by grace *alone* through faith *alone*. Obviously, that is a false interpretation of both that passage and the terms of salvation. Others say that man is saved by grace (God’s part), by faith (man’s response to what God has done). That sentiment is certainly Biblical. A third view, and the view to which I hold, is that salvation is by the grace of God (Eph. 2:5, 8) and through **THE** faith. This article will, in part, dissect the last two views of salvation either *by faith* or *by the faith*.

Grace is the undeserved favor of God toward man, manifested in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:6-7). No man deserves or earns the grace of God. Every man who has ever been saved by God has been saved by grace. The grace of God brings salvation and teaches man to walk in a certain way (Titus 2:11-12). The redemption and forgiveness that is found only in Christ is “*according to the riches of His grace*” (Eph. 1:7). Apart from the grace of God, not one of us could be saved from sin!

Faith can be simply defined as belief. However, as one reads the entirety of the Bible, true faith is much more than just a simple belief in something or someone. True, God-pleasing faith is always active (Jam. 2:14-26). As James wrote in that text, “*faith without works is dead*” (Jam. 2:26).

**Faith as personal belief in Ephesians 2:8.** As was stated above, salvation by God’s grace and through man’s obedient faith is a Biblical truth. Man is justified by faith (Heb. 11). Faith is produced today by the preaching and hearing of the word of God (Rom. 10:14-17). The just live by faith (Rom. 1:17), but not faith alone (Jam. 2:24). Paul said to the Philippian jailor, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). It is absolutely true that man is saved by faith. It is absolutely false that man is saved by faith *alone*.

**Faith as “the” faith, i.e., the gospel system in**

**Ephesians 2:8.** Acts 6:7 states, “*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*” In Galatians 3 Paul contrasted **the law** versus **the faith**. He was showing the differences between the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. This was a very common contrast discussed by Paul. One of the main problems in the first century church was the tension between Jews and Gentiles. Acts 15 addresses that issue at length.

Now, back to Ephesians 2. The congregation in Ephesus was made up partly of people from a Gentile (non-Jewish) background. They were “*in time past Gentiles in the flesh*” (Eph. 2:11). He reminded them that they, along with Jews, were one body in Christ (Eph. 2:13-16). It is within that context that Paul wrote, “*For by grace are ye saved through (the) faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*” In the same context he wrote, “*Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace*” (Eph. 2:15). So, while it is true that man is saved by grace through faith, it is also true that man is saved by

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God’s grace through **the** faith - the gospel of Christ.

Next, Paul wrote, “*and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*” Man’s personal faith is produced by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Man must respond to God on His terms in order to be saved by God’s grace. That is each man’s responsibility. However, salvation by God’s grace through **the** faith is the gift of God. Throughout Paul’s writings he makes the case that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17). “*The law (of Moses) was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by (the) faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*” (Gal. 3:24-25). Romans 7 and 8 show the contrast between the “*law*” and the “*commandment*” as opposed to “*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.*”

All the saved are saved by God’s grace. All the saved are saved by faith. All the saved are saved by **the** faith. The phrase “*and that not of yourselves*” could literally be translated as, “*and that not out of yourselves.*” It is for that reason that I believe that salvation by grace through **the** faith is what Paul was discussing.

**P**aul wrote, *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doeth he yet hope for”* (Rom. 8:24)? Hope has been described by one person as, “desire plus expectation.” There are some things that we desire and we expect them in the conclusion. Salvation from sins and a home in heaven are those things that we desire and expect if we do the will of God.

Salvation is used at least two ways in our bibles - salvation from our sins, and salvation in heaven is the other. Salvation from our sins is one of those things that we desire. The sins we have committed separate us from God. *“Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that He cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear”* (Isa. 59:1-2). Because *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23). God has thus spent time to offer us salvation. *“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”* (Eph. 1:4). Thus, God started before the world was formed providing man with the scheme of redemption.

It cost God quite a bit for this salvation. *“Who would have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1Tim. 2:4). *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16). How many of us would be willing to give one of our children to save another person, or state, or nation, let alone the whole world?! But God was willing to send His Son and planned to send His Son for the redemption of mankind.

Understand that having fellowship with God is a thing that is greatly to be desired. Adam and Eve had this kind of fellowship and lost it due to sin. Study when they were in the Garden. Notice that it was in the cool of the evening that God was seeking Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8). God has provided a way that man could be reconciled back to Him and enjoy this fellowship with Him again. This then is to be greatly desired. We can expect this fellowship again because God has promised if we obey Him we will again enjoy this fellowship. *“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 Jn. 1:7). Thus we have hope!

Heaven is another one of those things that is greatly to be desired. Heaven is described for us in many ways. Notice what John wrote, *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”* (Rev. 21:4) Jesus said of heaven, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (Jn. 14:1-3). Heaven is a beautiful place, one that cannot be described by the words of men. The words that we do have to describe heaven show us that it is a place to be greatly desired.

God is offering us eternal life. *“And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life”* (1 Jn. 2:25). *“And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son”* (1 Jn. 5:11). This eternal life is for those that obey Him. *“Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him”* (Heb. 5:8-9). Because God is offering us eternal salvation and God does not break His promises,

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we can expect heaven. Notice the confidence that Paul had and thus, we can have this same confidence, *“For which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day”* (1 Tim. 1:12). Paul stated also, *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not only me, but unto all them also that love His appearing”* (2 Tim. 4:8). He had the desire and he expected to go to heaven and extended that hope to us as well.

Since we have this hope it acts as an anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19). This hope is based on the fact of God’s promises and God’s oath. When the storms of life come into our lives, and they will, we have something that keeps us moored and that will not allow us to slip. We can keep our minds focused on the goal of being with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit for all of eternity. We can desire heaven and salvation, we can expect salvation and heaven, and thus we have hope! Don’t give up hope!

**H**ow does salvation come to us? The Scriptures teach that we are saved by a few different “things,” so to speak. Of certainty, salvation is by the name of Jesus. But why is that, and what does it mean? Let us explore...

**A Movement Begins** - The book called “Acts” is a historical document that records the early life of followers of Jesus. The first two chapters of this book describe the beginning of the movement known today as “Christianity.” The church begins as the apostles preach about King Jesus (Acts 2:36), and then those present respond eagerly (Acts 2:37-41). Luke, the historian, records the following as this section ends: *“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:46-47). Yet, favor with “all” the people is about to change. Peter and John heal a lame man, and then Peter presents the gospel. The religious authorities arrest them. What was their crime? Healing someone? “The powers that be” are agitated about the resurrection, and about Jesus (Acts 4:1-3). They previously rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and were involved in His execution. To now hear someone preaching that this Jesus is the Messiah after all is quite unsettling. As a sect, the Sadducees rejected the idea of the resurrection from the dead. Rejecting the resurrection claim is nothing new. This teaching about life from the grave has always been mocked and rejected by some. It is not, however, merely that they are upset about the resurrection being taught, or even over Jesus. The specific issue is that the apostles were teaching that Jesus was raised, and that His resurrection is the initial step in God’s new work (Acts 3:17-26). The message: Salvation from our sin, and hope for eternity is based entirely on Jesus.

**Interrogation Time** - The Jewish leaders ask the apostles about the source of their authority to “do this,” apparently seeking to dodge mentioning the healing itself (Acts 4:5-7, see Luke 20:1-8). They ask about the name behind the action, for there is authority in a name. The apostle Peter declares that this miracle was done by the name of Jesus Christ (Messiah) of Nazareth! To make it clear, he adds that this is the same Jesus they crucified, and the same Jesus that God then raised up from the dead. The once lame man now stands before them “by Him” (Acts 4:10). Peter’s speech ends with this crescendo statement: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

**Salvation by the Name** - Salvation is by the name of Jesus! No other name will do. This singular way is how we “must be saved,” for it is part of God’s eternal plan for redemption. But how is one saved by or in a name?

As previously noted, a name is about authority, so we are saved by the authority of Jesus. He is the King, and when we submit our loyalty to Him, He saves us as we are transferred into His reign (Col. 1:13-14). We are saved from the domain of darkness, and we are saved to be a part of His kingdom. The apostle quotes Psalm 118:22 and directly applies it to Jesus (Acts 4:11). Jesus was rejected by men, but vindicated by God. Humans humiliated Him with their torture, but God exalted Him on high as Lord (Phil. 2:8-11). The religious leaders who rejected Jesus were like builders looking around for some other way, and then being shown by that they had the chief cornerstone with them all along. In keeping with the Psalm, Jesus is the foundation of the new temple (Acts 7:44-54; Eph. 2:19-22), allowing all who are in Him access to God’s presence. The gospel of salvation is the declaration that Jesus is Lord by means of His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Rom. 1:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:1-4. Good news! Salvation is available for all in His name (Rom. 1:16-17). We follow this pattern of death, burial, and resurrection as we are immersed into Him ourselves (Rom. 6:1-6, 17-17). We are immersed in His name or by His authority (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; 19:1-5), and then we work and worship by the same (Col. 3:17).

There are many kings, rulers, and “saviors,” but there is only one risen Savior. What other king rules based on his triumph over sin, Satan, and death itself? No other ruler provides salvation from sin, victory over the grave, and life eternal for his loyal subjects. Religious pluralism falls short in view of Jesus and the good news about Him. Jesus Himself states, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (Jn. 14:6). It does not matter what anyone else says, there are not many ways, there is only one way. This is sometimes called religious particularism, the opposite of pluralism. Getting to God is not an “all roads lead to Rome” sort of phenomenon. Pluralism tries to make all religious beliefs true (and they cannot all be true anyway), but there is only one saving name, only one true Lord of the world. His name is Jesus! Luke records that the two apostles are told to not speak anymore in “*this name*” (Acts 4:17-18). These rejectors cannot deny the miraculous evidence standing before them, so they simply try to keep the message about Jesus from continuing to spread. When the two return to the other disciples, they pray together for boldness to keep on speaking about “*the name*” (Acts 4:23-31, verse 30 being the sixth and last reference to “the name” in this chapter). As disciples today, may we never use the name of Jesus for our own personal agendas, to support our political purposes, or to bolster our own prestige. May we confidently preach Jesus and teach others about salvation that is by His name. May we never shy away from the exclusive nature of Jesus as Lord and the reality that salvation is only by Him.

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- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus the Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47)

#### Salvation

- Saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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