

Saved by Grace through Faith

[Ephesians 2:8-10](#) – *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* (NKJV)

These are the words of Paul in his letter to Gentile Christians living and worshipping in or near the city of Ephesus which was located in Asia Minor. Many people who lived in the first century and today point to this verse as the proof text of salvation by faith alone. Did Paul mean that when he wrote this to the Ephesians or was he trying to teach them something else? And if so, what was he trying to tell them? In other words, what did Paul mean when he wrote what he did in [Eph 2:8-10](#)? This lesson is going to examine that in detail and at the conclusion of it, we will make some applications from it to our faith as well. After all, what it meant to Paul's readership in the first century is what it must mean to us today.

First of all, Paul wrote we are "saved by grace". What's grace? Grace is often defined as God's unmerited favor toward man. The wages of sin is death ([Romans 6:23](#)), which means eternal separation from God. Sin caused mankind to lose fellowship with God. The only way man can regain that fellowship is if he pays the penalty for that sin. Man sinned, man incurred a debt. The problem is, the payment for all sin is loss of fellowship with God forever. It doesn't matter what that sin is, the penalty is the same. We have lost our fellowship with God and that cannot be restored unless we pay the penalty in full.

That poses a real big problem for us in that even though we suffer separation from God for an eternity, we still will not have paid the debt in full. Even after we have suffered in hell for eternity, we still have not paid the just penalty for disobeying God. We cannot buy back our fellowship with God, even with an eternity of punishment. God's absolute just and holy nature demands this penalty and it is not possible for God to violate His own nature. All things are possible with God, but only those things which are possible for Him are within His reach. It is impossible for God to lie ([Titus 1:2](#)). It is impossible for God to be tempted with evil ([James 1:13](#)). It is equally impossible for God to accept sin without just punishment of the sinner. This leaves man without hope of reconciliation with God.

Thankfully for us, God is rich in grace and mercy and He doesn't want to see man suffer for all eternity. He wants man to have a chance for reconciliation so He came up with a plan where man can have a hope of being reconciled without having to suffer an eternity of punishment. God was under no obligation to do so. Nothing man did compelled God to do this. And this means of reconciliation came at great personal expense for God. Namely the life of His Son as a

substitutionary death penalty for us. God could have washed His hands of mankind and walked away to leave mankind to his fate forever and God would have been perfectly within His right to do so. He didn't owe man anything. Mankind got himself into this predicament all by himself without any help from God. God was absolutely blameless in all that man did. But because God loved us so much, He graciously came up with a means whereby man could be reconciled to Him and escape the death penalty of sin. That's grace. Grace as a comprehensive Biblical term represents everything God did in securing a means of redemption for mankind.

For God to give man His law is grace.

For God to let man know he sinned is grace.

For God to provide a means of reconciliation is grace.

For God to accept the death of His Son at the hands of man for the sins of man is grace.

For God to make this means of reconciliation known through His word is grace.

For God to allow mankind time to respond is grace.

All of things God did in providing a way of redemption for mankind is Grace. Grace is God reaching down from heaven to sinsick, doomed and fallen man with a means and method of reconciliation. Grace is God's role in the redemption of Man.

Are we saved by grace only? In other words, are we saved simply because God did everything He did with no response from us on our part? Absolutely not. If we were saved by grace only, every human that ever lived would be saved simply by being in existence. Mankind has an obligation to respond to God's grace before it will be of any benefit at all. So what is that response? Let's go back to [Ephesians 2:8](#). By "*grace ye have been saved through faith*".

Faith is the response that man must give in order to receive God's grace. "*Without faith it is impossible to please Him*" ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). We are saved by Grace through faith. Without faith, grace is worthless to us. We must have faith if God's grace is going to benefit us in any way whatsoever.

What did Paul mean "*through faith*"? As we mentioned earlier, [Eph 2:8-10](#) is a verse that advocates of the doctrine of salvation by faith alone use as a proof-text in support of this doctrine. Did Paul mean to say that God's grace, (in other words, everything God did on man's behalf) is available simply on the basis of belief in Him? That's something we can put to the test very easily. Let's look a little further in the letter Paul wrote to the Ephesians. If Paul taught that anything whatsoever beyond faith is necessary, then he could not have meant "belief only" in [Eph 2:8-10](#). We need to be very clear on this. If it can be demonstrated from scripture that anything in addition to belief is required, then Paul could not have meant saved by grace through faith alone.

Please turn with me to [Ephesians 6](#). Starting in verse 1 we see “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord*“. That’s a command. In verse 2 Paul writes “*Honor your father and mother,*” In verse 4 we see “*...fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*”

Verse 5: “*Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.*”

Verse 9 “*And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also* is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.*

And now V10 and following; “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,* against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*”

Wait a minute Paul. Hold up a little. I don’t understand. If you meant faith only earlier in your letter, then why are you telling me now to do all the things you just said in order to stand against the devil? Because if I am saved by faith alone, then I all I need to do is to believe in you in order to stand. I don’t have to do anything but believe in order to stand against the devil. Why are you telling me to do all these things in order to stand against satan?

Let’s look a little further. What about Paul’s letter to the Romans in chapter 2 starting in verse 5?

[Romans 2:5-11](#), “*But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who “will render to each one according to his deeds”:* 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.*”

Wait a minute Paul. I though you taught the Ephesians we were saved by faith alone. What is this you are saying to the Romans? “*God, 6 who “will render to*

each one according to his deeds”: 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;”*

Paul? Are you teaching the Ephesians they are saved by faith alone and then teaching the Romans they have to seek eternal life through doing good? What about VSS 8-10??? *“but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good,”* That’s not fair Paul. If the Ephesians are saved by faith only, why do the Romans have to obey the truth?

What about the Philippian Christians? [Philippians 2:12-13](#), *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling“... Whoah Paul.. Wait now... What is this? You mean the Ephesians are saved by faith alone but the Philippians have to work out their own salvation? With fear and trembling? If I were a Christian living in the first century and Paul taught faith only to the Ephesians and a working faith in Rome and Philippi, I’d be checking out land prices in Ephesus.*

Truth is, if salvation were by faith alone, Paul would not have told the Romans and the Philippians and the Colossians and all the others to work at it. We don’t have the time to go through all of them, but if anyone wants to see them, I’d be happy to show you a whole list of them....[Galatians 6:7-9](#) *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”*

Maybe it would be a good idea to go back and have another look at [Ephesians 2:8-10](#) and maybe look at it from the perspective that he is not telling us that we don’t have to do anything but believe in order to be saved, because that’s not what he taught in other places and to other people. And we know Paul wasn’t preaching different gospels to different cities. Everyone got the same gospel.

[Ephesians 2:8-10](#)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

OK, so we are saved by grace through faith. Grace is God’s role. Faith is man’s role. *“and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”* What’s the gift? Looking back, if Grace is God’s role and faith is man’s role, the the gift has to be Grace. The gift was God’s role. That makes sense. The gift cannot be faith because that is man’s role and man’s role is man’s to give. Grace is God’s role, therefore grace is God’s gift to give.

What did Paul mean with “and that not of yourselves”? The gift was God’s grace. He gave that freely of His own choice. Man didn’t have any choice or say in God’s decision to graciously offer man a means of reconciliation. That makes sense. [Romans 5:8](#), “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*”

So what about V9? “*not of works, lest anyone should boast.*” Can any man set back as say he doesn’t need God’s gift of grace because of all the wonderful things he has done in his life? I’ve been real good God, I don’t need your gift of your grace. You can keep your grace God, I don’t need it because I’ve been a good person.... No one can set back and boast that his works in any way compelled or obligated God to offer a plan of redemption for mankind.

The primary object of discussion in [Ephesians 2:8](#) is not salvation, nor faith. It’s grace. Grace is the gift. Grace is what can’t be worked for, or earned. Grace is God’s role. Grace was God’s to give. Man cannot work for, earn or deserve the opportunity God gave him. Grace was God’s gift to freely give and no one can in any way earn, deserve, merit or pay for it in any way whatsoever.

Now let’s go on to Verse 10: “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works*”. workmanship means the product or result of labor. We are the product and result of God’s labor, created in Jesus Christ for good works. This means there is a role that has to be fulfilled on both sides. God has a role, which we understand to be grace. And His role involved the creation of us for good works. Paul goes on to say “*which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” The NASB more accurately translates the Greek as “*which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*” The NKJV translation makes it look like walking in these good works is just a good idea. Translators have been trying to water down the gospel for centuries now. This passage literally translated says: “*which God did before prepare, that in them we may walk.*” The word “may” in this context indicates a result or a purpose. It is used this way only in clauses introduced by “that” or “so that”. For example: ‘he preaches so that the average listener may understand’. The word ‘may’ in this sentence means that the purpose or result of the manner of preaching was easily understood... that he may understand. Let’s go back and look at Paul’s phrase again: “*which God did before prepare, that in them we may walk*”. Again... “*which God did before prepare, that [introductory word], in them we may [purpose or result] walk*”.

God did not create us to good works and leave it up to us whether or not we walked in them. He created us to good works for the purpose or result of us to walk in them. The reason he created us to good works was for us to walk in them, to do them. The Christian Faith, faithfully lived, is a walk. The Christian

walk is a chosen conviction resulting in a life of commitment. A walk is a chosen path down which one must travel. By faith we walk.

[Ephesians 2:8-10](#)

For by grace (God's role) you have been saved through faith (man's role), and that not of yourselves (you can't do it by yourself); it (grace) is the gift of God, 9 not of works (nothing you can do can merit what God did), lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship (the result of His labor), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we may (for the purpose of) walk in them.

There's two kinds of works mentioned in this passage. There are the works one could boast about, which are worthless. And then there are good works, which God prepared for the purpose of us walking in them.

Paul did not write that we are saved by grace through faith only. He wrote that we are saved by grace through faith and when we understand that it is God's grace, (God's role), that was the gift which could not be earned or merited by works which men could boast about and that the faith that saves is the faith that walks in good works prepared by God. Faith saves when faith becomes a walk or when it becomes a chosen conviction resulting in a life of commitment. One could just say that faith saves when faith obeys.

Turn with me to [James 2:14-26](#)

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my* works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?* 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."* And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*

Abraham's faith saved when it obeyed God and offered Isaac on the altar. Rahab's faith saved when she sent the messengers out another way. Their faith saved when their faith obeyed. Abraham's a Rahab's faith worked together with their

obedience and thus made their faith perfect. The original language means “complete” their works made their faith complete. Their works made their faith alive. Their faith saved them when it became complete and alive with obedience. [Ephesians 2:8-10](#) is a difficult passage when it is lifted out of its context and used in a manner contrary to the overall teachings of Paul and the rest of the inspired NT writers. But when we look at it in harmony with the rest of the NT, we see that in reality it teaches the exact opposite of what many people out in the world think it does. This is important for us to know because it is our job to teach others and help guide others to the truth.

By Grace (God’s role) are we saved by faith (man’s role). All that God did in making salvation possible is a gift that cannot be earned, merited or received as a result of man’s works. What God did for man was God and God’s alone and man had nothing to do with the planning of it or the implementation of it. Man did not deserve it, could not earn it, and can never repay it. But we are God’s workmanship (the result of His labor) Created In Christ Jesus unto good works, works of obedience, works of righteousness, for the purpose of our walking in them, a chosen conviction which results in a lifetime of commitment. Our faith saves when it obeys. The wondrous, unmeritable, unearnable, totally undeserved gift of God’s grace becomes available when we become obedient to the faith.

Now all we need is a verse of scripture which says that and the lesson is complete. Everyone living under the gospel age receives God’s grace in the exact same way. Even the Apostles had to be obedient if they wanted to benefit from God’s grace. Turn with me to [Romans 1:5](#) and let’s close this lesson with one final verse of scripture. This is Paul writing to the Christians living in Rome. In his greeting to them, he told them exactly how he and all the others received God’s grace. This is the same Paul that wrote [Ephesians 2:8-10](#).

[Romans 1:5](#)

Through Him [Christ] we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations [everyone everywhere] for His name,

Paul, and all the other Christians among all nations, received grace (God’s role) for obedience to the faith (man’s role). That is exactly how we receive grace today. It’s not earned. God does not owe us anything because we obeyed. We have not earned a spot in heaven because of it. We simply obeyed the will of God, trusting Him, believing Him, Submitting to Him and serving Him in obedience to His will, faithful unto death.