

Grace, Faith and Obedience

“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 (Eph. 2:8-10).” These verses have inspired some and perplexed others. Doctrines have evolved isolating each of the three actions mentioned here to the exclusion of the others, for example, the extreme doctrines of salvation by grace alone, salvation by faith alone and salvation by meritorious works alone. In reality, all three play unique, but complimentary, roles in the gospel plan of salvation.

Grace is generally defined as “unmerited favor,” which may be understood from the following verses: *“...the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men (Tit. 2:11),” “...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17),”* and *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).”* Hence, grace is from God, through Christ, to sinners, who in that corrupt state are incapable of meriting a divine gift. It stands to reason that if man had deserved Jesus, he would not have needed Him to die as the final sacrifice for sin. But, since that was not the case God extended grace through His Son, not in response to man’s merit, but to call for man’s response.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6).” Faith that pleases God involves coming to God, diligently seeking Him, believing that He is and that He will reward these efforts. *“Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent (John 6:29).”* The word “work” in this verse is from *ergon*, meaning a deed, action; task, occupation, undertaking; practical expression. These verses show conclusively that faith is more than mental activity. Further, 1 Thes. 1:3, 2 Thes. 1:11 and Jas. 2:14-26 add to the evidence that faith is much more than simple mental acceptance, assent or trust. These things are all important, for faith must begin in the mind, but faith must be developed and strengthened until it manifests itself in action before it becomes acceptable to God and sufficient unto salvation. *“...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).”* Faith, devoid of obedience, cannot save (Jas. 2:24) and is no better than the dead belief of demons (Jas. 2:19). Ephesians 2:8-10 denies the efficacy of works of merit, which would include the works of the law of Moses, but affirms the obedience of faith in works that have been *“prepared beforehand”* for the one who would be a Christian. God’s extension of grace must be met by man’s *“obedience to the faith (Rom. 1:5)”* and *“obedience of faith (Rom. 16:26)”* in order to result in salvation.

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