

FAITH ONLY—TRUTH OR ERROR?

By Keith Greer

One of the areas which we, and many of our religious friends, are divided is: "faith only". Is man saved by faith apart from works? Does God's grace save man by itself? Let us seek answers to these questions by a "thus saith the Lord".

First I want to give the proof text many will give for saved by "grace only".

"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. " (Ephesians 2:8,9) Just reading these passages seems to support their claim. Yet, one fatal flaw is made--they stopped reading!

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." {Ephesians 2:10}

This passage clearly shows that God created us to walk in "good works". God has a code of conduct for His children. If verses eight and nine are true, so is verse ten!

Many will tell you that if we believe in works, this negates God's grace. I believe just the opposite is true.

What is God's grace? "Unmerited favor; that which is not deserved". This is God's part in our salvation. God did for man what He could not do for himself--pay the debt for sin! How? By the shed blood of His Son on the cross of Calvary.

Does man have a part in his own salvation? Does God require anything of man for this grace? Remember this point--God has never once done for man what he is able to do for himself!

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, " (Hebrews 5:9) God has been consistent with this point from the beginning of time. He expects man to be obedient to His commandments. Show us a time when God did not require man's obedience? Is this not works?

Then some will tell us that we believe in "debt-payment" type of salvation. We work and God pays us. In other words, salvation is something that God owes us. Let me make this point perfectly clear--God owes man nothing! Never has, never will. If I obey every command that God has given me to perform and I perfectly keep His law, does He owe me salvation?

"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do. "{Luke 17: 10}

Let me try to explain it this way. Look at salvation as a scale of justice. On one side you have God's grace. On the other the obedient life of the believer. It takes both to give the scale a perfect balance. Can we put all the weight on God's grace? What about on my works? Either way the scale could never strike a perfect balance.

Please understand, all my acts of obedience still leaves me far short of God's salvation. It is His loving kindness, mercy, compassion and grace which will make the difference. We could not be saved without it!

"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. "{James 2:18} All my obedience is showing my desire for this wonderful gift of God.

Can God place conditions upon us to receive it? Yes, and He does! Our faith is an expression of our love, respect and obedience to His will in our lives – period! ***