

SALVATION BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH (2)

BY KEITH GREER

God's part. Mankind's biggest misunderstanding concerning salvation is that it has two parts—God's part and man's part. Obedient faith is man's part. At no time in the Bible record did God not expect us to be obedient to His directions. Why would He give commands if He didn't expect us to obey them? He wanted us to have direction and to understand what He expects from us. What we could not do for ourselves, God stepped up and accomplished for us. Consider...

Jesus died on the cross. Jesus had to die because mankind needed a remedy (a pure sacrifice) for his sin problem; and he did not have one. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away our sin {*Hebrews 10*}. We could not save ourselves by simply obeying God's commands—something else was needed. Through the death of His only Son, on a cross some 2,000 years ago, God provided the remedy. *"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* {*Romans 5:6-8*} He offered ONE sacrifice for all time {*Hebrews 9:26-28*}.

Jesus was buried. *"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."* {*1 Corinthians 15:3,4*} He had to be buried so He could do the next part...

Jesus arose. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* {*1 Peter 1:3*} Earlier, we mentioned that the Old Law was nailed to the cross. *"Who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."* {*Romans 4:25*} Christ's resurrection is important for two reasons.

(1) To show us that we, too, can overcome death. Read Paul's arguments in *1 Corinthians 15:13-23*.

(2) So He could return to heaven and offer His Father the blood to pay the ransom price for our sins. *"So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."* {*Hebrews 9:28*}

Man must die to sin. God did His part; now we must do ours. Each must die to sin. We must turn away from it and determine to sin no more. *Romans 6* calls this a “death to sin.” Then, we are buried in a watery grave {*Romans 6:3,4*} and resurrected to live a new life in Christ {*Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12*}. By our own death, burial, and resurrection, we mirror, in a figurative way, what God’s Son did for us, in a literal way.

What about grace? Grace is God’s unmerited favor. His plan is an expression of His grace. Our Savior’s death on the cross and the blood He shed paying the redemptive price for the sins of the world was an expression of His marvelous grace. We don’t deserve it; nor can we merit or earn it. It’s the gift He gives us because He loves us. Yet, contrary to what many believe, this gift comes with some conditions. God has the right to make conditions because He is offering the benefit we receive—salvation of our souls.

God didn’t promise us a free ride, with no strings attached. Salvation is a gift because God was not obligated to offer it to us. Our obedience does not negate God’s grace; it demonstrates our willingness to accept His gracious offer. God did for us what we could never do for ourselves—paid the price for the condemnation resulting from our sins. Both parts are essential to achieve the end result—our salvation. Can anyone be saved without God’s grace? Absolutely not! A better question might be— can man be saved without obeying Him and demonstrating our faith by our accepting His terms?
