

It Is Written

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By Grace Through Faith with the Washing of Water

By Terry Wane Benton

Notice the prepositions: by, through, and with. The Book of Ephesians uses all three to describe what is involved with our salvation. It teaches we are saved by grace. It teaches we are saved through faith. It teaches we are saved with the washing of water by the word. It is not grace alone, else faith and washing of water would not be required. It is not faith alone, else grace and washing of water would not be involved. It is not by washing of water alone, else grace and faith would not be involved. But, it is all three involved together.

By Grace

By grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:5,8). God did not owe us anything, and we did not deserve His grace. But, receiving the benefits of His grace was conditional. If it was grace alone (a common denominational codeword), then everyone would be saved, because He is not willing that any should perish (II Peter 3:9) and He died for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2). So, if we are saved by grace alone, there are no conditions, and everyone will be saved (universal salvation).

Through Faith

“Through faith” tells us there is a channel “through” which grace connects us to the gracious salvation provided for all men. (Ephesians 1:12-13; 2:8). The text does not say there has to be a certain content of faith in order for the channel to work. Everybody believes, has faith, in something. So, if I believed in chickens, Buddha, Muhammed, and science would this “faith” be a proper channel for salvation? No? Now, you would have to branch out from Ephesians 2:8 to discuss what the proper content of faith must be. If we just stayed with Ephesians 2:8 then everybody with any content of faith would be saved. But, bringing in other verses we know the content is a crucial element of saving faith. So, the right content of faith must be in place before we can be saved.

The text does not tell us if there has to be a certain level or depth of faith. On this point, would the men in John 12:42 who “believed” in Jesus but wouldn’t “confess” Him have the kind of faith that saves? No? If not, then Ephesians 2:8 cannot be talking about just any level of faith. It must have the right content and it must be willing to confess Jesus. So, if the content and characteristic of “faith” are important, then follow me to the next point.

With the Washing of Water by the Word

Paul says that our cleansing (which we already know happens “by grace through faith”) is with the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26). It does not say that we are cleansed, sanctified, and washed without the washing of water by the word. It says that it is with the washing of water by the word. It does not say we are saved by grace through faith alone without the washing of water by the word, but we are saved by grace through faith ... with the washing of water by the word.

Now, let us connect the dots. The 3,000 on Pentecost were instructed to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). They were further encouraged to “be saved” from this perverse generation (Acts 2:40). They were then baptized because they “gladly received his word.” Thus, they were saved by grace through faith with the washing of water by the word. Saul was instructed

to “arise, and be baptized, washing away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Again, he was saved by grace through faith with the washing of water by the word.

There is no way around it, and an honest person would not try to get around it. An honest person of faith will simply do as the 3,000, Saul, and the Ephesians. We will surrender to God and seek to be “saved by grace through faith with the washing of water by the word.” Be sure you are being honest with God and His word!

The Harvest Is Past

By Jarrod Jacobs

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jeremiah 8:20 KJV). In context, these words were spoken by people desperate for someone to deliver them from the consequences of their decisions. Some Bible versions even use phrases like “we have not been delivered,” “rescued,” and “we have not been helped” in place of the word “saved” used in the KJV. It seems people had recognized God’s power to help them (Jeremiah 8:14) but understood it was too late now (Jeremiah 8:15). Now, these people, God’s people, realize they had run out of chances. “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” What a tragedy!

I suppose there are no sadder words in the English language than “no hope.” They are used by Paul in Ephesians 2:12 when he describes the spiritual state of people who are outside of Christ. This is the way these people in Jeremiah’s day were! Though they were God’s children, they continued to reject God through idolatry (Jeremiah 8:2). They “hold fast deceit, they refuse to return” was another charge against the people (Jeremiah 8:5). In addition to these, we read of their stubbornness when they rejected “the old paths” in Jeremiah 6:16!

I understand that God extends a time of patience to allow people to see the error of their ways and repent (II Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4). God extended such patience to the Canaanites (Genesis 15:16). He did this with the Egyptians, allowing them not only 430 years to correct their error and adding ten more plagues as a means of giving the Pharaoh every last chance to free the Israelites. We have seen God’s longsuffering in other areas of life, and it was evident when He dealt with the Israelites during these years of the divided kingdom!

Yet, God’s long-suffering is not eternal. For example, there was a day when God shut the door to the ark, and none were allowed in (Genesis 7:16). Even in the parable of the ten virgins, the door was shut after a period of time, and five virgins remained outside of the wedding feast (Matthew 25:10). In Jeremiah 8, we see the people lament because summer is over and the harvest is past. In other words, it is too late now!

When we look in the New Testament, the urgency to become a Christian is apparent. After urging people to “save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40), Acts 2:41 says about 3000 were baptized when they gladly received the word. The language here leaves us with the understanding that they were baptized right then. They did not put it off. Again, when the Philippian jailor wanted to be saved, he was taken “straightway ... the same hour of the night” to do it (Acts 16:25, 33-34). The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians and told them, “now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:2). The Hebrew writer also emphasized taking immediate action when he wrote, “today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7-8, 15).

Procrastination has no place in the Lord’s plan of salvation. We have no lease on life and know not what might happen in our future (Proverbs 27:1). Thus we need to take advantage of the “here and now” before it is gone. The Israelites learned the hard way what it means when the “harvest is past.” Don’t you make that mistake! Be saved today while you still can (Acts 22:16). If you need to repent and return to your Lord, your first love, then do it while the breath is in your body. You don’t know when your life’s “summer” will be ended!