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Editor, Keith Sharp

Designer, William Stewart



- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER THINGS**

are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS  
**4:8**

are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christistheway.com](http://christistheway.com).

## Christians Who Cuss

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

You would think that the phrase “Christians who cuss” would be an impossible reality, yet it happens quite often nowadays.

### Things Said

One of the most basic truths to godliness is pure communication. The Bible says, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). The term corrupt (PHTHEIRO) means to “ruin or deprave” (Strong’s Concordance) and “signifies to destroy by means of corrupting, and so bringing into a worse state” (Vine’s Dictionary). It carries the idea of causing decay and defilement of another’s morals. And yet this is exactly what happens whenever we use profanity, course jesting, slander, or take the Lord’s name in vain. We defile others and have a negative influence on them.

Jesus warns, “But I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36, NAS). Can you think of a better reason NOT to say “4-letter words” or use profanity? How differently will we speak if we realize we must give account for it on the Day of Judgment? Will this change how we respond to adversity or motivate us to use a different tone with others when we are upset? Seriously, how carefully should we select our words if we must answer for them on the Day of Judgment?

### Things Shared

Sometimes it is not the words that come from our physical tongue that do the most harm. It is often the ones we put on paper or express electronically that create the most havoc and condemn us the most. Nevertheless, some Christians share things on Facebook and other media platforms that are laced with

profanity. Whether they realize it or not, they post things to defend their political view or to express contempt for some injustice that are often mixed with cussing, hatred, or taking the Lord's name in vain. If you are doing that, I have one question for You: **What Are You Thinking?** Even if you could persuade people to your point-of-view politically (which will never happen in an argument on social media, by the way), why are you using curse words to make your case? Children of God are supposed to "put off filthy language out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:8). And yet, when you share things online that include filthy language and say things in your post that reveal anger and profanity, you might as well forget about influencing anyone to the Lord. They will be turned off by you and the name of God will be "blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Romans 2:24).

Instead, the true disciple of Christ will express love and godliness in a world of darkness and sin (cf. Matthew 5:13-16). He is very mindful of his presence online and types his words carefully. "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil" (Proverbs 15:28). So please brethren, pay attention to the things you say (and share) on social media and avoid anything that suggests you approve of evil. "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so" (James 3:10). In other words, **Think** before you post! The warning of eternal accountability for our words is just as relevant online as it is in person.

### Conclusion

We reveal our heart with the things we say, type and text. Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19). Filthy words reveal a carnal heart. So, if we find ourselves cussing when we get angry or we express things online that are impure, we should recognize our need for further spiritual development and ask God for help in overcoming this sin (cf. James 1:5-7). We need a heart transplant so that our words will come out pure.

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## Jesus Was Punished Instead Of Us

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

Isaiah 53:5 prophesies about Jesus "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." That says Jesus was chastised so we could have peace with God; Jesus was chastised for our sins so we wouldn't have to be. Since Jesus had zero sin, He certainly wasn't being chastised for anything He had done. So it had to be for what we have done - substitution. I don't see any way around that conclusion, do you? The real question is – why would anybody want to try to get around Isa 53:5? What do they have to gain?

Some ask how it could be fair that Jesus was chastised for our sins instead of us. But whether we think it was fair or not is irrelevant. The only thing really relevant is that God said it is true. In one sense it is not "fair" for one man to be put to death for another man's crimes, but that would be true even if you're talking about a sacrificial death only. Hiram Hutto once explained to me that Jesus' death was fair because God volunteered himself (not another) to die for us.

Some wonder why Jesus didn't have to suffer an eternity in Gehenna if He took our place. Well if you've ever seen a Hogan's Heroes rerun on TV, you may have noticed the many times Colonel Hogan (as an officer) was threatened with a different punishment than his enlisted men for the same transgression. Perhaps similarly since Jesus is of such a higher rank than us, God considers the punishment Jesus endured a fair trade off. But regardless, we should be thankful God considered it a fair trade off even if we don't. God didn't have to ask us for permission you know.

Conclusion: Verse 5 also says Jesus was "wounded for our transgressions," "bruised for our iniquities"; "with his stripes we are healed" (spiritually, I Peter 2:24). That confirms Jesus was punished for us, right? That's what we mean by substitution. Either Jesus was chastised for his own sins, or He was chastised for our sins (in our place). Which was it?

# Preaching Is a Life of Serving

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

A preacher is often called a "minister." That is an apt term, and is the word oft used in the Scriptures to describe both spiritual and physical service. "...the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). There were certain women "who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women that came up with him unto Jerusalem" (Mark 15:41). In these two passages, we have both spiritual and physical service under consideration.

I have discussed much of the spiritual ministering under the topic of teaching. What about the physical side? There are many situations where a preacher is called upon to be a servant. Sometimes this is abused, as some members are known to look upon the preacher as the "gofer" guy. He is the one called upon to run all sorts of errands for the members.

While the "ministering" concept can be abused, the preacher must also recognize there are genuine needs that he can fill when others are not available. By the fact that he is not tied to a 9 to 5 clock, he may be called upon to take someone to the doctor. And there are other situations when both a spiritual and physical need may be combined. I once was called at 2 or 3 A.M. to go get a young man and take him to the hospital. He had tried to commit suicide and needed to be admitted to the psychiatric ward. That trip entailed some 90 miles. Not only did he need hospital care, but he needed someone with whom to talk to about some serious spiritual concerns.

Do you enjoy visiting hospitals? That may not be the most pleasant task—to be around sick and dying people. I do not suggest that visiting hospitals is the preacher's job. All Christians share the same responsibility to visit the sick and give aid and encouragement. But once again, by reason of having time available, preachers often may be able to go when others cannot. And who knows what may be accomplished by such visits.

Once I was talking with a young woman we had converted. Her father was dying of cancer. I asked if he would talk to me. She asked, and he agreed. Coincidentally, he was on the same hospital floor where his daughter Jennifer worked. We had a pleasant visit, and I elicited from him the fact that he was not ready to die. He was a Baptist in his youth, but had not practiced religion for some time. We talked about the plan of salvation. The room began to be filled with nurses and family. I said I would be back. Two days later I came to talk with him. He said, "Preacher, I don't know you very well, but I would like for you to say a few words at my funeral." I said I would be glad to do so, but I would also like to say something at his new birth. "OK," he said, "I'm ready." We made arrangements to baptize him in a pool in the rehab unit Friday at 11 a.m. He died the next day at noon. That was not the first time I had baptized someone in such a circumstance.

How often have you driven 100 miles round-trip to pick someone up for services? Or 50 miles? On more than one occasion have I regularly gone to pick up people who lived a good distance away. Sometimes others would offer to help, but it was usually my job. Was it sometimes inconvenient? Yes. But I suspect our Lord and the apostles also encountered some inconvenience on more than one occasion. Did you ever sit up all night with a sick child in the hospital so the parents could get some rest? Do you visit the aged and shut-ins?

Have you ever mowed a sick person's yard? Have you had Bible studies in a jail? Have you gone to the jail to see a member's son? One preacher told the congregation that if their son ended up in jail, they were not to call him. I guess he failed to see the word "service" in his job description.

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**The Tears Of Jesus**

On three different occasions we read of Jesus weeping. As we seek to understand why our Lord wept at these times it will help us to see and appreciate even more the depth of His love and His commitment to obey His Father's will. May we allow these events in the life of Jesus to motivate us to greater service to our great God.

"Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Initially Lazarus is just sick when his sisters, Martha and Mary, sent news to the Lord about their brother (John 11:1-3). After stating that his sickness is not unto death, He delays His coming to Bethany for two more days (John 11:4-6). While He prolonged His coming, the one whom He loved did indeed die (John 11:11-15). There are at least three things in this text which would happen when the Lord did come and raise His friend from the dead. (1) Both God and Christ would be glorified (John 11:4). (2) Many would be made believers because of what they would witness, when this man who was dead and had been in the tomb for four days was raised (John 11:15, 42, 45). (3) The chief priests, Pharisees, and the council plotted to put Him to death (John 11:46-53).

Why did Jesus weep knowing He would raise Lazarus from the dead, restoring his life to him? The text gives us the answer to this somewhat baffling question. "Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled" (John 11:33). What lesson(s) do we learn from this very touching example? We have a Lord who understands the difficult things which we must face in life. When our hearts are shattered, because someone we love very dearly has passed from this life, Jesus is there to heal those broken hearts, to comfort, and to guide one safely through the troubling seas. When facing temptations because of Satan's devices and our own human frailties, we have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15; Ephesians 6:11). What a blessing to have a Lord who can weep because of what others are experiencing.

"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). As Jesus approaches the descent of the Mount of Olives, He has a panoramic view of the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:37). He could see a good portion of the city, its walls, gates, the Temple, and most of all the people. How many times He wanted to gather the people together like a hen gathers her brood under her wings and yet they were unwilling (Luke 13:34-35). What strong emotion this stirred within the heart and mind of our Lord, which brought Him to tears. He knew the pending doom of the city, how it would be destroyed by Titus and his army, and the hordes of people who would lose their lives. And yet the most tragic thing which would occur, if they continued in their rebellion, the loss of their souls. It was not for a lack of evidence to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, for their defiance. Signs and miracles were performed by the Lord so they would believe (John 2:23; 3:2; chapter 9, etc.). The words He spoke often fulfilled the Scriptures and were deeply impressive on the hearts of many who were listening (John 7:37-46). Yet most of the Jews remained in rebellion against the very One who was to give His life so they might be saved.

What a tender, loving, and compassionate Lord. "who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear" (Hebrews 5:7). It seems the event(s) in the life of Jesus which the writer of the book of Hebrews has reference to, was the agonizing prayer of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane and possibly also when He was hanging on the cross (Luke 22:39-46; Matthew 27:46). I think it is hard for us to imagine how excruciating such an ordeal was for the Lord, facing such a hideous and painful death designed for a common criminal. Remember this is the sinless Son of God, who was God robed in flesh. Yet despite the agony and pain He experienced in the garden and on the cross, He still asked that the Father's will be done (Matthew 26:42). It was only through this means, what Jesus did for us, we could be saved. What a Savior.

We have a Savior with a heart which can be touched with such strong emotions, when He sees those who love Him weeping over the passing of those whom they care for very deeply. A heart filled with sadness over those who reject Him. And One who was extremely sorrowful when facing suffering and death and yet

was never swayed from doing His Father's will. Someone once said that the tears of Jesus are a translation of divine emotion into human language. May we express our thanks to God for such a loving Redeemer.

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## The Humanity of Jesus Christ

DO YOU REALLY KNOW JESUS?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

For many people in Jesus' day, it was a challenge to accept His divinity. In fact, it was His claims to divine nature that caused the Pharisees to oppose Him so vehemently, even to the point of seeking His life. After Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, some who believed in Christ went to the opposite extreme - affirming that Jesus did not come in the flesh. The apostle John wrote:

*...every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, who you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (1 John 4:3)*

John doesn't give the reason behind their rejection of Jesus' humanity. There were a few different gnostic doctrines prevalent in the first century that denied the humanity of Christ. Some likely thought it inconsistent, even impossible for a divine person to also be human. Perhaps they could not reconcile the frailty and weakness of human flesh with the limitless power and might of deity. No matter what the objection; regardless whether we are able to grasp how Jesus can be both God and man at the same time - the Bible says He is. Perhaps this is an example of what Paul meant when he wrote:

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)*

Just as some in today's religious world oppose the deity of Christ, there are some who stand against the humanity of Christ in our modern age. Much like their ancient counterparts, folks may not get how One person can be both divine and human. I'm not going to try to tell you how that works. I don't know; but what I do know is the Bible says Jesus is both. That is enough for me, and should be enough for every Bible believer.

There are many texts in the Bible that speak to the humanity of Christ. Consider:

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

In John 1:1, the Word was identified as God. In verse 14, the Word became flesh. There can be no doubt that this is Jesus Christ.

John 4:6 reads, *"...Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well..."* Jesus was journeying from Judea to Galilee. He was tired. He was fatigued. This is a characteristic of humanity, not deity.

Philippians 2:7-8 says, *"...He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death..."* Verse 6 said Jesus was in the form of God; verse 7 says He took the form of man. The word *form* is the same Greek word in both verses. Jesus was as much man as He was God. And He died! Is it possible for God to die? He died as a man.

Hebrews 2:14, 17 reads, *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same ... in all things He made to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest..."* In Luke 24:39, after Jesus had risen from the dead, He invited the disciples to handle Him so they would believe in His bodily resurrection. He said *"a spirit does not have flesh and bones."* He had flesh and bones and blood - whatever it means to be human, that is what Jesus

became.

Finally, Hebrews 4:15 says, "...we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Being a man, Jesus knew what it was to be tempted. He was tempted to sin, but did not yield. Jesus could not face temptation as God and serve as a sympathizing High Priest, for God cannot be tempted (James 1:13). He faced and overcame temptation as a man.

There are other texts that speak about the humanity of Christ, but for the honest truth seeker, these will suffice to demonstrate that Jesus was a human as you or I. To say so is not a denial of His deity; He was and is God. He is both God and man, as the Bible says.

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## When Jesus Returns - Part 2

### The Resurrection Day

Roger G. Mattingly | Lleida, Catalunya, Spain

Time and again some of our loved ones find themselves standing toe-to-toe with the face of death; and together with a gasping last breath it's cold finality rushes over them, seemingly freeing their spirits forevermore. And when that happens, the oft unexpected news reaches our ears and chills us to the bone, as if we had somehow been caught completely unaware by a gusting north wind, intent on blowing right through us. At first stunned, and then sobbing, we spend the passing of the weeks, or even months, unsure of just how we will ever again manage to navigate each coming day and continue on with our lives. All the while, our spiritual selves take note of the emptiness within that refuses to go away.

These experiences and more have been shared by many others just like us for thousands of years. For those who did not know the power of God, they became milestones of anguish in the lives of those who grieved and were left without hope. But for those who believed and had faith in Jesus Christ, though the sorrow of having lost a loved one was just as real, there was also certainty, based on the promise of God, that there was indeed a 'last day' in which all would be raised from the grave, many to be eternally in the company of those from whom they had been separated in the long ago. One such occurrence took place in the village of ancient Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem.

There was a certain man, Lazarus, who was living there with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Three times the Scriptures tell us that Jesus loved that family [ESV, John 11:3, 5, 36]. On one occasion, after He had been welcomed into their home, Martha prepared a meal for Him and those who were in attendance [ESV, Luke 10:38-42]. It may be that Jesus visited them often when He was near Jerusalem.

When Lazarus became ill, the sisters sent word to Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." When He had heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was. And then He told His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep" [NASV, John 11:1-11]."

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him and then, this amazing conversation took place:

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world (ESV, John 11:19-37)."

When Martha had told Mary that Jesus was coming, she too went out to meet Him and spoke heart-felt words concerning her brother and her faith in Jesus which were similar to the ones that her sister had. It is clear from the writings that both sisters loved their brother very much. As Scripture testifies, Jesus Himself wept, and then went to the tomb of Lazarus and raised him back to life after he had already been dead for four days. It is beyond all doubt that it was this restoration of life to her brother, Lazarus, which later stirred Mary to take the pound of very costly perfume and to anoint Jesus' feet, and then to wipe them with her hair [ESV, John 12:3]. The joy which the sisters felt that day at having their brother returned to them is surely what each of us also longs for concerning our own loved ones who have died. Yet, the life which was restored to Lazarus on that particular day was only temporary, in that he would have to die yet again.

But, the "last day" that Martha spoke of is the one in which Jesus will raise up everyone who has ever lived from their graves. It is the day of resurrection that will bring eternal life to all who have submitted themselves to Him and have been washed in His blood. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable [NASV, I Corinthians 15:52]."

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away (NASV, Revelation 21:3-4)."

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## Matthew 24 (Part 10)

Patrick Andrews | Conway, Arkansas, USA

How in the world can God explain to our finite minds things that are beyond our understanding? Our minds are incapable of understanding topics such as eternity and existence beyond life as we know it right now. Christians believe in life after death, but we believe it by faith. We've never seen the next life firsthand, but we believe that our existence doesn't end with our death. So many people cannot fathom their dead loved ones continuing to exist outside of this earthly realm; but they do exist. They will always exist.

One way to explain something that cannot be understood is to compare it with something that can be understood; using similes. Parents do this all the time explaining things to their children who are not yet old enough to comprehend subjects such as childbirth, or death. Parents compare something that is unknown to something that is known to better help the child understand why their Grandmother doesn't live in her house anymore.

God does the same thing for us. He compares things that we cannot know to things that we do know, in order to help us understand the nature of things that we will never sense so long as we are in the flesh.

Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which ***I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God***, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

One of the topics that our finite minds cannot fully grasp is the Kingdom of Heaven, The Body of Christ, or the Church. Sometimes the individual members of the church are compared to individual parts of our fleshly bodies (I Corinthians 12:12). If we consider the Church as a body that is made up of individual Christians, we can see the foolishness of envy and hatred toward one another. The lesson in this simile is on how much we need one another, and how backbiting and hatred toward other members is really nothing more than spiritual suicide (Galatians 5:15). If we fail to catch the analogy, we could fuss ourselves out of business.

In order to understand what Jesus is teaching in Matthew 24, you have to understand all the things that

relate to those questions and the answers that Christ gave to those questions. As I have stated before; Matthew 24 doesn't end until 25:46. Not only that, but there are many more passages in Matthew where Christ brings the nature and characteristics of the Kingdom into clearer focus. His comparisons allow us to comprehend that the Kingdom has a King, a law and an expectation of the King that we stay submissive to that law.

The phrase, "Kingdom of Heaven", is found only in the book of Matthew and only in thirty-two different verses. I do realize there are synonyms describing the same entity found throughout the New Testament, but for right now, let's just look at the Kingdom of Heaven and see what all the Lord compares it to.

### **Wheat and Tares**

**13:24-30; 36-43**

Jesus explains the meaning of this parable in verses 36-43. This parable is a lot like the one before it, found in the first half of this chapter and referred to as the Parable of the sower. In that parable, Jesus spoke of how different individuals would receive the Word of God, and in the parable of the wheat and tares He shows that Satan doesn't give up on someone simply because the Word of God took root in their heart.

I believe the key teaching in this parable is summed up in the phrase, "...let them both grow together...". There are so many lessons that can be drawn from these verses, but for the sake of brevity, understand that the child of God will have to deal with the children of the devil until the harvest. Sometimes you can't tell which is which.

### **A Great Treasure in a Field**

**13:44**

### **A Pearl of Great Price**

**13:45-46**

This parable and the one directly before it are teaching the same thing. The lesson is the same; The Kingdom of Heaven is worth more than all the wealth on earth. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "...seek ye first the Kingdom of God..."

### **A Great Net That Gathers Good and Bad**

**13:47-50**

This parable is teaching three things about the nature of the Kingdom. There will be a gathering of all. There will be a separation of the good from the bad, and there will be punishment for the wicked.

### **A King Taking Account of His Servants**

**18:23-35**

The lesson here is simple. You be as merciful to your fellowman as you want God to be to you when the day of reckoning comes.

### **Laborers in the Vineyard**

**20:1-16**

When I read this parable, I think of the longsuffering of God that waited in the days of Noah and is waiting still, not wanting any to perish (I Peter 3:20; II Peter 3:9). You might have entered the fight earlier and fought harder and longer than anyone else, but does that really matter if you get to spend eternity in Heaven?

### **The Marriage of the Kings Son**

**22:1-14**

This parable is similar to the parable of the great net before and the parable of the ten virgins that will follow. There is a gathering of the good and bad and the bad will be separated out because they hadn't prepared properly.

## **Ten Virgins**

**25:1-13**

Briefly put, the race we engage in when we choose to follow the Lord is a marathon. The five foolish virgins made some preparation, but they didn't prepare adequately.

## **Talents**

**25:14-30**

In this parable, the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a householder who entrusts some of his servants with varying degrees of wealth and then leaves on a journey. While he is away, he expects his servants to use what he has blessed them with so that when he returns, his worth will have increased.

I believe that this parable is teaching us that we have all been entrusted with some kind of blessing from God and we better be using it to bring glory to God. Those who refuse to use what they have been blessed with will be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Although the kingdom of Israel was slated for destruction in the near future; the Kingdom of God would stand forever and be worth any sacrifices that are made to obtain it.

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## **Grace and Faith**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

*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 (Ephesians 2:8-10).*

One of the fundamental doctrines of Protestant churches is that "justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone" ([www.protestantbeliefs.com](http://www.protestantbeliefs.com)). How can justification before God be both by grace alone and faith alone? Doesn't "alone" mean just one, whereas Protestants claim we are justified by two things? The Protestant answer is that God in His grace bestows faith on the elect. In reality, they are affirming justification by grace alone.

When I was a twenty-one year old "wet behind the ears" preacher in Quitman, Arkansas, I invited our grocer, a Baptist, to a gospel meeting. He said he would come if the preacher would preach on "Salvation By Grace Through Faith." I did not know that was the very subject the visiting preacher would address that night. Yes, contrary to what many Protestants have been told, I believe with all my heart in "Salvation By Grace Through Faith."

Scripturally many things lead to our justification. But they can be summarized under three heads: grace, faith, and works. What is the relationship between grace, faith, and works in our salvation?

### **Grace**

The root meaning of "grace" is simply "favor, acceptance" (Mounce. 1309). As a child Jesus grew "in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). This term "favor" is from the same Greek word, "charis," translated "grace" in Ephesians 2:8. Surely no believer will contend Jesus didn't earn or deserve favor with both God and man. He "was subject to" Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51) and "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

But it is equally true that "grace" means "kindness which bestows upon another what he has not deserved" (Thayer. 666) when it has reference to our salvation. "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt" (Romans 4:4). "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Romans 11:6).

When used in this sense, “undeserved favor,” as it is in our salvation from sin, it implies the recipient of grace, the sinner, has a need which he lacks the ability to supply. “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6, **New American Standard Bible**).

It also implies that the one who supplies the grace has the ability to meet the need. “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

It further means that the one receiving the grace is unworthy of it.

*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 5:7-8).

Saving grace by nature is from God to man, never from man to God. We are the ones in desperate need of salvation (Romans 3:23; 6:23). God needs nothing, and, if He did, we couldn't provide it. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness” (Psalm 50:12).

Grace is what makes our salvation possible.

*“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age”* (Titus 2:11-12).

“Grace” also denotes that state in which we stand justified before God.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God* (Romans 5:1-2).

### **Grace and Faith**

In Ephesians 2:1-10 the apostle Paul discusses the salvation of the Ephesian Christians. He points out that at one time they had been “dead in trespasses and sins” (verses 1-3). But, Paul reminds them, God made them “alive together with Christ” (verses 4-7). Thus, having once been spiritually dead, with only the dreadful prospect of a devil's hell before them, they were then alive with the blessed hope of eternal bliss in heaven. Paul reveals how this wonderful change took place in verses 8-10. We, being under the New Testament just as were the Ephesian Christians, must be saved in the very same way they were. How were they saved? The apostle explains:

*“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.”*

If salvation is wholly by grace, then one of three things must be true. Either God has selected a specific group of people to be saved without regard to anything they might do (as Calvinists teach), He will save everyone (as Universalists believe) or He will save no one (which no one believes). We know the merciful Father has not predestined which individuals will be saved, for His saving grace is for all people (Titus 2:11). Also, we know that not everyone will be saved (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Finally, Jesus promised that some would be saved (Matthew 25:34). Thus, since all three possibilities are eliminated, we know that salvation is not “wholly by grace.”

A gift may be free and by grace but still be conditional. When the Israelites took the city of Jericho, they had to march around that city a total of thirteen times, they had to shout with a great shout, and the priests had to blow on rams' horns before the walls would fall (Joshua chapter 6). Yet God told Joshua, “I have given Jericho into your hand.” (verse 2) Certainly they had to do something to obtain the city, for this was a conditional gift. Likewise, Peter promised his audience on Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit, but they

had to repent and be baptized to receive the gift (Acts 2:38). If a grandfather promises to pay for the college education of his grandchildren if they make good grades and stay out of trouble, that would be a conditional gift. They would not earn the gift, and it would be by the grace of their grandfather.

As long as the condition is not equal in value to the thing received, it is still a gift by grace. Marching around a city thirteen times, blowing on rams horns, and shouting are hardly brilliant military tactics to earn victory over a walled city. Were they not obedience to commands of God, they would be lunacy. Baptism in water is of no value to God or man in itself, it is simply a condition of divine grace.

What are the conditions upon which God, by His grace, will give the gift of salvation? Paul says it is "through faith." (Ephesians 2:8)

What is "faith?" The author of Hebrews defines "faith" as "the substance (assurance, **New American Standard Bible**) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction, **NASB**) of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

"Faith," in relationship to "hope," is that which "substantiates" or upholds it. It is "assurance" of that which we both desire and expect. Furthermore, it is based on "evidence" which yields "conviction" concerning things not seen. Also, faith includes trust, for "he who comes to God must believe that He is (conviction - KS), and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (trust - KS)." (Hebrews 11:6) The three elements of saving faith are belief based on evidence, trust, and assurance.

No Bible believer questions the fact that faith saves. It is the means by which we gain "access" into the grace of the loving Father, whereby we may "rejoice in hope" of eternal glory (Romans 5:1-2).

But, what kind of faith saves? Saving faith stands upon "the word of God." (Romans 10:17) Faith in human philosophy, men's opinions, our parents' religion, church creeds and teachings, or our own good deeds will not do. Furthermore, the faith which "avails" is "faith working through love." (Galatians 5:6)

But, didn't Paul say that salvation was "not of works, lest anyone should boast"? (Ephesians 2:9) Why, then, did he say that faith, to benefit, had to work? In spite of denominational doctrine, Jesus declared that faith is a work that we do (John 6:28-29). Did Paul contradict both himself and Jesus when he said salvation is "not of works"? No, the Scriptures, being truth, never contradict themselves. Rather, as Paul shows in Ephesians 2:9, he is eliminating the possibility that boastful works will save a person.



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