

Faith and Grace

Why is it that in God's plan, salvation is by faith and not in any other way? Why not include our good works and our obedience to his law, in addition to faith?

The Bible gives us a clear and direct answer. In Romans 4, the apostle Paul shows how Abraham was justified by faith when he believed God's promise. The same applies to all believers, all are justified by faith, and not on account of obedience to the law. Paul concludes that, 'Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring' (Romans 4:16).

This then is the reason: it is 'by faith, so that it may be by grace'!

If God had conditioned justification on our obedience, his justice could not accept anything less than perfect and complete obedience to his law. That would have meant our doom and damnation, for no-one, except Jesus Christ, has ever kept the law perfectly. Elsewhere the same apostle reasons this way:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."

Do you want your works to count for justification? Make sure that you 'continue to do everything' the law demands - otherwise you are cursed. But if you honestly look at yourself in the law of God and realize that you are a law-breaker and guilty before him, then you must seek salvation in an altogether different way, through God's determined means, namely by faith.

God justifies the ungodly by faith so that it may be by grace. God gives salvation as a free gift. Not that salvation is cheap! Our redemption is infinitely valuable for it was purchased by the precious blood of his Son. Yet God gives it to the undeserving freely. 'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.' (Isaiah 55:1).

But why is it that faith corresponds to grace? It is because faith says,

I am unworthy sinner;
I am helpless and powerless;
I plead guilty and I have no defence;
My righteousness are filthy rags;
I merit God's wrath, condemnation, hell!

Faith despairs of self, but faith does not despair of God! Faith fixes its gaze confidently upon the Lord Jesus Christ, saying,

You are worthy, for you shed your precious blood on the cross;
You are powerful, for you arose victorious from the grave;
You are gracious, kind and compassionate;
You promised rest to all who come to you;
So Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.
I am your sin, you are my righteousness.
May I never boast save in the cross of Christ my Lord;
And forever glory in the grace of God.