

<i>Notes</i>



JULY 21, 2019

Is Faith a Gift from God?

Eric Lyons

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, ESV).

For centuries, Bible commentators have differed on the precise reference of the pronoun “this” (“that” in KJV, ASV) in Ephesians 2:8. Does “this” (touto) refer to faith, as many have stated (e.g., Augustine, Chrysostom, Westcott, Lenski, etc.), or, does “this” refer to salvation from sin? Is faith “the gift of God,” or is this gift salvation by grace through faith?

Admittedly, from a cursory reading of Ephesians 2:8, it may appear that the demonstrative pronoun this has faith as its grammatical antecedent. Those who believe that faith is a gift (i.e., miraculous imposition) from God, often point out that in this verse “faith” is the nearest antecedent of “this” (“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God”). However, when one examines Ephesians 2:8 in the language in which it was written originally (Greek), he finds that the pronoun this (touto) is neuter in gender, while the word faith (pistis) is feminine.

Meeting Times

Sunday

Bible Class 9:30am

Worship 10:30am

Worship 6:00pm

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00pm

Ladies Bible Class will
resume in September

Since the general rule in Greek grammar is for the gender and number of a pronoun to be the same as its antecedent (Mounce, 1993, p. 102,109,), then some extenuating linguistic circumstance, special idiomatic use, or other mitigating factor would need to be demonstrated to justify linking “this” to “faith.” If such reasonable justification cannot be made, then one is compelled to continue studying the passage in order to know assuredly what “this” gift of God is.

When no clear antecedent is found within a text, Greek scholar William Mounce wisely recommends that the Bible student study the context of the passage in question in order to help determine what a pronoun is referring to (1993, p. 111). The overall context of the first three chapters of Ephesians is man’s salvation found in Christ. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (1:7). The heavenly “inheritance” is found in Christ (1:11).

After believing in the good news of salvation through Christ, the Ephesians were “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13). Sinners are made “alive with Christ” and saved “by grace” (2:5). Sinners are brought near to God “by the blood of Christ” (2:13). Paul became a servant of Christ “according to the gift of the grace of God...by the effective working of His power” (3:7).

Not only is the theme of salvation the overall context of the first three chapters of Ephesians, but the immediate context of Ephesians 2:8-9 is of salvation, not of faith. These two verses thoroughly document how a person is saved, not how a person believes. 1) Salvation is by grace. 2) Salvation is through faith. 3) Salvation is not of yourselves. 4) Salvation is the gift of God. 5) Salvation is not of works.

Paul was not giving an exposition on faith in his letter to the Ephesians. Salvation was his focus. Faith is mentioned as the mode by which salvation is accepted. Salvation is through faith. Just as water is received into a house in twenty-first-century America through a pipeline, a sinner receives salvation through obedient faith. The main focus of Paul’s message in Ephesians 2:8-9 was salvation (the living “water that springs up into everlasting life”—cf. John 4:14), not the mode of salvation.

Faith is not a direct gift from God given to some but not others. Rather, as Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Faith in Christ as the Son of God is only found in those who have first heard the Word of God, and then believed (cf. John 20:31).

Order of Service

Opening Remarks	Ray Parks
Song Leader	Don Petrosky, Jr.
Song	
Song	
Prayer	Sam Phillips
Song	
Communion	Leonard Meredith Don Petrosky Sr.
Song	
Song	
Sermon	Ben Moseley
Song	
Offering	
Closing Remarks	Ray Parks
Song	
Dismissal Prayer	Jarrett Haydon

Upcoming Events:

- June 5th – Aug. 28th Summer Series this week – Logan Summers: 1 & 2 Cor.
- Sept. 15th – 18th Gospel Meeting with Ken Hope

Wednesday Devotional

Summer Series June-August

...Prayer List...

Gay Kyle, Butch Crownover, Chris’ cousin Tyler, Esmeralda Medina, Gary, Tom Barr, Don & Sherri Blackwell, Melvin Wright, Tammy Whitman, Sean Bothwell

Remember our college students who are away at school: Jarrett & Luke Haydon

Shut-Ins: Robbi George

Attendance: Sunday AM: PM: Wednesday: Contribution: \$