

The word "Grace" has to do with an unmerited gift or favor. The gift of God to sinful man was Jesus Christ His Son and the salvation Jesus brought. John 3:16 reads, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." In Ephesians 2:8-9, the apostle Paul concurs, declaring that this gift was not merited, nor deserved, and that we must respond to this gift of God with our own "Faith". He wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

In previous Bible Talks, we have seen how sin separates us from God. There is a gap between us which must be spanned before we can be reconciled to our Heavenly Father. Yet, we have also seen how helpless we are to span this gap on our own. We are destitute to pay the debt for sin. So, God has paid it for us. By His grace, He has extended to us the possibility of reconciliation. The response He desires from us is "Faith"; that is, we must believe some things to be true before God's Grace will save us. The Hebrew writer said, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Grace and Faith are the two great ingredients which combine to assure salvation from sin. Like the mighty and strong hub of a wagon wheel, grace is the center of the salvation process. Without God's scheme of redemption ... if He had not become flesh and died for our sins ... salvation would be impossible. And, like the outer rim of that wheel, where the metal meets the road, our faith is equally important. Though God's grace is available to all people, He refuses to save anyone who does not believe He exists and who does not believe in the process of salvation He has set before us.

The importance of "Faith" to our salvation causes us to recognize also the importance of God's written word. For, Romans 10:17 reminds us that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Indeed, the New Testament writers had much to say about the process of salvation and our response to God. Like spokes on that wheel, the Bible lists three other things that God expects from us which connect our Faith with God's Grace. In the second chapter of James we learn that there are various degrees of faith. In verse 17, James said that there is such a thing as a "dead" faith. He said that even the demons believe, and shudder; yet we know they will not be saved. In verse 24 he said, "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone." James considered our obedience to God's will to be a demonstration of a saving faith. He said, "Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (vs 18). Hebrews 5:9 says that Christ is the source of eternal salvation "to all those who obey Him." It is a clear Biblical concept that saving Faith is demonstrated by reverent obedience to God's commands.

Now ... what were we saying about "**Three Spokes which Demonstrate our Faith**"?

The First Spoke involves the Confession of Our Faith in Christ. In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus Himself said, "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." You know ... this sounds important! It sounds like one will be lost if this command is not heeded. Jesus will not allow us to be ashamed of Him. If we have a saving faith, we had better stand up for Him and let others know about that faith. This "Confession" that Jesus requires is most definitely connected to our "Faith". In Romans 10:9-10 Paul stated it very plainly: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, YOU SHALL BE SAVED; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." Just these verses alone clearly show that an active obedience must complement our faith.

The Second Spoke on this wheel requires Repentance from Sin. In Acts 17:30-31, Paul taught that God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world ...” and that all men everywhere must “Repent.” The word “Repent” literally means “to turn around.” God expects us to turn from “our ways” and begin to walk in “His Ways.” Do you remember “Discipleship” from the first two Bible Talks? Surely we haven’t forgotten about the cost of following Jesus. You see, even Grace is not without demands. Paul said, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,” but he went on to say that this grace is also “instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12). We are sadly mistaken if we think that we can live any way we choose and that God will still save us. We do not have a saving faith if we refuse to repent of our sins and obey God’s word.

The Third Spoke which connects Faith and Grace is called “Baptism”. Jesus linked Baptism with Salvation in Mark 16:16. After commanding that the Gospel be preached to the whole creation, Jesus then said, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” Two things Jesus connected to Salvation: Belief and Baptism. Baptism is as important to salvation as is Faith, Confession, and Repentance. We dare not try to leave out any element which God has commanded and still hope to be saved.

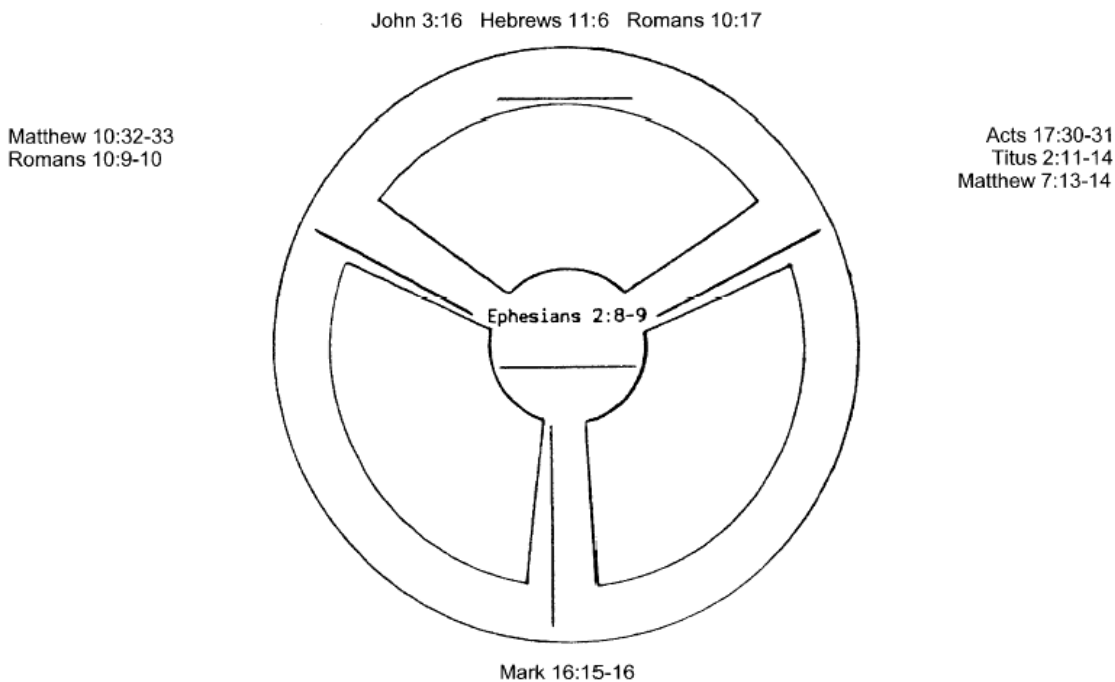
Many people are curious about the Biblical teaching concerning “Baptism.” If you are one of those people, then be sure to study Bible Talk # 111, “What is the Purpose of Baptism?”



Bible Probe

MY RESPONSE TO THE GRACE OF GOD

1. Fill in the blanks on the following diagram:



2. “FAITH” is my response to God’s “_____.”
3. “FAITH” comes by “_____” the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)
4. Can a person be justified by “FAITH” alone? (James 2:24)
5. “_____,” “_____,” and “_____” are three ways the New Testament teaches that I must “_____” my “FAITH.”
6. Explain your understanding of each of these three acts of obedience: