

# Faith is NOT a Gift for Salvation

Please review the following before reading this article:

- Faith and Belief, Are They Different?
- Dead Does NOT indicate "Inability"

Calvinists teach that everyone is totally depraved and are spiritually "dead" and therefore cannot believe God on their own, instead the person who is chosen by God must receive a "Gift of Faith" from Him. In his book *"The Reformed Faith,"* Loraine Boettner, a Traditional Calvinist, states regarding the Inability of fallen man:

*"Because of the fall, man is **unable** of himself to **savingly believe** the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desparately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not – indeed he cannot – choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, **it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ – it takes regeneration** by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. **Faith** is not something man contribute to salvation but is itself a port of God's gift of salvation --**it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.**" [emphasis mine]*

Faith/belief leading to Salvation is never called a gift in Scripture. There are four things related to Salvation which are specifically stated in Scripture as being a Gift of God:

- The Holy Spirit is called a gift in Acts 2:38 and 10:45
- Justification is called a gift in Romans 5:16,18
- Righteousness is called a gift in Romans 5:7

- Eternal Life is called a gift in Romans 6:23

Grace is never specifically called “a gift,” but by definition it is something given. We are given unmerited favor which we can neither earn nor purchase.

In these passages, Romans 12:3,6,15; 1 Corinthians 1:4, 3:10, Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:2,7,8, 4:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; and 2 Timothy 1:9, most are speaking of receiving grace for a specific purpose to a person who is *already* a believer. These aren't referring to the grace that gave us the gift of Eternal Life, Righteousness, Justification or the Holy Spirit which are all part of Salvation.

However, belief/faith is never called a gift, except for one circumstance and that is the Spiritual Gift of Faith which is a special type of faith given only to specific believers [those who are ALREADY saved]. Never to unbelievers.

The only Scripture passage that to the **English** reader sounds as if Faith is a gift is Ephesians 2:8 *“For by grace ye are saved by faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God”* In English the antecedent to a demonstrative pronoun is usually the nearest noun, so it is easy to misunderstand this because “faith” was the last noun mentioned. So, we see “faith” and “that” and think “that” is referring to “faith.”

However, in Greek, the antecedent to the demonstrative pronoun **must** have the same gender. The Greek word translated “faith” is feminine, whereas the demonstrative pronoun is “neuter.” The Greek word translated “grace” is also feminine, so “that” can't refer to “grace” either. So where is the antecedent to “that”?

The same grammatical construction occurs in two other verses in the New Testament:

- 1 Cor. 6:6 [but brother goeth to law with brother], and

**that** [neuter] before the unbelievers.

- 1 Cor. 6:8 Nay, [ye do wrong, and defraud], and **that** [neuter] your brethren.

In each, the bracketed part as a complete concept is being referred to by the demonstrative pronoun "that." In other words, in the first one "that" is equal to "but brother goeth to law with brother," and in the second one, "that" equals "ye do wrong, and defraud." So, similarly, "this" in Ephesians 2:8 is referring to the complete concept preceding it, which is **Salvation** on the basis of Grace which is accessed through faith/belief.

In his video series, "Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics," Dr. Dan Wallace states regarding Ephesians 2:8 *"but In this context, it seems that we have a strong validity to argue that the dative is a causal idea, because grace, obviously in Pauline theology, is the basis of our Salvation, whereas faith is the means by which we appropriate that Salvation...Faith is the means, but Grace is the cause."*

Faith being the means would be consistent with Romans 5:2 *"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."*

He also points out that "pistis" [faith/belief] is in the dative case, **not** the genitive case. Since it is in the dative case this would indicate that it is the means, not the cause. However, if it were in the genitive case, that would unfortunately indicate that "pistis" [faith/belief] would be the cause of our Salvation.

If faith were the cause, then it would be considered a work, a work that we have done to contribute toward our Salvation, which would contradict the rest of Scripture including Ephesians verse 9. This is why the Calvinists insist that faith is a gift from God, because they believe that faith is a meritorious work [which is not taught in Scripture anywhere]

and would be contributing to Salvation.

## Where DOES faith come from?

Romans 10:17 *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

### **The order of Salvation:**

- First, the unbeliever hears the Gospel [1 Cor. 15:1-4]
- Then the unbeliever changes his mind [repents] from unbelief to belief [Unless he refuses to believe]
- This belief/faith is the way God has determined for us to access God's Grace. Romans 5:2 *“By whom also we have **access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**”*
- **At the moment of belief,** the person is saved.