

Salvation, Grace, Faith, and Works

Joe Slater

Why is a greenhouse full of light? One person might answer, “Because it has lots of glass.” Another might reply, “It is full of light because the sun is shining.” Everyone understands that the two answers are not contradictory; they simply approach the question from different angles. Cover all the glass, and the greenhouse will be dark. But at night, with no sun, all the glass in the world will not illuminate the greenhouse! The sun is the ultimate source of light, but without the glass, the greenhouse would still be dark. The glass is necessary for the plants to receive the benefit of the sunlight.

What saves sinners? One person answers, “We are saved by God’s grace.” Another says, “We are saved by faith.” A third replies, “We must obey the gospel to be saved.” All three are correct.

The ultimate source of salvation is God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8). But the sunshine of God’s grace radiates through the glass of trusting obedience (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 5:9). Unfortunately, many sincere religious people utterly reject the third answer (obedience), mistakenly thinking that it contradicts the first two. In fact, some go to the extreme of rejecting the second answer (faith); they claim that faith is supernaturally infused into the person only after God saves him by “grace alone.”

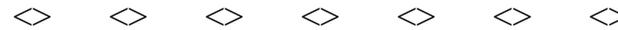
In particular, most of our religious neighbors reject the Biblical teaching that immersion in water (baptism) is necessary for salvation. Erroneously viewing baptism as a work of merit, they think it somehow detracts from the grace of God.

Baptism, however, is like the glass in a greenhouse. It does not, by itself, provide salvation. Without the grace of God, one could believe and be baptized until

he wrinkled up like a prune, but he would remain utterly lost. On the other hand, God has ordained believer’s baptism as one of the conditions for receiving His grace. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter proclaimed that baptism is “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38) and that baptism “saves us” (1 Peter 3:21). God’s servant, Ananias, told Saul of Tarsus to “*arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins*” (Acts 22:16).

Is baptism a “sacrament” that produces salvation? Absolutely not! Neither does glass produce sunlight. But glass is necessary for the greenhouse to be illuminated. And baptism is still necessary for sinners to receive God’s gracious gift of eternal life.

[NOTE: The seed thought for this article came from Arlie J. Hoover in the 9/13/77 issue of *Firm Foundation*.]



Omnipotent . . .

College student: “Do you think there is life on other planets?”

Preacher: “No, I don’t think so.”

Student: “You mean, all those billions and billions of planets out there -- and you don’t think there’s any life out there?”

Preacher: “No, I really don’t think so.”

Student: “Then why did God go to all that trouble to make all that stuff?”

Preacher: “What trouble?”

Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You (Jeremiah 32:17).

It was not trouble – He spoke and it was so. The only trouble that God ever had was bloody Calvary when He gave His beloved son for humanity’s sins (John 3:16).

--www.housetohouse.com/ Sept. 2015 via Thayer, MO)

That Vette Had Power!

Ken Klaus wrote about an experience that taught him a valuable lesson: A year or two ago a friend offered me a ride in his custom Corvette. That machine was beautiful to look at, impressive to sit in. Riding a few inches off the ground, my friend put that contraption through its paces. In first gear I was thrown back into the seat. In second gear it felt like the G-force was stretching my face, just like an astronaut during blastoff. In third gear we blew past an 18-wheeler like it was standing still. It was fantastic!

Then, when we were doing about 1000 mph (I may be exaggerating), we came upon a parked police vehicle. The Vette slowed down. The 18-wheeler slowed down. Everybody slowed down. That’s the point. The Vette had power. That 18-wheeler with a full load and a big diesel engine had power. But that parked police car had authority!

There are in this world a great many groups, individuals, and organizations that have power. They have financial power, political power, or majority power to impress us, seduce us, and intimidate us. But when it comes to authority, that’s different.

Satan has power. Rob Chaffart observed, “His power lies in his ability to deceive. When we fall for his deceptions, we give him authority over our lives and he takes us captive.” Jesus said, “*Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin*” (John 8:34). And Paul wrote, “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23).

Christ has both power and authority. He demonstrated both attributes by His miracles. His most astounding expression of power and authority was demonstrated when He died on the cross for our sins and was resurrected from the dead three days later. By His death, burial, and resurrection, He defeated Satan (see Hebrews 2:14) and made our redemption possible!

He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13, 14).

--David A. Sargent (via Thayer, MO)