

# San Juan church of Christ

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## What Does God's Word Say About . . . Salvation By Grace Or Works?

Grace is defined as "unmerited favor." Salvation by works of merit, therefore, is utterly impossible. If we received what is deserved, [or merited] no grace is involved. "The person who sins will die" (Ezek. 18:20). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). When one has sinned, that which is deserved: is death! All mankind has sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). If God gives me what I have merited, it eventually leads to physical death, and ultimately spiritual death which is eternal separation from God.

"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8). All the works that a man might do can never take away one sin he has committed. God's grace is offered to us in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Paul wrote, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to ALL men" (Titus 2:11).

We are saved "by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8). This gift of grace was given to us through "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publically as a propitiation [appeasement] in His blood through faith" (Rom. 3:23-25). Therefore, what man could not do for himself, Christ did in man's behalf. This gift of grace is extended to all mankind through the death of Christ and is accepted by our faith in the cleansing power of His blood.

This is to be a "living" faith, not a "dead" faith. James wrote, "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:17, 24). Abraham, who is called the father of the faithful, serves well as our example. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8). By faith Abraham obeyed and the response of faith is obedience. Paul describes this as "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). He refers to this in Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:23 as "the obedience of faith." James describes Abraham's faith "was working with his works, and as a result of his works, faith was perfected" (James 2:22).

Man's perfect obedience still does not remove the guilt of one's sin. Only the blood of Christ can do that. Man's response to the grace of God in obedient faith is not to "earn" his salvation by works. Our acceptance of His grace is through our obedient faith. This is why Jesus "became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). This is also the reason Peter declared, "You have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (1 Peter 1:22).

On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Jews asked "what they should do," God answered through Peter, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" and they [the Jews] obeyed him (Acts 2:38, 41). No one accused the apostle Peter of preaching salvation by works! He merely explained the means of accepting God's freely given grace.

If one is saved, he is saved by God's grace. But, one cannot accept "the grace of God" which brings salvation to all men (Titus 2:11) while refusing to obey God. So, while obedience to God's will does not "merit" or "earn" salvation, obedience by faith is the means which God has chosen for us to accept His grace.

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