
GRACE-FAITH / WORKS-LAW

(7 IRREFUTABLE FACTS)

This is a short study concerning **grace, faith, works, law** – and how these relate to one another.

There is great confusion about these four items ... hence ... this study.

I wish to present **7 IRREFUTABLE FACTS** which must be kept in mind when studying the subject of grace, faith, works, law.

7 IRREFUTABLE FACTS

1) The Bible is completely inspired from beginning to end.

The Bible writers were each guided by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21

21 ... holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

We do not have to make a choice between what Paul wrote vs. what James wrote.

- Each writer was guided by the same Holy Spirit.
- Each was correct in what he wrote.
- The writings of both must be interpreted so that they harmonize.

Paul wrote:

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

James wrote:

James 2:24

24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

Both of these statements are true. Both are inspired statements given by the Holy Spirit. We don't have to choose.

- I must be careful to interpret what Paul wrote in such a way that it harmonizes with what James wrote.
- If I concoct an interpretation which says no works of any kind are involved in justification, then I have reached the wrong conclusion.

2) Everyone who was ever saved was saved "by grace thru faith."

Not just NT Christians, but OT Jews (who were saved) were also saved "*by grace thru faith.*"

Some people paint the picture like this:

- **OT** had no grace (supposedly).
- Men were forced to try to save themselves by their works (supposedly).
- **NT** is all grace with no works at all (supposedly).
- Men today don't need to worry about keeping commands (supposedly).
- In fact, there is no law under the NT system (supposedly).

All of this is inaccurate.

Men could be saved under the OT system.

- Abraham was saved (according to apostle Paul – Rom 4:2-3).
- David was saved (according to apostle Paul – Rom 4:6-8).
- Others: Rahab (Ja 2:25).
- Moses (Heb 11:23ff)

Each one was saved by grace and thru faith. There was grace under the OT system:

Psalms 103:8

8 The LORD is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

3) Salvation "by grace thru faith" has always been based on the blood of Christ.

When men under the OT were saved "by grace thru faith," the grace part of the equation was the blood of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:4

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

God never gave the animal sacrifices to take away sins.

God required animal sacrifices as a foreshadow – pointing forward to the "lamb of God" who would one day come and shed His blood to take away our sins.

When Jesus died on the cross His blood flowed both ways.

- **It flowed backwards** and washed away all the sins of men who were faithful to God during OT times.
- **It flowed forward** to wash away all the sins of men who would be faithful to God in NT times.

Revelation 13:8

8 ... [Jesus is] **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**

4) God is no respecter of persons.

God shows no partiality:

Acts 10:34

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that **God shows no partiality.**

His grace was given out conditionally during OT times.

Deuteronomy 5:10

10 [God said, I show] mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

His grace is given conditionally to those who meet the conditions of (a) loving Him and (b) keeping His commandments.

- Since God shows no partiality,
- And since men in OT times had to keep His commands in order to receive His grace,
- Then men living in NT times have to keep His commands in order to receive His grace.

Acts 10:34-35

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that **God shows no partiality.**

35 But in every nation whoever fears Him **and works righteousness** is accepted by Him.

5) Obedience to God is how men express their faith in God.

Grace is God's part of salvation. He supplies the mercy, the grace, the forgiveness.

Faith is man's part of salvation.

"Faith" = "trust"

Men demonstrated they had faith (trust) in God by obeying what He said.

The Patriarchal Age

During the Patriarchal Age (before Moses) **men expressed their faith in God by keeping the commands He gave to the patriarchs.**

According to Heb 11

- Abel demonstrated his faith by offering the kind of sacrifice God commanded (v4).
- Enoch demonstrated his faith by keeping the commands God gave (v5).
- Noah (v7).
- Abraham (v8).
- Sarah (v11).
- Isaac (v20).
- Jacob (v21).
- Joseph (v22).

The Mosaic Age

When the Mosaic age came, **men still expressed their faith in God by keeping His commands,** but the commands had changed.

Q: Why were new commands given?

A: To test the faith of men – to see if they had enough faith in God to do what He said ... just because He said so.

Exodus 16:4

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, **that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.**

When men kept the commands God gave them, they were showing their faith in God. If they did not obey Him, they did not have the faith that saves.

According to Heb 11

- Moses demonstrated his faith by keeping the commands given to him (vv24-29).
- Israel kept the commands of God by faith (v30).
- Rahab (v31).
- Gideon (v32).
- Barak (v32).
- Samson (v32).
- Jephthah (v32).
- David (v32).
- Samuel (v32).
- The prophets (v32).

Keeping the commandments of God is an expression of faith.

In fact, a man cannot express his faith without obedience.

James 2:18

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

The Christian Age

In the Christian age, the commands have changed, but the principle remains: **Men express their faith in God by keeping His commandments.**

1 Peter 2:7

7 Therefore, **to you who believe**, He is precious; but **to those who are disobedient**,
"The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone,"

The opposite of a believer is someone who disobeys.

Hebrews 3:18-19

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to **those who did not obey?**

19 So we see that they could not enter in **because of unbelief.**

Here, the ones who did not obey are called unbelievers.

NOTE: An unbeliever, according to the Bible, is someone who does not believe God meant what He said.

ILL: Jodie came into kitchen. Got box of cereal. Headed for refrig. Peggy, "There's no milk." Jodie went anyway and looked inside refrig.

Q: Why did she look? Peggy already said there was no milk.

A: She looked because she didn't believe.

- An unbeliever doesn't believe God means what He says.
- Therefore, unbelievers do not obey God because they don't believe He really meant it when He gave each command.

6) Any interpretation which concludes obedience is NOT NECESSARY is wrong.

- People are quoting **Jn 3:16** and drawing the conclusion that obedience to the command of baptism is not necessary.
- People are quoting **Eph 2:8-9** and drawing the conclusion that obedience to the commands of worship and fellowship are not necessary.

They are reaching the wrong conclusion. Their method of interpretation is faulty.

To correctly understand the scriptures on grace and faith, one must begin with the understanding that:

- Grace is conditional.
- Grace is conditioned and dispensed to those who have enough faith in God to obey what He said.

No correct interpretation of grace can remove the necessity of obedience.

1 John 3:7-8

7 Little children, **let no one deceive you.** He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

8 **He who sins is of the devil, ...**

That's it. We must begin with that presupposition.

According to the apostle John, there will be people out there trying to deceive us.

- Deceivers will try to teach us we do not have to practice righteousness (i.e. obey God's commands).
- John said, "Let no one deceived you."

So when someone studies the subject of grace and concludes obedience is not necessary, they have reached the wrong conclusion.

7) There are different kinds of works mentioned in the scriptures.

- Works of obedience (Jonah 3:10).
- Works of God (Jn 6:29).
- Works of the Devil (1 Jn 3:8).
- **Works of merit.**

Works of merit need to be explained.

These are works which men do trusting in themselves.

Luke 18:9-14

9 Also He spoke this parable to **some who trusted in themselves** that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

Here are "*works of merit*" – works which men perform thinking they are meriting (earning) a place in heaven.

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

14 I tell you, **this man went down to his house justified** rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Here is a man trusting in God and asking for forgiveness. He's not trusting in the merits of his works.

When people perform their duties, they must not only **(a) perform certain actions**, but **(b) they must also have the right attitude**.

- **An action performed with a haughty attitude** = a "work of merit" which cannot save (Rom 4:1-8; Eph 2:8-9).
- **An action performed with a humble attitude** = a "work of obedience" which saves (Ja 2:24-26).

The attitude one has when he performs his work makes the difference between saved and lost.

- There's only one thing that distresses God more than a sinner:
- An arrogant sinner.

Luke 17:10

10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'

Here the Lord cautions us to obey "*all those things which [we] are commanded.*" Obedience is necessary.

He also cautions us to have a humble attitude: "*We are unprofitable servants; we have done what was our duty to do.*"

Those Bible passages which speak negatively about "works," are passages which are speaking about "**works of merit.**"

SUMMARY

7 IRREFUTABLE FACTS:

- 1) The Bible is completely inspired, so I must interpret all passages to harmonize with each other.
- 2) Everyone who was ever saved was "*saved by grace thru faith.*"
- 3) Salvation "*by grace thru faith*" has always been based on the blood of Christ – it flowed back to Adam and forward to the end of time.
- 4) God is no respecter of persons – if OT saints had to obey in order to receive saving grace, then we must obey.
- 5) Obedience is how men express their faith.
- 6) Any interpretation which concludes obedience is not necessary is wrong.
- 7) There are different kinds of works. Those negative passages are discussing works of merit.

Song:

*Trust and obey,
For there's no other way,
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

Trust God (not self) and keep His commandments.

This is the repeated theme of scripture:

Ecclesiastes 12:13

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God [humble attitude] and **keep His commandments** [obedience],
For this is the whole duty of man.

Micah 6:8

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to **walk** [obedience] **humbly** [humble attitude] with your God?

John 14:15

15 "If you **love Me** [humble attitude], **keep My commandments** [obedience].

Acts 10:35

35 But in every nation whoever **fears Him** [humble attitude] and **works righteousness** [obedience] is accepted by Him.