

# The Relationship between Grace, Faith, and Works in our Salvation

## (Where does Baptism fit in?)

### Old Testament Examples

*For it is by **grace** you have been saved, **through faith**-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- **not by works**, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)*

Our salvation is by grace through faith – not by works that we can boast about! This verse is one of the most beautiful and comforting in the Bible. God’s gift of salvation is not dependent on our perfect performance, but on Christ’s perfect sacrifice. Judged by our works – we are condemned sinners. Even people of faith stand before God only through the forgiveness that comes by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I am sure that the above statements would be accepted by almost every believer.

However, there is a great difference in opinion about how baptism fits into the teaching of Ephesians 2:8-9.

A commonly held opinion :                    Since salvation is by grace through faith and not of works, salvation can have no connection with baptism since baptism is a work.

The previous two articles examined the New Testament to show that this is a wrong opinion. Now we will turn our attention to three Old Testament examples to illustrate this point. In the following chart we will try to place various “actions” in these Old Testament stories under the appropriate heading.

<b>BY GRACE</b>	<b>THROUGH FAITH</b>	<b><u>NOT</u> OF WORKS YOU CAN BOAST ABOUT</b>
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## God’s Grace to Israel in the Battle of Jericho (Joshua 6)

After Moses led the people of Israel from Egypt to the edge of Canaan, Joshua became the leader who led them in conquering the land that God had promised to give them. The nation had been disobedient in their long stay in Egypt and during their journey in the wilderness. Even though God still planned to give them the land, he made it plain to them they did not deserve it. Read carefully the following verses:

*After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, "The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness." No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. Understand, then, that it **is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a rebellious people.** (Deuteronomy 9:4,6)*

As Israel crossed the Jordan to take the walled city of Jericho, the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have **given** Jericho into your hand, with its king and its mighty warriors” (Joshua 6:2). So the taking of this city by Israel was by **GRACE**! Now we know that God’s gifts often are given to others based on their **FAITH**. It is not based on man’s ability to earn the gift.

How would a battle during the time of Joshua normally be fought? Jericho was a walled city. There are at least three ways an army would try to use their wisdom or power to defeat a city that had high walls:

1. **IMMEDIATELY ATTACK THE CITY AND WITH LADDERS TRY TO GO OVER THE WALLS.** You might have the advantage of surprise, but those inside the city would have the advantage of being higher – of shooting arrows down on the approaching soldiers. Rocks and boiling water could be dropped on the attackers. This method would result in much loss of life. This approach would only work if the invading army had greater numbers.
2. **BUILD BULWARKS OR TOWERS THAT ARE HIGHER THAN THE WALL, GIVING YOUR ARCHERS A HEIGHT ADVANTAGE.** The attacking army can try to kill and set fire to the city from this advantage. The problem with this method is that while you are building your towers, those inside the city use their wall and towers to shoot down on you, even setting fire to the towers you build. To win this way you have to be skillful, patient, and lucky.
3. **SEIGE THE CITY.** In this strategy you surround the city from a safe distance. You cut off the ability of the city to receive supplies of food and water. The need for food and water will eventually force the citizens of the city to leave the safety of their walls. While this is a good method – it often took much time (sometimes years) – especially if those in the city were well supplied to begin with.

Now Joshua, as a military leader, could have used these methods or a combination of them. He could have plotted a battle plan that would have given the Israelites victory. However, it would not have been God’s gift and it would have been based upon the **WORK** of man. Israel could have boasted of their success in planning and fighting. God devised a plan where the city would be a **GIFT** based on their **FAITH** in Him. Notice God’s plan:

*March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in." (Joshua 6:3-5 NIV)*

No respected military leader or nation would use such a plan, UNLESS – they had faith in God. God’s plan would seem foolish to most. Paul said, “*the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.  
(Hebrews 11:30 NIV)*

Israel’s victory at Jericho was a gift from God – but God’s plan still required ACTION and OBEDIENCE based on faith. The walls did not fall until after they marched around the walls. Attacking the city with a large army, building towers to shoot down on the city, or cutting off the supplies of food and water by siege would have been the work and strategy of man. A victory in these cases would have given Israel room to BOAST in THEIR WORK. But the ACTION of marching around the city was an ACTION of FAITH. God’s command for action (marching around the walls and shouting) removed all grounds of boasting when they put their trust in God. Grace and faith does not remove the need for man to act.

	BY GRACE	THROUGH FAITH	<u>NOT</u> OF WORKS YOU CAN BOAST ABOUT
<b>Joshua &amp; Jericho</b>	“I have given you the city of Jericho” (Joshua 6:2)	“By <b>FAITH</b> the walls of Jericho fell after the people had <b>MARCHED</b> around them for 7 days	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Go over the walls</li> <li>2. Build towers</li> <li>3. Siege and starve them out</li> </ol>

### Gideon in the Battle Against Midian (Judges 6-7)

Gideon lived during the time of the judges of Israel (1300 B.C.) He was from one of the smallest families in the tribe of Manasseh and he had no military experience. Yet, when invaders (the people of Midian) came into Israel, God called him to lead the people in victory. Again, Israel was not deserving of victory. They had worshiped idols. Even the village where Gideon lived had an altar built to a foreign God. In the case of Gideon, we once again see God choosing a path to victory that would be based on faith – not on human strength or wisdom. God chose the person least likely to resemble a military leader. However, Gideon, due to a few signs from God, was so convinced of God’s power that he managed to call 32,000 men to join the fight against the enemy. The only problem was, the enemy had 135,000 men! We have examples in history of smaller armies beating larger armies, so God was concerned. If Israel’s smaller army defeated the larger army they would boast about their victory, claiming their great spirit and fighting ability was responsible for the victory. Therefore God said to Gideon:

*"The people who are with you **are too many for Me to GIVE** Midian into their hands, **lest Israel become boastful**, saying, '**My own power has SAVED me.**' "Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained. (Judges 7:2-3 NASB)*

So God had now made the odds against Israel so great that there was little hope for victory without God’s intervention. God was still not satisfied. He always saves or delivers by grace through faith.

He wants to remove all grounds of boasting concerning human works of merit. We are amazed when God says to Gideon:

*Then the LORD said to Gideon, "**The people are still too many**; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink." Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "**I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped** and will **give** the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home." (Judges 7:4-7 NASB)*

They would know the impossibility of 300 defeating 135,000, so they could clearly see God’s hand was in the victory, not their own strength. To further remove all grounds of boasting God told Gideon’s 300 men to not take any weapons. They were to take a covered light (torch) and a trumpet and surround the enemy at night. When Gideon’s men were in place on hillsides around the valley, on a given signal they uncovered the lamps and blew the trumpets. No doubt the Midianites thought there were 300 different groups of men. They fled into the darkness in confusion and mistakenly began to fight each other while they were on the run (see Judges 7:19-23).

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<b>Gideon &amp; 300 men</b>	“The people with you are too many to give Midian into their hands” (Judges 7:2)	“The men with Gideon ... blew the trumpets and broke the covers of the lamps” (Judges 7:19)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. used weapons</li> <li>2. recruited more men</li> <li>3. Followed an accepted war plan</li> </ol>

We see again that Israel won a battle as a result of God’s grace based on their faith. All works of merit were removed so that the basis of man’s boasting would be removed. However, being delivered (saved) by grace through faith did not remove the need for **ACTION**. They still blew the trumpets and broke the lamps. These were acts of faith, not works of boasting. Men would have thought their actions foolish. Their actions would not normally have led to victory. The victory could only be explained by God’s grace through their faith.

## Naaman the Leper (2 Kings 5:1-15)

Naaman was a captain of the Syrian army. He was from a nation that had conquered Israel many times. Naaman was a very powerful man under his king, but he had one major problem; he had leprosy. His captured Israelite slave girl told him there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him of this disease.

Naaman took a large amount of money and expensive treasures with him to Israel for the man who could heal him. He first went to the king of Israel, but later found the home of the prophet, Elisha. He thought the prophet would welcome him in keeping with his high position with the Syrian government. Elisha did not even meet with him personally, but instead sent his servant to give him a message.

*"Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you and you shall be clean."*

*But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.' "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. (2 Kings 5:10-14 NASB)*

Naaman's use of human reasoning led him to anger. He knew water had nothing to do with healing leprosy. He knew logically that if water could heal leprosy, the clean rivers of his country would do a better job than the muddy Jordan River of Israel. Naaman was willing to pay for his healing but his pride would not allow him to do what the messenger said.

God had given a command, "Go and dip seven times and be clean." Naaman would have gladly tried to earn or pay for his healing. God was trying to give him the healing as a gift that would require Naaman's humble faith. He asked him to do something that was illogical, humbling, and foolish in the sight of all men. The action of dipping in the Jordan designed to remove all grounds of boasting from the lips of Naaman. When Naaman repented and washed, he rightly praised God for his healing. His position and his money were no basis for his cleansing. Naaman was not cleansed by his own works or position – but by God's grace. Yet, Naaman was required to show his faith in ACTION. An obedient act of faith is not a work of merit!

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<b>Naaman the Leper</b>	Naaman would be healed by grace – not by medicine, payment, or natural means	"Dip seven times in the Jordan River and be clean"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gold and silver</li> <li>2. Changes of clothes</li> <li>3. "Do some great thing" (2 Ki 5:13)</li> </ol>
<b>The Sinner</b>	<b>In what column does baptism fit?</b>	<b>Is Baptism an <u>ACTION</u> of faith? Or ----</b>	<b><u>A WORK</u> of merit that we can boast about?</b>

If we can see that Naaman’s dipping seven times in the Jordan, Israel marching around the walls of Jericho, and Gideon’s blowing of trumpets were all acts of faith and not works of merit, we also ought to be able to see the same thing about a sinner’s baptism. To use Ephesians 2:8-9 to eliminate the necessity of baptism in God’s plan of salvation by grace through faith is a misuse of scripture. The powerful lesson learned in these stories ought to make us understand when God says that “baptism is for the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38). We should not argue with Peter when he says “baptism also saves us now” (1 Peter 3:21). Peter admits that it was not because our flesh was touched by the water but because our action of baptism shows our faith in the resurrection of Christ. Paul was told to “Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Naaman was told to “wash and be clean”. Neither one acted thinking they earned God’s salvation. Their humble faith led them to submit to God’s command.

Let’s remember that the walls of Jericho did not fall until AFTER they were marched around for seven days (Hebrews 11:30). The Midianites were defeated AFTER Gideon and the 300 men blew their trumpets and broke the covers of their lamps. Naaman was cleansed AFTER he dipped seven

times in the Jordan. None of these actions earned the result – but God’s grace did not give the promised result until he saw their faith in the action. God gives remission of sins AFTER a person’s faith leads him to be baptized.

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27 NASB)*

Let’s notice another important verse.

*he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5 NIV)*

## SALVATION

<b>Ephesians 2:8-9</b>	<b>BY GRACE</b>	<b>THROUGH FAITH</b>	<b><u>NOT</u> OF WORKS YOU CAN BOAST ABOUT</b>
<b>Titus 3:5</b>	<b>HIS MERCY</b>	<b>BY THE <u>WASHING</u> OF REBIRTH AND RENEWAL BY THE HOLY SPIRIT</b>	<b>NOT ON THE BASIS OF DEEDS WHICH WE HAVE DONE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS</b>

### Under what column does baptism fit?

Now maybe we can understand the proper place of baptism in God’s plan. Baptism is an **ACTION** of faith, not a work of merit. Instead of trying to do away with the necessity of baptism because we view it as a work, we can see it is an act of faith that is depending on God for salvation – not on our own riches, wisdom, or merit. This understanding can keep us from trying to destroy from our Bible verses which plainly tie baptism with grace, forgiveness of sins, cleansing, and salvation

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16 NIV)*

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NIV)*  
*John 3:5*

*And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.' (Acts 22:16 NIV)*

*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:3-4 NIV)*

*In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12 NIV)*

*who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:20-21 NIV)*