

FAITH THAT SAVES...

Is faith that works!

An Apostolic Study on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Written and Edited By Rick Flores

Revised 2014

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. James 2: 20 – 24 (NKJV)

**Making sense of Mercy, Grace, Works,
Faith, and Obedience to God's Word.**

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Do you ever feel like you are not good enough to measure up to God's expectations?

Have you ever felt inadequate or unworthy to dwell in God's presence?

Then you are not alone!

This Bible Study was written for anyone who has ever wanted to give up on themselves because they feel that they are not "righteous" enough. The Bible gives us an astounding revelation on how we are declared righteous by God. It will leave you with the renewed feeling that Jesus Christ really does think the world of you. You can be made complete by simply applying your faith to God's Word. You will come to realize that the righteousness that you have been struggling to attain all along can become a reality today by placing your trust in the risen Savior. You will also come away with a complete understanding of the difference in merely *professing* a belief in Jesus Christ, and actually *expressing* a belief in Jesus Christ. Your faith will find "feet" and be put to work!

Romans 3: 22 – 24 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

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Part 1 – WHO’S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IT ANYWAY?

Matthew 5: 6 – Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Matthew 5: 20 – For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The righteousness of the religious leaders of their day was all in the outward appearance. They were rated “G” on the outside, but rated “R” on the inside. They confused righteousness with standards of apparel. We could be guilty of doing the same thing, if we do not have the proper understanding of what it means to be righteous.

What exactly is righteousness? What does it mean to be righteous? New College Dictionary definition states, “characterized by uprightness or morality; acting in an upright way.”

An easy to remember definition is simply “right living”.

Do you ever feel like you are not good enough to measure up to God’s expectations?

Rate your own righteousness – If “1” would be the lowest form of immorality and evil, and “10” would be just as holy and righteous as Jesus himself, where would you rate yourself?

Something to ponder: The only way we can be saved is to be a perfect 10!

Take a quick look at the following two verses of scripture:

1 Corinthians 6: 9 – Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?...

Romans 3: 10 – As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Question: If the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, and there are none righteous, who then shall be saved? How can *anyone* possibly be saved? How could we ever measure a “10”???

Here is the secret...

We cannot be saved by our own righteousness; we *MUST* rely on the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. Check out this passage of scripture:

Philippians 3: 3 – 10 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. ⁴ Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, ⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: ¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Paul actually was sincere in his religion, but he was sincerely wrong. He said so himself:

1 Timothy 1: 12, 13 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; ¹³ Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Here is the first account of Justification by Faith found in the bible:

Genesis 15: 1 – 6 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. ² And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? ³ And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴ And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. ⁵ And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. ⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Paul uses this Old Testament example to teach Justification by Faith in the New Testament:

Romans 4: 1 – 3; 17 – 24 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ² For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. ³ For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

¹⁷ (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. ¹⁸ Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. ¹⁹ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: ²⁰ He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹ And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. ²² And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. ²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

We have all fallen short of the mark; we must place our faith in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Romans 3: 21 – 28 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²² Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. ²⁷ Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. ²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Because of Adam's offence, we were destined for judgment; but thanks be to Christ for reversing the curse of sin and death!

Romans 5: 17 – 21 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) ¹⁸ Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. ²⁰ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: ²¹ That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings out the true meaning in the following passage of scripture:

Ephesians 2: 1 – 10 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶ And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷ That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Paul reminded the church in Ephesus that they were once the lowest of sinners, with absolutely nothing to boast of. There is no work of the law, or any good deed, that could have earned them a mansion in Heaven. It is important to emphasize that Paul did not merely state that they were saved by grace, he said they were saved by grace THROUGH FAITH. When God witnessed their faith, He extended His grace by providing Salvation. Salvation is a gift from God, and it is all made possible by our faith, which is our willingness to believe. To be justified by faith is to be declared righteous in the sight of God.

PART 2 – WITH OR WITHOUT WORKS?

Faith is the key that unlocks the door of doubt and unbelief. Here are just two examples:

Matthew 9: 28, 29 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. ²⁹ Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

Mark 5: 28 – 34 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. ²⁹ And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. ³⁰ And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? ³¹ And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? ³² And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. ³³ But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. ³⁴ And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

Faith Never Dies

Hope never dies, or it would cease to be hope. The same is true with faith. Take a look at this:

Hebrews 11: 1 – 3 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders obtained a good report. ³ Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Faith is kind of like the wind; we cannot see it, but we can see the evidence of it.

Faith is a Verb

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5: 7 that we walk by faith, and not by sight. But as we will discover, faith is not faith at all if we do not demonstrate it. You could say that faith is a verb – it is something you do to demonstrate to God and others that you have it. Examples of natural, earthly faith would include reaching for a light switch or turning the ignition of your car. You have faith that they are going to work, but you still have to do your part to turn them on. Consider the words of James:

James 2: 14 – 26 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ¹⁸ Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. ¹⁹ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. ²⁰ But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. ²⁴ Ye see then how that by works a man is justified,

and not by faith only.²⁵ Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Is There a Contradiction Here?

The writing of James does not contradict the writings of Paul in the book of Romans and Ephesians. Paul was speaking about works (deeds) of the law not being able to save us (Romans 3:28). James is speaking about the works (actions) of our faith, as in obedience to God's will. That is why he mentioned providing clothes or food for people in need, and Abraham's willingness to obey by placing his son on the altar. He was against a person merely professing faith, but not being actively involved with Christianity. (See James 1: 22 – 27) Paul was referring more to ritualism, while James was referring to obedience and Christian service. Paul was referring to the laws written in stone, James was referring to the laws written in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

The Council at Jerusalem

The topic of whether or not the works of the law were necessary for salvation actually came up in the early church. A council was held for the purpose of coming to a conclusion. Check this out:

Acts 15: 1 – 11 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. ² When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. ³ And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. ⁴ And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. ⁵ But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. ⁶ And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. ⁷ And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. ⁸ And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; ⁹ And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Did you catch that? Peter was recalling when the gospel was first received by the Gentiles (a revival which he personally preached as recorded in Acts 10). You may recall that these new Gentiles were baptized in the name of Jesus and filled with the Holy Ghost, with the evidence of speaking with other tongues. (See Acts 10: 44 - 48). Yet with all that, Peter says that they were purified by faith (Acts 15:9), and saved through grace (Acts 15:11). Peter understood that being saved by grace through faith does NOT nullify our need to be baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

With that in mind, Let's Take Another Look At Salvation By Grace Through Faith:

Ephesians 2: 8, 9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Is This Your Mail?

Some people have confused Ephesians 2: 8, 9 with being a Salvation plan in and of itself; with nothing else being necessary to make it to Heaven. But as we will discover, Ephesians is a letter written to the already established church in Ephesus. It was not intended to be a Salvation plan, (it did not even mention Repentance or the new birth) but rather an explanation of the awesome grace of God that is given to those who trust Him. A "life-line" called the plan of Salvation has been extended to us because of God's great mercy. When we deserved judgment, God extended mercy. Let's take a look at how Paul began his letter to the Ephesian church:

Ephesians 1: 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

One would only need to go to the book of Acts to see how the revival in Ephesus originally started, for it is the only New Testament book in which the actual preaching to the unsaved was recorded. The 21 books that follow the book of Acts are known as Epistles, which were letters written to the already established churches of the day. They contained instruction on Christian living, doctrinal issues, faith, overcoming the devil, etc. With that in mind, let's see how the gospel first came to Ephesus:

Acts 19: 1 – 8 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, ² He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. ³ And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. ⁴ Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. ⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. ⁷ And all the men were about twelve. ⁸ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

In spite of the fact that we are saved by grace through faith, the converts in Ephesus were *still* asked two pertinent questions: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" and "How were you baptized?" Since the inception of the New Testament Church in Acts 2, grace has provided us with the plan of Salvation, and it was first preached by Peter:

Acts 2: 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Does Acts 2: 38 fit in harmony with the doctrine of Justification of Faith which Paul taught in the book of Romans?

The book of Romans is also an epistle written to an already established church in Rome. Paul was expounding to them the extreme role that faith played in their Salvation. The scriptures which we have studied concerning Justification by Faith were written those who had already been saved. Take a look at the introduction to the epistle of Romans:

Romans 1: 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was written to a church that was familiar with water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ...

Romans 6: 3, 4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death...

It was written to a church that was familiar with receiving the Holy Spirit...

Romans 8: 14, 15 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. ¹⁵For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

When we rightly divide the Word of God, as we are instructed to do so (See 2 Timothy 2:15) we receive a much clearer understanding of what Justification by Faith really means. Our faith came by hearing the Word of God. That faith caused us to come forward and ask: "What must we do?" (See Acts 2:37), just as in the beginning. When we repented of our sins and were born of water and of the Spirit (See John 3:5; Acts 2:38) we were saved by the grace of God. This is the true meaning of Justification by Faith.

Paul made it perfectly clear that being justified by faith and saved by grace is not a license to live as we please. We must continue to live righteously in our everyday lives:

Romans 6: 1, 2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ²God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Romans 6: 12 – 18 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. ¹⁴For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. ¹⁵What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. ¹⁶Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ¹⁷But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. ¹⁸Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (See also Titus 2: 11, 12)

Notice that in verses 17 & 18, Paul reminds the church that they were transformed from sinfulness to righteousness when they "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine"? Justification by Faith is more than just a mere profession of faith, it is putting feet to your faith and stepping out in obedience to God's Word.

The Reward of Obedience

As we obey The Lord from our heart, we are made free from sin, and are declared whole, clean, and righteous. We may not always understand at first why God asks certain acts of obedience of us, but if we will obey His word, he will reward us with Salvation. Take water baptism, for example: Why would God ask us to be dunked in water in order to have our sins forgiven? (See Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38) He gave us an example of this in the Old Testament through a leper named Naaman. Naaman's wife put in a "prayer request" that God would heal him of his leprosy. God answered her request by sending Elisha the prophet. Elisha had what seemed like a very unusual answer for them. Check this out:

2 Kings 5: 10 – 14 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and *you shall* be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, '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 heal the leprosy.' ¹² Are not the Abanah and the 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. ¹³ And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, *if* the prophet had told you *to do* something great, would you not have done *it*? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

In verse 11, Naaman's initial response was that he thought his cleansing would come through some other method – perhaps the prophet would simply "wave his hand" or use his voice to call on the name of the LORD. In verse 12, Naaman begins to question the dirty water of the Jordan River! In his finite mind, he simply did not understand how *unclean water* could save his filthy body. Little did he know that the power of healing was not in the water – it was in *obedience to the Word of God*. In Noah's day, God chose water not only as a means to destroy the world, but also as a way in which the obedient could be saved:

1 Peter 3: 20 – 21 "...in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. ²¹ The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

Peter, who preached the Acts 2:38 Salvation message, is clarifying that baptism in and of itself cannot cleanse the filth of the flesh, it is our own conscience which tells us to answer the call of obedience, which in turn provides our Salvation. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved..." is not for us to question or dis-prove; it is for us to obey. (See Mark 16:16)

Paul, formerly known as Saul, was given this instruction when he had his encounter with Jesus Christ:

Acts 22: 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Hebrews 11: 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

I pray that the Word of God has given you a clearer understanding of Justification by Faith. The righteousness of God is imputed, or placed upon us, through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, true faith is not a "one time profession". Our faith in Christ is evidenced by our obedience to His Word. Obedience to God is not a work of the law, it is faith in action. Throughout the entire Bible, courageous people of God were saved, healed, or delivered because they demonstrated their faith, against all odds. I urge you to read the entire 11th chapter of Hebrews. You will find remarkable accounts of men and women who lived out their faith at all costs. It is a summary of some of the greatest stories ever told.

Though the stories vary tremendously, they all had one common denominator:

Obedience to God's Word because of faith in God's promise.

In each case, faith was demonstrated by their act of obedience to the plan of God. For example:

Hebrews 11: 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous...

Abel heard the Word of the Lord, believed the message, *then did something* about it. He prepared a blood sacrifice, and because of his obedience was declared righteous.

Hebrews 11: 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Noah heard the Word of the Lord, believed the message, *then did something* about it. He moved with godly fear and built the Ark. (See Philippians 2: 12) Because of his obedience, he saved his entire family and was declared righteous.

Hebrews 11: 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Abraham heard the Word of the Lord, believed the message, *then did something* about it. He moved totally by faith that God would lead and guide him. Because he obeyed, because he put feet to his faith, he was considered righteous, and the friend of God. (See James 2: 23)

Now here is the bottom line to our New Testament Salvation:

In Acts 2, the Bible records the birth of the New Testament Church. Not coincidentally, Peter, who was given the charge by Jesus (Matthew 16: 18, 19), was the first Apostle to preach a sermon and the first one to tell people how to be saved. (See Acts 2: 37, 38) The crowd heard the Word, believed the Word, and then did something about it:

Acts 2: 41, 42 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine...

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10: 17), but we do not simply hear it and go our merry way – *we do something* about it. By faith, we obey God, and follow the plan of Salvation, trusting that we will obtain the promise of eternal life. It all begins and ends with faith. We are justified by our faith in God. It's simply amazing. It's simply grace. Simply amazing grace.

The End

Rick Flores is former Youth Pastor of over 7 years, and a Bible Teacher of Youth, College, and Adult classes for 30 years at Hope Center Church in San Antonio, TX. The following is a list of other studies he has written, and are available by contacting: www.backontrackbiblestudies.com or Rick Flores @ Facebook.com/Back on Track Bible Studies; or Facebook.com/Rick Flores; Twitter @RickFloresRG1 or email @ rgflores1@sbcglobal.net

“The Power of God: The Gospel of Jesus Christ”

The importance of The Word of God, The Oneness of God, and Biblical Salvation.

“The Spirit of Truth”

Learning how to decipher the difference between Truth & Error. The detailed meaning behind Repentance and the New Birth. The true meaning of holiness and separation from the world.

“Withstanding the Winds”

Answers to the most common questions/objections to the Acts 2:38 message and the message of The Mighty God in Christ (Oneness doctrine). Highly recommended for all Apostolic teachers.

“One Hour to Heaven”

A one hour study of Salvation that cuts to the chase - What did Jesus say we *must* do to be saved? Did the Apostles' preaching confirm His words? How can we be certain about our Salvation?

“If I Had One Hour To Tell You About One God”

A brief, yet concise one hour study on the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Mighty God.

A very special thank you to my incredible wife, Diana, who not only is my best friend, but my IT Person! She has saved me many hours and headaches as I navigate my way through life.

A Grace Awakening? (The Pressure to compromise)

One thing I have noticed in being in the Apostolic Faith for over 30 years is that the pressure to water down the message comes much more from *within* than it does from *without*. Someone will always be determined to tell us what we DON'T have to do, and DON'T have to preach, rather than answering the cry of the masses: "What MUST we do to be saved?"

They claim to have received a "grace awakening", as though we have not already believed in the unmerited favor of God. We absolutely believe in the grace and mercy of God. Mercy is "not getting what you had coming" - and we can all attest to that. Grace is "getting what you did not deserve" - and we all know that we were sinners sentenced to a devil's hell until Jesus stepped on the scene.

They claim that somehow this "revelation" from the teachings in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, etc. on Grace and Justification by faith somehow nullify the Acts 2:38 message. They claim that insisting on water baptism is causing people to "work" for their Salvation. Can I remind you: You do not even HAVE an epistle without first having a church to write the epistle to. You do not have a book of Romans unless you first have a red hot apostolic revival there - and it is evident by Paul's words in both Romans 6: 3 - 6 and Romans 8: 9 - 11 that they had been baptized in Jesus' name and filled with The Holy Ghost. You do not have a book of Ephesians without the gospel being taken to Ephesus by Paul in Acts 19. Herein lies the questions that we all have to answer: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?", and "Unto what then were you baptized?" (See Acts 19: 1 - 6) The first disciples in Ephesus to receive the gospel were baptized in Jesus' name and spoke with tongues when the Holy Ghost came upon them.

It is true that Peter, (who preached the Acts 2: 38 message), says we are saved by grace (Acts 15:11) and by believing on the Lord (Acts 11: 17). And yes, Paul, (who preached the same message of Salvation as Peter did), says that we are justified by our faith (Rom. 3:28; 5: 1) and saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2: 8, 9). But hear me LOUD AND CLEAR: Neither of these two Apostles were attempting to cancel out their own words, or God's Salvation plan. They simply had an understanding of grace, faith and believing that many others have distorted. The "works" Paul spoke of in Ephesians 2 were clearly the works of the law, and had nothing to do with standards of discipline, holiness, or the Acts 2: 38 message.

Those who claim that we are free from the law are quick to forget that the God did not turn from being a "thou shalt not" God of the Old Testament to a "do as you please" God of the New Testament. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, he came to fulfill it. While we are free from the ceremonial laws, we have never received a license to sin. (See Romans 6: 15) We are now governed by the laws that are written in our hearts - our tablets of flesh. "Thou shalt not kill" becomes "do not be angry or hate your brother". "Thou shalt not commit adultery" becomes "get rid of the lust in your heart", etc. (See Matthew 5)

Hebrews 8: 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

The commandments of God are now in our hearts. We have even a greater obligation to them because we have received His Spirit. I know this is not popular, but let me remind you of what Jesus said:

John 14: 15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 15: 14 Ye are my friends, IF ye do whatsoever I command you.

Matthew 7: 21- 23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Do you know what that word, “iniquity” means in this setting? It means “LAWLESSNESS”. It means people were going through all the motions of church, but not doing the will of God, and not being led by the spiritual laws that God had placed in their heart.

It has been my observation throughout the years that those who say we are in bondage, and who desire to rid the church of “legalism” are also those have an uncanny way of ridding the church of the necessity of the name of Jesus Christ in water baptism. Before long the necessity of the Holy Ghost baptism is also a thing of the past – all in the name of “grace”. Don’t get me wrong: Be thankful if you are in a church that teaches grace, but be overwhelmed with appreciation for your Pastor if you are in a place where grace teaches the church:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. ¹⁵ These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. **Titus 2: 11 – 15**

Bottom line is, check yourself: Are you preaching the love, mercy, grace, and long-suffering of God? Are you preaching “70 x 70” forgiveness? Are you preaching restoration to the backslider? If you are, blessed and highly favored are you! However, you MUST continue to preach INWARD holiness and OUTWARD separation from the world. God’s Word still declares, “Come out from among them and be separate.” A church preaching only rules and regulations will drive people away. A church that preaches “anything goes” becomes more of a social club. Find your balance. Love God. Love people. Contend for the Faith. Defend the Truth. Remember where you came from. Take people where you are going.

We are not out of line to teach moral standards, and we are definitely not out of line to teach the Acts 2:38 message as the plan of Salvation. Don’t let anyone despise you. Preach the Word. Remember, you do not have “saved by grace through faith” until you have been extended the grace of God and been moved by your faith to obey God’s great Salvation plan. Obedience is not a work. Obedience is not a sacrifice. As a matter of fact, it’s BETTER than sacrifice. Just ask King Saul.