

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

I once thought that the faith of the phrase “through faith” in 2: 8 indicated the assurance of the salvation we have by grace. I had taken the passage to mean essentially this: “We are saved by grace and we know we are saved through faith.” Though the sentiment is a scriptural truth, I was made to realize – rather painfully and embarrassingly – that the text says something very different. Paul identified grace and the faith as the cause of our eternal salvation; not just grace but grace and faith. Like I said, this realization of something that seems now so obvious caused me a lot of discomfort. For a while, I really wished Paul had not used “through faith” in 2:8. It would have made things so much easier for me as a Primitive Baptist! But God inspired the Apostle Paul to write “through faith” and that means God had only good reasons for it being there. I therefore began to pray and seek God’s help to learn what He would be pleased to show me about Ephesians 2:8. The following gives both my experience in studying the verse and the results of my study.

I quickly came to realize that I had to come to terms with the second half of 2:8 and how it impacted the first half. Is it telling me where faith comes from? I knew that many of our brethren have used this part of the verse to explain where faith comes from. Faith, some have said, is “that not yourselves: it is the gift of God.” I, too, held that opinion as true but what nagged at me was Paul said in 2: 9, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” I saw that it clearly serves as a restatement of the second half of 2:8. The “that not of yourselves” of 2:8 paralleled to “not of works lest any man should boast” of 2:9. I then came to see that grammatically and exegetically the “that” and the “it” referred not to the faith but to the salvation mentioned in the first half of 2:8. It’s as if the Apostle had written, “and that salvation is not of yourselves: that salvation is the gift of God: the salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast they earned it.” In researching the prepositions “by” and “through”, I found that they typically are used to describe the means or the agent by which something happens. In many cases, they are used to describe the efficient cause of an effect. When by and through are used together, the “by” is used as the primary and the “through as the instrumental efficient causes of an effect. Thus, “by grace” and “through faith” describe the efficient means or cause of salvation, which is obviously “eternal salvation.” I knew that a cause must always precede its effect, so, if “by grace” and “through faith” denote the cause of our salvation, then logically grace and faith had to exist and act prior to us being saved.

When I finally saw this, I confess that I really felt at a loss. The grammar and logic compelled me to acknowledge that Paul meant something I didn’t think he ought to have meant. Imagine that! I had resisted viewing the faith as God’s faith for years thinking it was probably an Old Baptist work-around to a thorny issue. I had come to see that “it is the gift of God” was not meant to explain how we get faith to exercise in belief of the Gospel so as to get assurance of salvation. I had long ago eliminated the possibility that it was God’s faith and now I had eliminated the possibility that it was my faith! I had run out of faiths to use! Talk about your quandaries! Adding to my quandary was the first mention of faith in Ephesians. In 1:15, Paul wrote that he had “heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.” Clearly, Paul here meant that their exercise of faith in the Lord just as much as he meant it was their exercise of love unto the saints. I wondered, “Does this verse set the context for understanding the faith in 2:8?” I could not go with any view of 2:8 that said, “God’s grace and my

AN ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 2:8 AND THE MEANING OF 'THROUGH FAITH'

faith in Jesus are the cause of my eternal salvation.” But, I had also come to see based on grammar and exegesis that neither imparted faith nor gospel faith qualified as valid for “through faith”. I was surely in the quandary of all quandaries.

I therefore resolved to start at the beginning of the second chapter and work my way down to the eighth verse as carefully and as conscientiously as I could. As I proceeded, I found it helpful to write what I was seeing in an outline-like analysis. In studying 2:1-7 like this, I found it helped me see understand the build-up to 2:8.

Four reasons for the need of grace:

1. You couldn't save yourself because "... you ... were dead in trespasses and sins.”
2. You were actively moving in the wrong “[w]herein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.”
3. You walked “according to the prince of the power of the air.”
4. The one who motivated you to walk this way was “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

Four descriptions of our state while in sin:

1. “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past.”
2. “In the lusts of our flesh.”
3. “Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”
4. “And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Two categories of people who are equally dead in sins and totally depraved:

1. The “you” in verses one and two which are Gentiles, and
2. The “we” in verse three which are Jews.

Three reasons given in verse four for why God saved us:

1. Mercy - Because He is “rich in mercy.”
2. Love - Because of His “great love wherewith he loved us.”
3. Our helpless state - Because we couldn't save ourselves since “we were dead in sins.”

The two-fold plan of the Apostle Paul for Ephesians 2:1-7:

1. From verses one to four, Paul described what we were saved from.
2. From verses five through seven, he described what we are saved to.

Because we cannot save ourselves, we need someone to save us which is what God did when he “quickened us together with Christ,” and this describes what grace is and why he wrote in verse five:

(by grace ye are saved.)

This parenthetical statement acts as the header for signaling what is to come in verses six and seven.

Three four-fold facets of salvation by grace:

AN ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 2:8 AND THE MEANING OF 'THROUGH FAITH'

1. God has <u>quickened</u> .	God has <u>raised</u> .	God has <u>made</u> .
2. God has quickened <u>us</u> .	God has raised <u>us</u> .	God has made <u>us</u> .
3. God has quickened us <u>together</u> .	God has raised us <u>up together</u> .	God has made us <u>sit together</u> .
4. God has quickened us together <u>with Christ</u> .	God has raised us up together <u>with Christ</u> .	God has made us sit together <u>with Christ</u> .

Having already described the “salvation from” aspect of salvation by grace, he proceeded to describe the “salvation to” aspect in verse six:

1. Everyone together was quickened.
2. Everyone together was raised up when quickened.
3. Everyone together was made to sit in heavenly places when they were quickened.

He tied our quickening/raising/sitting to when Christ was quickened/raised/seated:

1. Everyone who was quickened was quickened when Christ was quickened.
2. Everyone who was raised up was raised up when Christ was raised up.
3. Everyone who was made to sit together in heavenly places was made to sit when Christ was seated in Heaven.

Verse six conclusion: this speaks of what happened for us representatively in Christ when Christ was resurrected and ascended to Heaven.

Verse seven concludes the “salvation to” aspect of salvation by grace:

1. We are allowed to sit in heavenly places because we are “In Christ Jesus.”
2. God will show us “in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace” because we are “in Christ Jesus.”
3. God can bestow “his kindness toward us” because of what we have “through Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 2:1-7 summary: God saved us all together by grace from a currently downward death in sin to a currently upward life in Christ in heavenly places that includes a future life with Him in the heavenly places where God shall show us the exceeding riches of His grace.

After putting that together, I had an epiphany; a blinding flash of the obvious. I noticed for the first time – as if I had never seen it there before – how verse seven ended. It ended with the phrase “through Jesus Christ”, so I began to consider if “through Jesus Christ” had any bearing on “through faith.” I had come to realize that the over-arching theme of 2:5-7 was God's work in accomplishing salvation, and it had become obvious to me that in these verses Paul nowhere indicated that we had any our part in acquiring our salvation. Though we are the glad recipients of this salvation, Paul gave no indication especially in 2:5-7 of our active participation in it. This convinced me that, whatever impact the phrase "through Christ Jesus" had on 2:8, it couldn't be pointing to our experience of this salvation. If the faith in 2:8 is our faith, 2:5-7 gave nothing as set-up for that contextual view of faith. The thought occurred to me that Paul had used Jesus and faith interchangeably in his Galatians epistle. In Galatians 3:25,

AN ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 2:8 AND THE MEANING OF 'THROUGH FAITH'

Paul wrote. "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Paul could not have meant God didn't start giving the gift of faith until after the incarnation of Christ. He clearly substituted the person of Jesus for the thing called faith. The schoolmaster was removed when faith, that is, Christ came. In Ga 3:22, Paul wrote that the "promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." He meant that the promise came about by the faith of Jesus Christ. In other words, Christ's obedience to the Father brought about the long awaited promise. Paul then in Ga 3:25 uses the word "faith" as shorthand for "the faith of Jesus Christ" of Ga 3:22. Although what Paul wrote in Galatians isn't directly applicable, it nevertheless helped me better understand Paul's view of faith and it provided me a very useful parallel to both the "through Christ Jesus" in Eph 2:7 and "through faith" in Eph 2:8.

From my attempt at parsing 2:1-7, I arrived at these three conclusions:

1. That God saved us all from the same thing because we were all together in the same depraved state.
2. That God saved us all the same way because we were quickened together.
3. That God saved us all the same time because we were quickened together with Christ.

Furthermore, I noticed how the Apostle Paul used the following three prepositional phrases to express Christ's work on our behalf:

1. With Christ - we were made alive with Him when He was made alive.
2. In Christ - we are made to sit together in Heavenly Places because He is in those Heavenly Places.
3. Through Christ - we are saved because of what He did for us.

These three things reinforced in my mind that Paul had been emphasizing the work of salvation rather than our experience of it. It therefore seemed to me that Paul wasn't focused solely on the idea of regeneration when he wrote in 2:1, "and you hath he quickened." In 2:1, Paul wrote, "And you hath he quickened who were dead," and, in 2:5, he wrote, "hath quickened us together with Christ." I asked myself, "Are both or one or none speaking of regeneration in part or in whole?" The answer came admittedly in a roundabout way. I noticed that 2:1 has "hath he quickened" in italics. Words or phrases in italics indicate where the Translators added words to help the passage make sense in English. Without the italicized words, 2:1 reads like this: "And you who were dead in trespasses and sins." Reading 2:1 this way helped made a lot of sense when viewed within the contextual theme of 2:1-4, which is the need for salvation. Paul's statement in 2:1 was meant as his lead-off statement for emphasizing what we were saved from: "death in trespasses and sins." By contrast, 2:5 gives "quickened together with Christ" in plain non-italicized type, so these words are literally in the original Greek text and not supplied by the Translators. The phrase in 2:5, unlike that of 2:1, puts much less emphasis on the idea of regeneration than it does on the legal and representational aspect of Christ's work. I could see that 2:5 represented more of what Paul meant by quickening than 2:1, so I concluded that Paul wasn't so much focused on explaining our regeneration as he was to show the sin state we were all in together and how Christ delivered us all together at one time from that sin state by His atoning death on the cross. Still, I had to wonder, "How does this bear on the meaning of 'through faith' in 2:8?"

I remembered hearing about a debate that had been raging in the seminaries for ten or more years concerning the correct interpretation of the Greek phrase "pisteous iesou christou" which is almost always translated in our KJV as "the faith of Jesus Christ." Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:16 are notable examples of this. In Ephesians 2:8, the Textus Receptus shows the definite article in front of pistis: δια της πιστεως (dia tes pisteos), which literally interpreted would read as, "through the faith." Though I am not expert in koine Greek, I feel very confident in saying that "through the faith" gives an accurate translation of the Greek for Eph 2:8, even if it may seem overly literal. Romans 3:25 shows the same Greek syntax for "through faith" as Eph 2:8, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." To me, Romans 3:25 shows the promise-keeping good-faith of God in the salvation of His people by putting His Son to death in our place. In Romans 3:3, Paul in saying "the faith of God" conveyed the idea of the fidelity of God in contrast to the Jew's infidelity. In Romans 3:22, he used "the faith of Jesus Christ" to convey Jesus' faith-keeping in fulfilling the promise He had made to His Father before time.

I had long ago come to see that Paul's use of faith often carried the idea of something far greater than mere belief. In fact, Paul many times used faith in the same way we would to convey the idea of fidelity or, as I have put it, faith-keeping. Titus 2:10 uses fidelity, "Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity." The word "fidelity" in Titus 2:10 comes from the Greek πιστιν (pistin) which is the word most often translated in the KJV into the word "faith". A context for faith as fidelity therefore had been set throughout Paul's epistles and especially in his Romans and Galatians epistles. Though this seemed a valid point, it nevertheless relied too heavily on what I considered to be a very technical explanation. Nevertheless, I was beginning to see how "for by grace are ye saved through the faith of Jesus Christ" was every bit as valid a take as any other I had heard and more valid than most. I had to admit that this view flowed seamlessly from 2:7's ending phrase of "through Christ Jesus." Though I liked this view more and more, I still thought it lacked conclusive evidence to establish it as *bona fide*. I felt that, if it is true that the faith of 2:8 is the faith of Christ, then I felt it would be best if it could be validated within the Ephesian epistle.

I began a review of the places in Ephesians where the word 'faith' is mentioned, and the first mention of faith in Ephesians is in 1:15. As I had said earlier, the phrase "your faith in the Lord Jesus" plainly meant the believer's exercise of faith in Christ. I began to wonder if 1:15 truly set the context for 2:8 and its use of faith. If it did, then how could anyone validly affirm faith in 2:8 as Christ's and, if true, how could I reconcile the idea of my exercise of faith as part of the efficient cause of my eternal salvation? As I ruminated on that question, I recalled something a good friend of mine had taught me about biblical hermeneutics and this helped me immensely. He said, "As we ponder a text or a given author's use of a word or idea, we start with the immediate context of the letter in which our passage appears, and then we "spiral" out from that point to the broader use of the word or idea in that letter, and then to other letters written by the same author, etc." This helped me "get over" the feeling that I had to prove "though faith" as "through the faith of Christ" by a passage in Ephesians that clearly taught this. Still, I felt I should at least give a conscientious effort at proving this concept by a passage in Ephesians. If I couldn't, it wouldn't disprove the faith of 2:8 as Christ's faith.

As I looked for "faith" verses in Ephesians, I noticed how few verses there were of these. Paul's low-frequency use of the word 'faith' in Ephesians indicated that he had put a low emphasis on a discussion

AN ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 2:8 AND THE MEANING OF 'THROUGH FAITH'

of faith in that epistle; especially, when compared to his other letters where he spoke about 'faith' such as Roman and Galatians. While Paul does use the word more in the later chapters, it seemed safe to conclude that Paul felt that the church in Ephesus had no problems with the doctrine of faith, so he focused on other matters in this letter. I looked at Ephesians 4:5 and its mention of "one faith" but that seemed hardly to resonate at all with Ephesians 2:8. I looked at Eph 4:13; 6:16, 21, 23 and found that these mostly referred to "the faith" meaning the Gospel. I found two mentions of faith in the third chapter: 3:12 and 3:17. In 3:17, it speaks of the faith in our hearts which I could easily see as the faith we are given by God. It was 3:12, however, that made me stand up and take notice. In 3:12, Paul wrote, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." This expression in the more popular English versions of the Bible that have come out since the publication of the KJV -- most notably, the RV, ASV, RSV, and the NIV -- all have "by faith in him." Robertson, in his Word Pictures, said, "Through our faith in him. Clearly objective genitive (in him)." Wuest, in his Word Studies, said, "The words, 'faith of Him,' Vincent renders, 'faith in Him.'" Despite the negative take of those Greek experts, the more recent English versions like the ISV and the NET Bible put the word "faithfulness" in place of the word "faith". For 3:12, the NET Bible has "in whom we have boldness and confident access to God because of Christ's faithfulness." The ISV has "in whom we have boldness and confident access through his faithfulness." A couple of the so-called literal translations have chosen to translate 3:12 almost verbatim to how we find it worded in our KJV. The Literal Translation of the Holy Bible (LITV) gives, "in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through His faith." Young's Literal Translation gives, "in whom we have the freedom and the access in confidence through the faith of him." The ISV, NET, LITV, and Young's are not better than or equal to the KJV, and I don't view them as the Bible like I do the KJV. I see them more as I might a commentary like Gill's. Nevertheless, I think they give compelling linguistic support to the view that 3:12 speaks of Christ's faith and not ours.

I found it very interesting that the first three mentions of faith in Ephesians are 1:15 ("faith in"), 2:8 ("through faith"), and 3:12 ("faith of"). Does "faith in" in 1:15 mean something different to "faith of" in 3:12? My first thought was that, since the Translators had chosen to use both phrases within the same epistle, they must have intentionally chosen to use "faith in" in 1:15 and "faith of" in 3:12. I concluded that the Translators, at least, saw some difference in meaning between the two phrases. My next thought started in the form of a question: "What best fits the context of 3:12: my faith in obeying the Lord or His faith in obeying His Father?" So I looked for the immediate context of 3:12 and found that it starts in 3:8 where Paul argued that the gospel he preached to the Gentiles until recently had been hidden "from the beginning of the world." Paul said the recent revelation of this hidden truth came about by the work of Christ. When I saw this, I realized what Paul was telling the Ephesians in 3:12. In essence, he told them, "Because of what Jesus did, we stand free and confident before God." Thus, it is as a consequence of Christ's work that we have this "boldness and access in confidence."

Before I could sign-off on 3:12 as teaching Christ's faith, I tested it one more time by considering the faith as my exercise of faith. I asked myself, "If this is my faith in the Lord Jesus, then how can I have and maintain "boldness and access with confidence?" I know that many times my faith is cold and weak and sometimes almost nonexistent. I couldn't see how I could have bold and confident access if this was my faith. Then this thought came to me: If my "boldness and access with confidence" is based on Christ's abiding faith-keeping, on His obeying His Father, and not on my exercise of faith, then Paul's thought makes a lot of sense. This made me think of what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:13,

AN ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 2:8 AND THE MEANING OF 'THROUGH FAITH'

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Paul's words to Timothy have given me a lot of comfort over the years. It gives me confidence that I can always go to the Lord even though I am oftentimes disobedient. Why should I feel confident in my access to the Lord even when I have been disobedient? It is because, though He may deny me fellowship for a while, He will never deny He died for me. Paul throughout 3:1-11 alluded to the riches that we (especially us Gentiles) have. He made it plain that we have these riches because of what Christ did for us. Paul clearly stated that the Gospel was one of those riches we have because of Christ's atoning sacrifice, but the gospel (and our belief of it) was not what bestowed those riches upon us. To see this greatly brought me around to viewing 3:12 and "the faith of Him" as Christ's fidelity rather than mine. I now felt that "by the faith of him" in 3:12 indisputably had been proved to mean Christ's faith. I now needed to determine if this was part of the context for the "through faith" in 2:8.

As I began to see Paul's major emphasis in chapter three, I began to see how he had already discussed it in the earlier chapters. Not only was Christ's death an atoning sacrifice but it was that which brought riches to all those for whom He died. In 1:7, Paul spoke of what His death accomplished, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Here we see His death brought us redemption, and, as a result, we have forgiveness of sins, and this accords or agrees to the riches of His grace. In a very similar vein of thought, Paul in 2:7 spoke of the exceeding riches of his grace that God would show us through (or because of) Christ Jesus. Since 3:12 spoke of access to God, this made me think of what Paul said in 2:18, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." 2:18 bears a remarkably close resemblance to 3:12. Notice how in 2:18 it has, "for through him we both have access." I noticed the close resemblance it bore to 3:12, and, since they are so similar, I noticed what 2:18 stated the reason for why we have this wonderful access: It is "through him." Paul's use of "through him" maps precisely to his use of "by the faith of him" in 3:12. It occurred to me that both phrases mean the same thing: "Through him," is therefore just another way of saying, "by the faith of Him." I can't begin to tell you how this impacted my mind when I saw this!

Proceeding with my hunt for the contextual headwaters of 3:12, it became clear to me that, in 2:18, Paul had essentially said, "Because of what Christ did for us, both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father by means of the Spirit." I consider this to mean the same thing that Paul meant in 3:12. The basis for Paul's statement in 2:18 is found in 2:16 where he taught that God removed the thing that separated Jew from Gentile. The partition was removed by means of Christ's death on the cross. Christ's death not only brought us redemption, forgiveness, riches, and access, it also unified His family by removing the partition of between Jew and Gentile. To accomplish this unification, He had to make peace (2:14) with God. To make peace required the shedding of His blood, that is, His death. Before His death, we Gentiles were rightly seen by the Circumcision (i.e., the Jews) as the Uncircumcision. Paul explained in 2:12 that, to a Jew, the Uncircumcised were, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." In truth, we were this way because we were, as Paul said in 2:12, "without Christ." Then Paul in 2:13 gave us Gentiles the good news, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Paul's thoughts in 2:11-13 tie back to what he said in 2:10, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This sets the stage for what follows in the remainder of the second and third chapters: We are now allowed to participate in the riches of grace and to approach the Father boldly and confidently because we belong to Christ as His

AN ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 2:8 AND THE MEANING OF ‘THROUGH FAITH’

workmanship. It was at this point in my studies that God blessed me to see clearly that 2:8 and 3:12 form a contextual block that 1:15 has very little bearing on. The context strongly supports and practically demands that we understand the phrase “through faith” in 2:8 to be equivalent in meaning to “because of His faith.” I now say with confidence – though I trust with humility and gratitude to God – that God inspired the Apostle Paul to convey essentially this:

“For by means of God’s grace are we all eternally saved because of the fidelity of Christ; and that salvation is not of us: salvation is the gift of God: not of our works lest any of us should boast that we earned it.”

This, brethren, is how I arrived at my current view of Ephesians 2:8. Believe it or not, I am giving the condensed version of many hours of study and meditation and hashing it out with others. I am grateful for the faith we as Primitive Baptists hold to. It is more precious to me now than ever.