

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

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oldhickorycofc.com

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How Did the Walls of Jericho Fall?

The Old Testament story of the destruction of the city of Jericho is recorded in Joshua 6. This was an impressive victory for the Israelites because Jericho was a fortified city protected by a great wall. As Israel came to the city, we read, "Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in" (Josh. 6:1).

Jericho was not strong enough to escape destruction. It was utterly destroyed (Josh. 6:21). To what can this victory be attributed? Was it a grand and glorious gift of God? Was it a result of the efforts of Israel under the leadership of Joshua? The answer is yes. It was both.

The Walls of Jericho Fell by the Grace of God

"And the Lord said to Joshua: 'See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor,'" (Josh. 6:2). God plainly tells us the walls of Jericho fell because he gave it to the children of Israel.

This was a demonstration of the grace of God. By themselves, the Israelites had very little hope of accomplishing such a great task. However, with God's grace, destroying Jericho seemed to be an easy task. Their victory was a gift from God.

The Walls of Jericho Fell by Faith

God's gift to Israel was based upon conditions. "You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him" (Josh. 6:3-5).

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days" (Heb. 11:30). It was necessary for Israel to meet God's conditions in order to partake of his gift.

Even though God gave them the city, notice Israel did not receive the gift until after meeting God's conditions.

We Can Learn Valuable Lessons Concerning Grace and Faith

When one meets the condition of receiving God's gifts (this is faith), it does not change the fact that it is still a gift (this is grace).

When man meets the conditions of receiving the grace of God, there is no room for glorying in self. Notice after Israel obeyed God and the walls fell that Joshua said, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!" (Josh. 6:16). They did not say, "Hey, look what we did all by ourselves!" They understood their victory was a gift. They had overcome Jericho by the grace of God.

It took both grace and faith for the walls of Jericho to fall. Walls do not fall down by marching around them. Truly, the victory was by the grace of God. However, God did not give Israel the victory until after they had met his conditions. Eliminate the grace of God or the faith of Israel and the walls of Jericho would not have fallen.

How Are Men Saved From Their Sins?

Are we saved from our sins by the grace of God? Are we saved from our sins by faith? The answer is yes. The Bible teaches that we are saved by grace and by faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

We Are Saved By Grace

The penalty of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). God paid this penalty and removed the burden of sin by giving us his Son as a sacrifice. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Sinful man had done nothing to earn this demonstration of love. It was truly a free gift, grace.

We Are Saved By Faith

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). Saving faith is the acceptance of God's terms and conditions for receiving his gift. This acceptance is demonstrated through obedience to God's terms and conditions. Remember, man is saved by grace through faith.

Example of Salvation by Grace and Faith

The saints at Ephesus were saved by grace and faith. Paul said, "For by grace you have been saved . . ." (Eph. 2:8). Concerning their salvation, Paul recognized the "exceeding greatness of His power toward us" (Eph. 1:19). This power was demonstrated in two ways. First, Paul says, "By which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead"

(Eph. 1:20). Second, Paul says, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). It is by the grace of God that those dead spiritually in sin can be made alive spiritually. God provided this salvation through the giving of his Son and raising him from the dead.

Did Paul mean the Ephesians were saved by grace alone? Certainly not for Paul also said, “. . . You have been saved by faith” (Eph. 2:8). It took grace and faith. Paul understood those dead in their trespasses and sins must accept God’s terms and conditions of salvation. Those terms and conditions were given in the gospel of Christ. As an apostle, Paul was given “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:2). Paul preached “the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6). The Ephesians were not saved until they heard the gospel, believed on Christ, and were baptized in the name of the Lord (Eph. 1:14; Acts 19:4-5). Their faith was demonstrated in obedience to God’s terms of receiving grace. Without obedience to the gospel of the dispensation of the grace of God, the Ephesians would not have been saved.

The Ephesians were not saved by grace alone. They were not saved by faith alone. The Bible teaches us it took both grace and faith to bring salvation to those dead in trespasses and sins. Eliminate the grace of God or the faith of the Ephesians and they would not have been saved. Therefore, there was no room for self-glory on the part of the Ephesians. Their salvation was not a result of personal works (Eph. 2:9).

Conclusion

It took such great love on God’s part to give sinful man his Son. Christ demonstrated great love in allowing sinful man to cruelly and shamefully crucify him. Truly, we have done nothing to deserve this. There is nothing man has done or can ever do to deserve this grace.

However, we must realize, God’s grace is conditional. It must be accepted by faith. Faith is demonstrated by obeying the word of God. Faith will lead one to:

- Believe — John 8:32
- Repent — Luke 13:3
- Confess — Romans 10:9, 10
- Be Baptized — Mark 16:16
- Remain faithful at all costs — Revelation 2:10

When one meets these conditions, it does not change the fact that one is saved by the grace of God. It does not give one opportunity to glory in self. “Hey, look what I did!” It takes both the grace of God and obedient faith to be saved. God has done his part. Have you done yours?

- Steve Curtis, via Truth Magazine, June 7, 2001

With My Whole Heart

David said, "With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments" (Psa. 119:10).

Many religious folks talk about "heart-felt" faith and about seeking after God "with all my heart," but "they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they confidently affirm" (1 Tim. 1:7). This is seen in the case of those who speak derisively and disparagingly about "seeking to find God between the pages of a book." When faced with the fact that their doctrines and practices are human traditions, the inventions of men, they smugly and confidently assert that their faith is "spiritual and deeply imbedded in my heart, and not in the keeping of commandments." They assure us they have "more confidence that Jesus is in my heart than you do that he is in your commandments."

But note the Psalm above. Assuredly, one must seek God with his "whole heart." Certainly, we must let Christ "dwell in (our) hearts by faith" (Eph 3:17). But how does "faith" (through which Christ dwells in our hearts) come? "Faith cometh by hearing," by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). So, one must seek God and faith in him "between the pages of a book," the Bible.

Further, after David spoke of seeking God with his whole heart, he said, "O let me not wander from thy commandments." Let that sink in. The Spirit connects whole hearted seeking and service to God with one's not wandering from the commandments of the Lord.

Therefore, those who would divorce "whole hearted faith in God" from "keeping commandments" are separating that which the Holy Spirit joined together, and we would remind them that "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." God joined whole hearted faith and trust in him with the keeping of his commandments. Those who would sever them do so at their own peril (Matt. 7:21-27).

- Larry Ray Hafley

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- > "When you meet temptation, be sure to turn to the right!"
 - > "The one thing worse than a quitter is the person who is afraid to begin!"
 - > "Some folks don't look up until they are flat on their backs!"
 - > "Bad habits are like a comfortable bed: easy to get into, but hard to get out of!"
 - > "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Generosity!*" (Text: Acts 4:32); Sunday evening: "*You Must Be Born Again!*" (John 3:1-15).