Is an Individual Saved by Grace, Faith or Works?

If you listen to a variety of Bible teachers, you will find that the subject of how an individual is saved from sin is one which seemingly has more than one answer. One preacher will tell you that men are saved entirely on the basis of grace. Another teaches that salvation is by faith alone. Still others would suggest that people must be workers of good deeds and by doing so become worthy of entering into God's eternal kingdom. What makes this even more confusing to people is that each of these teachers will support their doctrine with Scripture. So how is one to understand the truth on this crucial subject? The account of Noah's salvation from the flood clarifies the answer to this all-important question.

Genesis 6:5 tells us, *"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* This grieved Jehovah in His heart, and He determined that He would destroy man from the face of the earth (6:6-7).

Noah is now introduced into the narrative. The Holy Spirit records that *"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8).* What can one conclude about Noah from this text? Was he without sin? No. If he were perfect then he would not stand in need of grace (undeserved favor). God made a decision to extend His grace to Noah by warning him about the impending flood and giving him the means by which he might avoid this destruction. Was Noah then saved by grace? Yes. Was Noah saved by grace alone? No.

Jehovah gave Noah instructions on how He planned for him to escape this destruction. The Lord told Noah to build an ark in order to avoid being swept away by the flood. It was imperative that Noah believe both the warning of

the forthcoming judgment and the means by which God instructed him that he could be saved.

Would Noah have been saved from the flood despite God having extended His grace to him, if he had not believed the Lord's message? No. God expected Noah to take Him at His word. Was Noah saved by grace? Yes. Was he saved by faith? Yes. Was he saved by either of the two with the exclusion of the other? No.

Noah believed God when He warned of the impending destruction that was to come upon the world. Jehovah gave Noah a blueprint by which he could be saved. He instructed Noah to build the ark to a specific length, width, and height. The Lord also specified the type of wood that was to be used in the construction of the ark. In addition, He told Noah how many windows and floors to build into the craft. Would the Lord have saved Noah from the flood if he had sat on a hill and waited for God to provide the ark for his salvation? No. Obedience was a necessary ingredient in this equation if Noah was to escape being among those who God would annihilate in His judgment. Would God have saved Noah if he had decided upon a different method by which to save himself from the flood? No. Was Noah free to alter the plans that God had provided him for his salvation? No. Noah had to carry out his obedience to the Lord's commands without altering God's blueprint. Was Noah saved as a result of his obedience? Yes. Did Noah's obedience to God's command negate the fact of his being saved by the grace of God? Not in any way! Noah was still a sinner who was undeserving of salvation. Did his obedience negate the fact that Noah was saved by faith? Not at all! In fact, his obedience was a response and completion of his faith.

Today, God has warned man of impending judgment. However, He has extended grace (undeserved favor) by warning us of His judgment and

providing the means by which we can be saved from sin. This grace is offered through the death of Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice for sin. God's grace is available to whomever will choose to accept it. *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11).* Although this grace is available to all men, it will only avail those who believe God's warning of judgment and His message of salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16). *"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).* Can one be saved from their sin by grace without faith? No! *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).* One cannot be saved by grace or by faith to the exclusion of the other. Can an individual be saved from their sins and enter into heaven without obedience? No. The Lord said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).* James wrote of Abraham, *"Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? (complete)…You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:22-24).* Does obedience in any way negate the fact that one is saved by grace or faith? Certainly not!

The example of Noah teaches us that grace, faith and obedience all play an essential role in our salvation. God's grace has been extended to you through His Son, Jesus Christ. Do you believe His message of judgment and salvation? If so, accept His grace by obeying His command to be united with Christ in baptism for the remission of your sins (Romans 6:3-4, Acts 22:16).