

In verse 22, Paul confirms that God, Who is righteous, imparts “*righteousness*” on the basis of “*faith in Jesus Christ.*”

even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; (Romans 3:22)

This truth verifies that God withholds righteousness under only one condition: When the depraved refuse to exercise repentance and faith in Christ. Those individuals who view the depraved as incapable of exercising repentance and faith would disagree. They would argue that God must spiritually regenerate the depraved, and follow by giving them the gifts of repentance and faith, before they can repent, believe, and be saved. I disagree for the following reasons.

The Contextual View of Repentance and Faith

The Scriptures teach that God does the saving and man does the repenting and believing, for God saves those who exercise repentance and faith while depraved. However, a debate exists regarding the source of this repentance and faith. In fact, at least two schools of thought exist within Christendom: (1) Repentance and faith are God’s gifts to those who will subsequently believe and be saved (2) Repentance and faith originate with the depraved (the spiritually unregenerated) and are exercised prior to God bestowing salvation.

The first school (1) views the depraved (the spiritually unregenerated) as totally incapable of exercising personal repentance and faith. In fact, they view the depraved as spiritual corpses—unable to respond to any spiritual stimulus. Therefore, they view the depravity of man as being a Total Depravity—thus the “T” of the TULIP.

The remaining letters of the acrostic (ULIP) rest on the foundation of this extreme view of depravity. Under this arrangement, God must, by means of Unconditional Election (the “U” of the TULIP), elect (choose) each family member (to salvation) from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. Based on this view, the depraved are incapable of repenting and believing due to their spiritual deadness. Hence, God must make that choice for them.

Limited Atonement (the “L” of the TULIP), a mindset that views Jesus as dying for the elect alone, naturally follows. Any of His blood shed for the non-elect would be wasted according to this view.

The next letter of the TULIP (the “I”) must logically (not scripturally) follow. If the depraved are incapable of exercising personal repentance and faith, as is incorrectly assumed, God must, through Irresistible Grace (the “I”), draw the elect to Himself when it is their time to repent and believe. Thus, the following sequence is incorrectly assumed: (1) God must spiritually regenerate the depraved prior to salvation (2) God follows by awarding the spiritually regenerated the gifts of repentance and faith (3) The spiritually regenerated who have received God’s gifts of repentance and faith then repent, believe, and are saved. This arrangement is unacceptable, for to be spiritually

regenerated is equivalent to being saved. So, according to this sequence, the believer is saved twice—a direct violation of the Scriptures.

This system also necessitates that the elect persevere for the purpose of validating their election—thus the “P” of the TULIP, Perseverance of the Saints. Consequently, the TULIP leaves its followers lacking assurance of their salvation. After all, to what degree must one persevere to validate his election? The answer is unattainable due to the unscriptural nature of this system’s dogma.

Because the TULIP rests upon the foundation of the “T,” Total Depravity, it rests upon shaky ground. Numerous Scriptures confirm that the depraved can recognize their lost state and, in turn, understand their need for a Savior. Adam and Eve (as mentioned earlier) are prime examples, for after sinning and becoming depraved “...*they knew that they were naked...*” (Genesis 3:7). Thus, “...*they sewed fig leaves together...*” to cover themselves due to their sin:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:7)

Also Philippians 2:11, a passage addressed previously, states:

that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2:10-11)

Many people who “*bow*” in this instance and “*confess that Jesus is Lord*” will be depraved (spiritually unregenerated), for “*every knee*” of mankind will “*bow*” instead of just some. The depraved will respond in this manner without being spiritually regenerated—negating the “T” of the TULIP, along with the other letters of the acrostic (ULIP), altogether.

The subjects of repentance and faith must be perceived properly if God is to be perceived properly.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Paul emphasizes that salvation is most definitely by God’s “*grace*” (also reference Romans 3:24 and Titus 3:7). Paul also affirms that “...*the righteous man shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17), a quote from Habakkuk 2:4.

The word “*that*” in the phrase, “*and that not of yourselves*” (Ephesians 2:8), is a major source of contention between (1) People who view faith as God’s gift and (2) People who perceive faith as originating with the depraved (the spiritually unregenerated—the lost). Individuals in the first camp view “*that*” as pointing to “*faith*.” The second camp views “*that*” as pointing to “*saved*.”

The grammar of the Greek language offers the answer. The word “*that*” (in Ephesians 2:8) refers to “*saved*” because “*faith*” is a feminine noun and the demonstrative pronoun “*that*” is neuter—making it impossible for “*that*” to refer to “*faith*.” Alford, F. F. Bruce, A. T. Robertson, W. E. Vine, Scofield, and additional Greek authorities agree according to Dave Hunt, in *What Love Is This?*, page 452.ⁱ In addition, the following notation is written in the margin of the New American Standard Bible relating to “*that*” in Ephesians 2:8:

I.e., that salvation

Even John Calvin believed that salvation rather than faith is the gift in Ephesians 2:8. On page 453 of *What Love Is This?*, Dave Hunt writes:

Calvin himself acknowledged, “But they commonly misinterpret this text, and restrict the word ‘gift’ to faith alone. But Paul...does not mean that faith is the gift of God, but that salvation is given to us by God...”ⁱⁱ

Yet, many individuals who view themselves as Calvinists would disagree with Calvin’s interpretation of this passage! I find that amazing!

Ephesians 2:9, when coupled with Ephesians 2:8, also confirms that salvation, not “*faith*,” is the “*gift*.” Ephesians 2:9 applies:

not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:9)

Paul is teaching that salvation (“*saved*”—Ephesians 2:8) is “*not...a result of works...*” (Ephesians 2:9). Salvation is a “*gift*” (Ephesians 2:8) received by those who exercise “*faith*” (Ephesians 2:8) while depraved. Thus, one cannot work himself into a right standing with God. This truth is exactly what Paul teaches elsewhere. Read Romans 3:27-28, for example, realizing that “*justified*” points to salvation:

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Romans 3:27-28)

Paul proves once again that we are “*justified*” (saved) “*apart from works*” (Romans 3:28). This truth is identical to what Paul conveys in Ephesians 2:8-9. Paul also confirms that “*boasting*” is “*excluded*” in such cases (Romans 3:27). Thus, to exercise “*faith*” while depraved is not a work. In fact, Paul contrasts “*faith*” and “*works*” on many occasions in the Scriptures. Consequently, choosing to exercise personal “*faith*” in the midst of one’s depravity is not a meritorious deed. Paul teaches the same principle in Romans 4:5, contrasting “*work*” with believing:

But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, (Romans 4:5)

Romans 9:30-32 confirms the same truth:

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works...
(Romans 9:30-32)

Scripture has a great deal more to say about “*faith*.” We have already determined that “*faith*” (Ephesians 2:8-9) originates within the heart of the depraved (also read Acts 16:31, Acts 26:18, and Romans 10:8-10). The faith required prior to salvation is not God’s gift, for “*faith*” springs forth from the lost (the depraved—the spiritually unregenerated) who desire to be saved. I exercised faith in my depravity when I said, “God help, I need a Savior.” In that statement, I exhibited not only faith, but repentance as well (we will address repentance shortly). Thus, faith was not the Father’s gift prior to His saving me. On the other hand, we must not overlook the Father’s drawing (John 6:44) and the Spirit’s conviction (John 16:8) that have been ever-present in our lives. But the faith we exercised prior to salvation was our own faith, initiated in our depravity. It was not the Father’s gift!

The faith addressed in Ephesians 2:8-9 cannot be classified as God’s gift. Salvation is His gift (Ephesians 2:8-9)—given to those who exercise personal repentance and faith while depraved.

ⁱ Hunt, Dave. *What Love Is This?* Bend, OR: The Berea Call. 2006

ⁱⁱ Ibid