

## Comments on Ephesians 2:8-9 by DoctorG.

Although at first blush the meaning of these two verses seem fairly clear to most Christians, the theology expressed here has seen much debate. Let me address this somewhat briefly.

The Interlinear Bible shows Eph 2:8 as follows:

### Ephesians 2:8

τῆ	γάρ	χάριτί	ἐστε	σεσωσμένοι	διὰ	πίστεως*	καὶ	τοῦτο	οὐκ	ἐξ
tē	gar	chariti	este	sesōsmenoi	dia	pisteōs	kai	touto	ouk	ex
<a href="#">DDFS</a>	<a href="#">CS</a>	<a href="#">N-DF-S</a>	<a href="#">VIPA--2P+</a>	<a href="#">+VPRPNM2P</a>	<a href="#">PG</a>	<a href="#">N-GF-S</a>	<a href="#">AB/CC</a>	<a href="#">APDNN-S</a>	<a href="#">QN</a>	<a href="#">PG</a>
-	FOR	BY GRACE	YOU° HAVE BEEN SAVED	«	THROUGH	FAITH;	AND	THIS	NOT	OF
ὁ	γάρ	χάρις	εἰμί	σώζω	διὰ	πίστις	καὶ	οὗτος	οὐ	ἐκ
<G3588>	<G1063>	<G5485>	<G1510>	<G4982>	<G1223>	<G4102>	<G2532>	<G3778>	<G3756>	<G1537>
🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊
ὑμῶν,	θεοῦ	τὸ	δῶρον*							
humōn	theou	to	dōron							
<a href="#">NPG-2P</a>	<a href="#">N-GM-S</a>	<a href="#">DNNS</a>	<a href="#">N-NN-S</a>							
YOUR [SELVES],	[IT IS] GOD'S	-	GIFT;							
σύ	θεός	ὁ	δῶρον							
<G4771>	<G2316>	<G3588>	<G1435>							
🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊							

Here are five English translations of Ephesians 2:8-9:

### Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--  
<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.

### Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;  
<sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

### Ephesians 2:8-9 (HCSB)

<sup>8</sup> For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—  
<sup>9</sup> not from works, so that no one can boast.

### Ephesians 2:8-9 (TLB)

<sup>8</sup> Because of his kindness, you have been saved through trusting Christ. And even trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God.  
<sup>9</sup> Salvation is not a reward for the good we have done, so none of us can take any credit for it.

### Ephesians 2:8-9 (GW)

<sup>8</sup> God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God.  
<sup>9</sup> It's not the result of anything you've done, so no one can brag about it.

Note the following:

1. In vs 8 , The NIV and the NASB have the phrase “it is God's gift.” The HCB uses the phrase “it is God's Gift.” The NASB has "it is" in italics. This shows that this phrase is not in the original Greek, as shown in the Interlinear. The phrase "It is" is placed in the English text to make the language flow

better. The actual word source is (transliterated Greek) *theou*, which is Genitive (Possessive) and Masculine Gender. Note that "grace" and "faith" are both of Feminine Gender. Normally, (IMHO) a word that refers to an object takes on the gender of the object. In English, "it" is of Neuter Gender. We use "she" to refer to a woman, "he" to refer to a man. Thus one can not directly from the text determine what "it is", and consequently "gift," refers to. The bottom line - it is not possible to conclude without reservation that "it is" or "gift" refers to "faith," as many from the "Reformed" tradition do. (I use parentheses to indicate that the word Reformed is not a very precise term!)

2. The NIV and HCSB have "this not from yourselves" while the NASB has "that not of yourselves." The prepositions "of" or "from" are used rather interchangeably in English to show origin or perhaps possession. The Greek preposition seems to refer exclusively to origin, so "from" is perhaps the best English word. (Note: the NASB uses "of," perhaps, because that is what the KJV uses.....) "This" and "that" (Greek *touto*) are Neuter, so probably does not refer to "faith," which immediately precedes it, or even "grace," both of which are Feminine.

A.T. Robertson states: And that (*kai touto*). Neuter, not feminine *tautē*, and so refers not to *pistis* (feminine) or to *charis* (feminine also), but to the act of being saved by grace conditioned on faith on our part. Paul shows that salvation does not have its source (ex humōn, out of you) in men, but from God. Besides, it is God's gift (*dōron*) and not the result of our work.

3. So now we come to the two paraphrases, the TLB and the GW. Notice that the TLB does not use "faith" but "trusting" and says explicitly "trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God." Thus, Ken Taylor seems to be of the "Reformed" or "Calvinist" persuasion, at this point, but then he seems to switch when he next uses "Salvation is not a reward for the good we have done."
4. The GW has "Being saved is a gift from God. It's not the result of anything you've done."

Thus, I think that the GW is the best way to understand these two verses. Those of the "Reformed" position translate and understand them from a biased perspective – they force the meaning to fit their preconceived theological position. "Grace" (from Gk *charis*), is an all-inclusive term that refers to all of the divine blessings and merciful kindnesses we receive from God. Salvation is part of that, and salvation is the context of the verses which precede verse 8. At the phrase "that not of yourselves," the NASB has a footnote which says "i.e. that salvation."

A.T. Robertson (*Word Pictures in the NT*) makes these same arguments. In referring to the expression "by grace, through faith" he says, "Grace is God's part, faith is ours."

Certainly. God's grace is something that cannot be earned, if for no other reason than the fact that it is so comprehensive, so immeasurable. Faith, as the term is used in Scripture, is much less comprehensive. It clearly is something that a human possesses as a motivational aspect of their life. It is volitional in nature – it involves choice. Once a person, inspired by the Holy Spirit, experiences just a small realization of God's grace, they choose to trust God for salvation and for decision-making in daily living. That abiding trust is called faith. (The Greek word for "faith" is *pistis*, which carries the dual meaning of trust and belief.)

The word "faith" is used at least 250 times in the NASB. Paul gives a definition in Heb. 11:1. It is used only 4 times in the OT. A telling verse is **Deuteronomy 32:51 (NASB)**..... *because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel.* Moses is told he is to die on the mountain overlooking the Promised Land because he "broke faith" with God. Clearly, Moses made a choice, and God responded to that choice. See **Genesis 15:6 (NIV)** *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.* God responded to Abraham's choice to follow where God led him by saving him. From a "Reformed" perspective, Abraham had no choice in the matter.

(There is more to be said; I stop here in order to keep this to two pages.)