TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Bobby Rader

#570 A Beautiful Life
Jesus Is Well and Alive

Scripture Reading by: Braylen Butler
Oft We Come Together

Communion Devotional by: Don Taylor
Lord's Supper and Contribution

Our God, He is Alive
Sermon: "The Chosen: Simon the Zealot
Psalms 106:28-31

Almost Persuaded
Anywhere Is Home
Closing Prayer by: Ross Ward

Don Taylor's group will meet at the building
on today at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

May 18, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Baptism and Salvation by Grace

We have spent several weeks laying out what Scripture teaches about baptism in this space. But we know that not everyone understands its significance the same way, and we have now been examining why that is. One objection, which we considered last week, is that it undermines salvation by faith. We saw that this is based on a misunderstanding of biblical faith. Faith is more than just mental assent; it requires faithfulness. Obedience, then, is the common theme for answering such objections.

With this emphasis on obedience, we might run across another objection: an emphasis on baptism subverts salvation by grace. The passage often associated with this position is **Ephesians 2:8-9:** *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Paul reminded the Ephesians that God's grace saved them. How did it do that? Through faith, not through works. Rather, salvation was the gift of God. Thus, the argument runs, we are saved by grace; there is nothing we can do, including baptism, to be saved.

If God gives salvation by grace—and he does!—is obedience unnecessary? Are we ignoring God's grace by saying we must make some sort of response, whether that is baptism or otherwise? How can Scripture say we are saved by baptism? **(1 Pet 3:21)** How can faith be necessary, for that matter? **(Eph 2:8)**

A good way to begin to answer that is to go back and look at some stories. God decided to give us his word primarily in the form of narrative. These illustrate for us how God works in our world; we learn what he is like and what he expects of his people. Stories can help take complex ideas and simplify them for us. So let's consider some examples.

The Walls of Jericho
The first story is found in **Joshua 6.** Israel had just entered the Promised Land. But there was still work to be done before they could call it their own. They would have to defeat the many peoples who controlled Canaan. The first stop on the map was the well-fortified city of Jericho. And the people there were aware that the Israelites were nearby—they had shut the gates tightly, so no one could come in or out. How would they defeat Jericho?

God stepped in at that point. *And the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.* **(Josh 6:2)**. Do you know what that is called? That is grace! God was giving Israel something they could not earn for themselves.

But God's grace came with conditions: *You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.* **(Josh 6:3-5)**

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Steve Lunceford has cancer and not doing well.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas, Debbie Lynn, Kim Berka

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, May 19th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, June 3rd at 8:00 a.m.

For those interested in helping with VBS, there will be a meeting this morning after service in the auditorium. VBS is Friday, June 27th.

Congratulations

Danny and Tania Balch announce the marriage of their son Dylan. Dylan and Hope were married on Saturday, May 17th. They ask for prayers on their behalf as they begin this new journey.

Food Bank

We served 110 families on Thursday, May 15th at our food bank. That equals to 355 individuals. We had 12 volunteers.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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The Israelites followed God's commands. And, just as God promised, the walls fell. Why did the walls fall? Was Joshua some sort of ancient proto-engineer who knew the resonant frequency needed to make them crumble? No—they fell because of God's grace. This was a free gift.

But listen to the Hebrews writer*: By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days* **(Heb 11:30).** They fell by faith? I thought they fell by God's grace! Does that mean they ALSO fell because Israelites believed God? Yes! But notice too that their faith was not abstract belief, it was not dead. It was an obedient faith. It acted and did exactly what God required. What if Israel had refused to march around Jericho? "God already promised us the city, we don't need to do anything?" Or what if the Israelites had done all as God commanded except for one thing? What if they had marched 6 times on the last day? Do you think God still would have brought down the walls? Apparently, the gift came with conditions There is nothing here to lead us to believe it would have been granted otherwise.

Let's put this story together then. First, God promised to give Israel the city; that is grace, unmerited favor. Second, though, God put conditions on that gracious gift; he demanded that obedient faith be demonstrated. Third, in completing God's requirements, the walls of the city fell; not on the first, second, third day of marching, but on the seventh, at the shout. When everything was completed, God actually gave them the blessing he promised.

The Serpent in the Wilderness

Let's consider a second story, in **Numbers 21.** Years before Israel took Jericho, they were wandering in the wilderness. And, as happened a lot, the Israelites complained against God. They were upset because of the long journey and began blaming him for their problems. In God's anger, he sent fiery serpents among the people. Whoever was bitten by the serpents died. When Moses and the people begged God for forgiveness and help, we find *And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.* **(Num 21:8-9)**

So we see the same process here at work: by grace, God gave something to Israel they couldn't give themselves. He rescued them from death caused by the serpent bite. But once again, God's grace came with conditions: when bitten, one must look at the image of the serpent Moses made. Then, after responding in obedience, God would give his blessing, and they would live.

Were they being saved by God's grace? Absolutely! But God explicitly said grace wouldn't cover them until they responded in obedient faith. If Moses had refused to make the bronze serpent, or if people had refused to look at it, God would have refused his gift of healing. God promised that his grace would save them at the completion of obedience.

Conclusion

The last story is especially interesting, because of something Jesus said. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* **(Jn 3:14-15).** Salvation through the cross of Christ comes the same way it came through the bronze serpent. By God's grace, he offers us something we cannot offer ourselves: salvation from sin. But God's gift comes with conditions. We must respond with a penitent faith, culminating in baptism. Then God gives us his blessings.

So, are we saved by grace? Yes! We could NEVER save ourselves. But are we also saved by our faith expressed in baptism? Yes! Not because of how great we are, but due to God's gracious promise

Bryant Perkins