

# Salvation - The Gift of God

(by Bob Pulliam)

Salvation is referred to as a gift from God several times in the New Testament. For some, this means that God has given salvation and mankind need do nothing in receiving it. Others believe one must do something to be saved. What does the Bible teach?...

## ***It Is a Gift...***

Perhaps the most commonly thought of passage in this respect is Ephesians 2:8f:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

There are several aspects of this passage that require attention in light of what is being taught today (see Faith Only?). This article will focus on the word 'gift', however. Two other places of note have this phrase. They are Romans 5:15-18 and Romans 6:23. There can be no doubt that salvation is the gift of God.

## ***What Is Demanded by This Word?...***

The word 'gift' certainly does not demand that nothing be done on the part of the recipient. We give gifts all the time, and understand that the recipient can refuse or accept it. They also must open and take advantage of whatever is given. That 'gift' carries the idea of no action on the part of the receiver is absurd.

Let's assume for a moment that the word gift means salvation is automatically ours without doing anything (although no one believes this, for all would have you do something, even if it's just praying). If so, we turn to Romans 5.

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." (Rom 5:18)

Notice here that "the free gift came to all men". We are told that this must mean that it only came to all men (or perhaps just the "elect"). But this free gift came to all men just "as through one man's offense judgment came to all men". For those who teach that the sin of Adam passed to all men, this creates a quandary. If Adam's sin passed to all men automatically (through birth), then this verse means that Jesus' justification passed to all men automatically. That's universal salvation! No one will be lost, according to that view! You know the Bible doesn't teach that, so something is wrong.

How did judgment come to all men. It was by death passing to all men (v12). How did death pass to all men? It was by each man partaking of sin. No sin was passed down to create an automatic condemnation. Each man stands condemned before God when he partakes of sin. In the same way, each man stands justified before God when he partakes of the redemption that God offers. How does he partake? The way God says he must partake.

## ***The Best Way to Know...***

If you really want to know how to unwrap a gift, you ought to watch someone who is doing it. And we have plenty to watch when we read the book of Acts. The people in Acts 2 asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (v37) A lot of folks would answer, "There's nothing to do! Salvation is a gift!" But not Peter. Peter told them what to do. Phillip told the Samaritans what to do, and they were baptized (Acts 8:12). Peter commanded Cornelius and his house to be baptized (Acts 10:48). Paul was told to be baptized (Acts 22:16). Why have I emphasized baptism in these examples I've cited? Because baptism is the very thing that sticks in most folk's craw. They don't want to believe that someone has to be baptized to be saved. These people accepted the gift of God the way they were told to accept it. Sadly, that is not the way many are being told to accept the gift of salvation today.

### **Just a Note of Clarification**

There is another Greek word for 'gift' in the New Testament. That word is *dorea*. Vine says of this word, "denotes 'a free gift,' stressing its gratuitous character; it is always used in the NT of a spiritual or supernatural gift..." This word is distinct from the word we are considering in this article (i.e. - *doron*). And I might note that this distinction might quickly lead one to believe that an individual's salvation is not a supernatural gift from God. By that I mean, God does not do something supernatural to each individual to save him or her.