

bijlage i - Efeze 2:8,9

What is "the gift of God" which is referred to in these verses? This is a key question which must be carefully answered. There are basically two possible answers. There are many who teach that the gift of God referred to in this passage is FAITH. Others teach that the gift of God mentioned here is SALVATION.

What is "the gift of God" in Ephesians 2:8-9? Is it **faith** or is it **salvation**?

The key to understanding Ephesians 2:8-9 is to correctly identify the antecedent of the pronoun "**that**" [τοὐτο]. Does the pronoun "that" (v.8) refer to **faith** or does it refer to **salvation**? There are those who say that "faith" is the gift of God and there are others who say that "salvation" is the gift of God.

View #1-Faith is the Gift of God

"For by grace are ye saved through **faith**; and **this faith** is not of yourselves, **this faith** is the gift of God, **this faith** is not of works, lest any man should boast" (in this case the antecedent of the pronoun is identified as "faith").

Most Reformed men understand the gift of God in Ephesians 2:8-9 as referring to FAITH. This raises some interesting questions. If saving faith is the gift of God, then how does the sinner receive this gift? Does he pray that God will give him the gift of faith? Does he hope that God will sovereignly bestow this gift upon him so that he can be saved? What must he do to have faith?

Reformed theology teaches that for a person to be saved, God must first bestow upon him the gift of saving faith. Before he receives this gift he must first be regenerated, because Reformed theology teaches that unregenerate sinners who are dead in sins are unable to believe.

Charles Spurgeon has given a good answer to those who insist that regeneration is necessary before a sinner can believe:

In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace. If I am to preach the faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners.

[Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon, "The Warrant of Faith."]

Some Reformed men carry the idea of "regeneration precedes faith" to a ridiculous extreme. For example, R. C. Sproul and others teach that it is possible for an infant to be regenerated

and not come to faith in Christ until years later. [For full documentation, see our study entitled, [Does Regeneration Precede Faith?](#)]

The view which insists that *regeneration precedes faith* is inconsistent with the clear teaching of the Bible. For example, John 1:12 does **not** say: "As many as have been regenerated, to them gave He the power to believe on His Name, even to those who have become the children of God." Instead John 1:12 teaches that those who receive Christ by faith become children of God (that is, they are born of God or regenerated). In a similar way John 20:31 says, "believing ye might have life." It does **not** say, "having life ye might believe" (which is what one would expect it to say if regeneration precedes faith). Numerous passages in the Gospel of John teach that LIFE (eternal life) is the result of believing in Christ (John 3:15,16,36; 5:24; 6:47; etc.). Reformed men teach that LIFE results in FAITH. The Bible teaches that FAITH results in LIFE. The Biblical position is that a sinner is regenerated the moment he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. These issues are more fully discussed in our paper, [Does Regeneration Precede Faith?](#)

There is a variation of **View #1** which is held by the esteemed Princeton theologian, Charles Hodge, as well as others. This is discussed in Appendix #1.

View #2-Salvation is the Gift of God

"For by grace **are ye saved** through faith; and **this salvation** is not of yourselves, **this salvation** is the gift of God, **this salvation** is not of works, lest any man should boast" (in this case the antecedent of the pronoun is identified as "salvation" which is the idea of the main verb "are ye saved").

This view is clearly reflected in the IFCA [*Independent Fundamental Churches of America*] doctrinal statement [Article IV, Section 1, Paragraph 6] which says, "We believe that **SALVATION** is the GIFT OF GOD brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." This well-worded statement makes it clear that salvation is the gift of God and this gift is received by personal faith. The gift is salvation; the receiving of that gift is by faith.

There is another view which is a variation of View #2 (which says that salvation is the gift of God) and for a discussion of this variation, see Appendix #2.

A Lesson in Greek

If you look at an interlinear Greek New Testament, you will see that the passage reads as follows: "For by grace ye are saved through faith, and **this** [τοῦτο] [is] not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God, not of works lest anyone might boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

The pronoun [τοῦτο] is a demonstrative pronoun. It points out the thing that is referred to. In gender it is neither masculine nor feminine, but it is neuter. It could be translated "**this thing**." In number it is singular. It refers to something, but not several things. In case it is nominative (the subject of the verb). "**This thing** is not of yourself, [it is] the gift of God."

What Does "This Thing" Refer To?

The Biblical expositor needs to correctly identify the antecedent of the pronoun, that is, to identify what the pronoun refers to.

Some might argue that "faith" is the nearest antecedent: "For by grace are ye saved through **faith** and **this** [is] not of yourselves" (Eph. 2:8). It is certainly true that "faith" is the nearest antecedent, but since there are a great number of cases in the New Testament where the nearest antecedent is not the correct one, we should be very careful before making this identification. There are other far more important considerations.

Here is the correct rule that Greek grammar demands be followed: **Pronouns agree with their antecedent in gender and number. Their case is determined by their use in their own clause.** [*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* by H. E. Dana and Julius Mantey, p. 125 (Section 135).]

This rule argues forcefully against the identification of "faith" as the antecedent because "faith" does not agree with the pronoun in gender. The pronoun "**this**" (verse 8) is NEUTER, and the noun "faith" (verse 8) is FEMININE. If Paul wanted his readers to understand the pronoun as referring to "faith," then there is no reason why he would not have used the feminine form of the demonstrative pronoun [which would be the Greek word **αυτη**]. This would have settled it. The verse would read, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and **this feminine thing** [namely faith], is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." If Paul had used the feminine pronoun then it would be very clear, obvious and indisputable that FAITH is the gift of God. However, Paul did **not** use the feminine pronoun.

Why then did Paul use the neuter pronoun? What is the antecedent? If Paul had wanted to refer to the idea contained in the main verb (the idea of being SAVED), then it would have been perfectly normal and appropriate for him to use the neuter gender. It would have been very natural for Paul to say, "For by grace ARE YE SAVED through faith and this thing that I'm talking about, namely salvation, is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God..." If Paul had wanted the pronoun to refer to the idea or concept contained in the verb, the neuter form would be the one to use. The pronoun "this thing" [**τοϋτο**] commonly takes a conceptual antecedent. [*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* by Daniel B. Wallace, p. 335.]

We need to carefully think through Ephesians 2:8-9 in order to correctly identify the antecedent. We must ask, "What is Paul talking about in Ephesians 2:8-9? What is his main point?" It is obvious that Paul is talking about HOW A PERSON IS SAVED. The main idea of the sentence is found in the verb "ARE YE SAVED" [or "YE ARE SAVED"]. How is a person saved? Ephesians 2:8-9 answers this key question. Salvation is by grace. Salvation is through faith. Salvation is not of yourselves. Salvation is the GIFT OF GOD. Salvation is not of works. Paul is not giving a dissertation on faith, but he is giving a brief dissertation on salvation. SALVATION is his main subject. Faith is mentioned because you cannot answer the question "HOW IS A PERSON SAVED?" without mentioning faith. A person is saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). God's gracious gift of salvation must be personally received, and it is received by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the main thing that Paul is talking about in these two verses is salvation, not faith.

THE GIFT OF GOD

New Testament Usage

The Bible explains itself. We do not need to depend only on Ephesians 2:8 in order to find out what the gift of God is. There are many other New Testament passages which clearly tell us what the gift of God is. How is the expression "gift of God" used elsewhere in the New Testament by Paul and the other writers?

A study of the places where the word "gift" is used in the New Testament reveals the following:

δῶρον (gift, present) neuter noun

This word is used to refer to the "gift of God" only once, and that is in the passage under consideration (Ephesians 2:8). However there are other related Greek words that are translated "gift" and these are as follows:

δωρεά (gift) feminine noun

John 4:10--the gift of God is **everlasting life** (compare verse 14).

Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17--the gift of God is the **Holy Spirit**.

Romans 5:15,17--these verses speak of the gift of **justification** (righteousness) and life (compare verses 18,21).

2 Corinthians 9:15--this verse speaks of God's unspeakable gift which is **Jesus Christ**.

We should note that this word is **never** used of FAITH.

δώρημα (gift, present) neuter noun

This word is never used of FAITH but it is used of God's gift of salvation or justification (see Romans 5:16).

χάρισμα (a gift freely and graciously given) neuter noun

Romans 6:23--the gift of God is **eternal life** (compare Romans 5:15-16).

This word is never used of FAITH (except in 1 Corinthians 12:9 which is speaking of the temporary gift of miracle working faith and not saving faith).

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Thus, in no other place in the New Testament does the word "GIFT" ever refer to saving faith. However, we recognize that apart from God's mercy and gracious enabling and enlightenment, saving faith could not be exercised (John 6:44,65; Romans 9:16; Matthew 11:27; 16:16-17; Acts 16:14; etc.).

We have seen therefore that there are many passages in the New Testament which speak of SALVATION (or justification or eternal life) as being the gift of God, especially in Paul's writings. In light of this, it would be much safer to identify "the gift of God" in Ephesians 2:8 with SALVATION unless there were some very obvious reasons for doing otherwise. If Ephesians 2:8 speaks of faith as being the gift of God, then this is the only place in the New Testament where Paul makes such an identification.

Since the pronoun is in the neuter gender (not agreeing with the feminine gender of the word "faith"), since Paul is talking about how a person is saved (salvation is clearly the matter being discussed) and since the New Testament elsewhere refers to salvation as the gift of God, we have good reason for concluding that salvation is the gift of God in Ephesians 2:8.

"Not of works"--New Testament Usage

"Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). What is not of works? Is Paul saying that faith is not of works or is he saying that salvation is not of works? Here again it is helpful to do a study of New Testament (Pauline) usage:

In Romans 3:20 Paul says that **justification** is not of works.
In Romans 3:27 Paul says that **justification** is not of works.
In Romans 3:28 Paul says that **justification** is apart from works.
In Romans 4:2,6 Paul says that **justification** is not of works.
In Romans 9:11 Paul says that **election** is not of works.
In Romans 9:32 Paul says that **righteousness** is not of works.
In Romans 11:6 Paul says that **election** is not of works.
In Galatians 2:16 Paul says that **justification** is not of works.
In 2 Timothy 1:9 Paul says that God's **salvation** and **calling** are not according to works.
In Titus 3:5 Paul says that **salvation** is not of works.

If Ephesians 2:9 means that **salvation is not of works**, this would be in harmony with all of these above passages. That salvation is not of works is repeatedly taught by Paul, but **in no other place in the new testament does Paul ever say that "faith is not of works."** Again and again Paul says that salvation (justification) is not of works, but he never says that faith is not of works. It would be foolish to say such a thing. That faith is not of works is so obvious (or as Alford says "irrelevant") that it does not need to be said. As John Eadie has said, "you may declare that salvation is not of works, but cannot with propriety say that faith is not of works." This is why men like Charles Hodge are forced to put a parenthesis in this passage: "Ye are saved through faith (and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God), not of works" [See Hodge's commentary on *Ephesians* under *Ephesians 2:8*.] Hodge wants to make the verse say that faith is the gift of God (because this fits in well with his Reformed theology). However, Hodge knows that Paul would never say that "faith is not of works" (see Appendix 1).

The Bible repeatedly says that we are not saved by works (see the verses cited earlier). Also the Bible repeatedly says that we are saved or justified by faith (Romans 5:1; etc.). If a man is not saved by works but by faith, then faith is obviously not a work: "but to him that **worketh not**, but **believeth...**" (Romans 4:5). Faith and works do not go together. Faith is not a work. Work is something that we take credit for. Work is something that we can be rewarded for. Work is something that we can boast about. Work is meritorious. Faith is **non-meritorious**. A person cannot "take credit" or "praise himself" for his faith, because faith is not meritorious (deserving of reward or honor). Faith is not something that a person can boast about. Faith does not take credit for itself. Faith gives all the credit to Christ. Faith acknowledges that Christ gets all the credit and praise and honor, for He did it all! Faith is not something "good" that a man does; it is simply a recognition on the part of man that "I cannot do any good thing, and therefore I need a Saviour." Only someone totally ignorant of the gospel and of the meaning of "faith" would ever try to take credit for faith. There is no merit in the act of believing.

To say that faith is a work is totally contrary to what the New Testament teaches on salvation. Salvation is "not of works" and entirely "apart from works" (Rom. 3:28; 4:6). Those who believe are those who "DO NOT WORK" (Romans 4:5). What then do they do? They merely REST upon the finished work of Christ who did it all and paid it all!

If Ephesians 2:9 speaks of faith as being "not of works," then this is the only place in the New Testament where Paul makes such a statement. If on the other hand the verse is saying that salvation is not of works, then this would harmonize with Paul's frequent teaching elsewhere and this would be one of many verses in the New Testament which teaches this truth.

As a practical example, think of how we share the message of salvation with those who are lost. Often we tell them that salvation is not of works. All false religions teach some form of salvation by a system of works. In our sharing of the gospel we make it clear to people that salvation is not of works and there is **nothing that they can do** to work for their salvation or to earn favor with God. On the other hand, we do *not* tell the sinner: "My friend, faith is not of works. There is **nothing that you can do** to believe." No, faith is something that the sinner is responsible to do. The sinner is responsible to take God at His Word and to rest his all upon the WORTH (who He is), the WORK (what He has done) and the WORD (what He has said) of the Saviour. Even though faith is not a meritorious work, it is a work that man must do: "Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that ye BELIEVE** on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:28-29). It is something that man is responsible to do, and condemned for not doing (John 8:24; 3:18).

Saving Faith

In Ephesians 2:8, faith is not the gift. Faith is how we receive the gift. Faith is the **HAND OF THE HEART** that reaches out and receives that which God so graciously gives. Faith is man's response to God's gracious provision and promise. Faith is taking God at His Word and resting fully on Jesus Christ, WHO HE IS, WHAT HE HAS DONE and WHAT HE HAS SAID. What is saving faith? The hymn writer has expressed it well: "Tis so sweet to TRUST IN JESUS, [what does it mean to trust in Jesus?] → just to take Him at His Word, → just to rest upon His promise, → just to know THUS SAITH THE LORD."

Some extreme Calvinists tend to speak of faith as if it is something that man cannot do. This results in a wrong understanding of man's inability. The question the Philippian jailer asked was this: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Some would answer in this way: "Nothing! You can't do anything! You are dead and totally unable to respond to God until you are regenerated. You have no part in salvation. God must do it all. You cannot exercise saving faith." This answer might harmonize with one's theological system, but there is only one problem. This is not how Paul and Silas answered the question! Paul and Silas told the jailer that there was something that he could do and was responsible to do: "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ!" (Acts 16:31 and compare how Peter answered a similar question in Acts 2:37-38).

Regardless of one's theological system, Acts 16:31 is very clear. God must do the saving; man must do the believing. The saving is something that God alone must do. The believing is something that the sinner must do. God does not do the believing for man. Even William Hendriksen (who is Reformed in his theology and who believes that faith is the gift of God in Ephesians 2:8) says, "both the responsibility of believing and also its activity are ours, for God does not believe for us." Another illustration would be the account of the deadly serpents in the wilderness in Numbers 21. Should we say that the Israelites had no part in their deliverance from the deadly snakes? Of course not! Their part was to LOOK; God's part was to HEAL. They did the looking and God did the healing.

Faith is when the sinner humbly recognizes his desperate need and acknowledges that God must do all the saving. **Salvation is wholly the work of god; faith is wholly the responsibility of man.** Man does not contribute to his own salvation. It is the work of God. God alone must do the saving; man must do the believing (Acts 16:31). Those who are saved have only God to thank; those who are lost have only themselves to blame. God gets all the credit for man's salvation; the unsaved man must take full blame and responsibility for his eternal damnation. The saved person thankfully says, "I'm in heaven because of God!" The lost person must truthfully say, "I'm in hell because of me." His damnation is based, not on God's rejection of him, but upon his rejection of God (Mark 16:16; 2 Thess. 2:10,12; John 5:40).

No one will ever stand before God and say, "I am condemned because God never gave me the gift of faith." No such excuse will ever be uttered. All men are responsible to believe. All men are commanded to believe and to repent (1 John 3:23 and Acts 17:30). God says, "**Look unto Me** [that's faith!] and be ye saved all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22). According to 1 Timothy 2:4, God desires ALL MEN to COME unto Himself (and coming to Christ is equated with believing on Him--John 6:35). Men are responsible to believe and to come and to repent. Men are condemned eternally for their failure to do this (John 8:24; 3:18; etc.).

D.L. Moody once said, "Some say that faith is the gift of God. So is the air, but you have to breathe it; so is bread, but you have to eat it; so is water, but you have to drink it. Some are wanting some miraculous kind of feeling. That is not faith. 'Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.' It is not for me to sit down and wait for faith to come stealing over me...it is for me to take God at His Word."

According to the Apostle Paul, faith is "being fully persuaded [convinced] that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20-21). God has promised to save all those who come unto Him through Christ (Heb. 7:25), and the man of faith is fully persuaded and convinced that God will do this. Notice also that Romans 4:3 and Romans 4:5 speak of "his

faith" (Abraham's faith) not God's faith. A study of the verb "believe" in the New Testament reveals that the subject of the verb is man (it is always men or persons that do the believing) and the verb is most often used in the active voice, which means that it is men, women, boys and girls who must perform the action of the verb. People must do the believing. God holds them responsible for whether or not they do this.

The IFCA doctrinal statement sums it up well: "We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." According to this statement, it is SALVATION not FAITH which is the gift of God. This gift of God (this gracious salvation) is received in only one way: by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What Difference Does It Make?

What is wrong with saying that FAITH is the gift of God? Does it make any real difference? What are the practical implications of saying such a thing?

I would recommend an article by Roy L. Aldrich entitled "The Gift of God." [*Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1965.] The author convincingly shows that the interpretation of Ephesians 2:8 which says that FAITH is the GIFT OF GOD leads to a hyper-Calvinistic doctrine of faith, which in turn leads to an unscriptural plan of salvation. For example, Shedd says: "The Calvinist maintains that faith is wholly from God, being one of the effects of regeneration" [*Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 472]. This results in a strange plan of salvation. According to Shedd, because the sinner cannot believe, he is instructed to perform the following duties: 1) Read and hear the divine Word; 2) Give serious application of the mind to the truth; 3) Pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit for conviction and regeneration [*Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, pp. 512-513].⁷ Arthur Pink agrees with Shedd saying that the sinner is to "ask God...to bestow upon him the gifts of repentance and faith" (*The Sovereignty of God*, pp. 198-199). Here is Roy Aldrich's excellent comment: "If the sinner is so spiritually dead that he cannot believe, then how can he hear the divine Word, give serious application of the mind to the truth and pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit? The extreme Calvinist deals with a rather lively spiritual corpse after all...**The tragedy of this position is that it perverts the gospel. The sinner is wrongly instructed to beg for that which God is already beseeching him to receive. He is really being told that the condition of salvation is prayer instead of faith**" [*Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1965, p.249].

Another illustration of this is from the pulpit of Dr. John MacArthur, a very popular Bible teacher in America. Dr. MacArthur believes and teaches that faith is a gift of God. [See MacArthur's major commentary on *Ephesians*, p. 61 and see also his major commentary on *Romans 1-8*, p. 55 and the book *Faith Works*, pages 24, 43, 69, 149, 185.] Such teaching has some very practical implications and it will affect the way a person presents the gospel.

If faith is a gift of God, THEN HOW DO I GET IT? Do I do nothing and hope that God will sovereignly bestow it upon me? Or, do I cry out to God and pray that He will give me the gift of saving faith? Dr. MacArthur apparently holds to this second option. At the end of one of his messages he gave a salvation appeal and said the following: "Faith is a gift from God...it is permanent...the faith that God gives begets obedience...God gave it to you and He sustains it...May God grant you a true saving faith, a permanent gift that begins in humility and brokenness over sin and ends up in obedience unto righteousness. That's true faith and it's a

gift that only God can give, **and if you desire it pray and ask that He would grant it to you.**" [Tape GC 90-21 on Lordship salvation, last part of tape, comments made during the closing invitation]

Notice carefully what MacArthur is doing. He is not telling the sinner to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31), but to PRAY and ASK GOD to grant the GIFT OF FAITH! This perverts the gospel of Christ by making the condition of salvation prayer instead of faith! Sinners are commanded to believe on Christ. They are not commanded to pray for the gift of faith.

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Ephesians 2:8-9 is not complicated. It was one of the first passages that I memorized as a new believer. I always understood it to mean that salvation was God's gracious and free gift, and that faith was how we received this gift. It was not until I began reading certain theologians that I became aware of the other interpretation. May God help us not to complicate and corrupt the simplicity of the gospel message, a message so straightforward and simple that even a child can understand it.

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Appendix #1

View #1 says that the gift referred to in Ephesians 2:8-9 is faith. There is a variation of this view which says that the gift of God is faith, but unlike View #1 it says that salvation, not faith, is "not of works." This is the view of Charles Hodge [See Charles Hodges' commentary on *Ephesians*, under Ephesians 2:8-9] and others. These men realize that Paul would never have said that "faith is not of works" (for reasons which have been already been discussed in this paper), and therefore they are forced to place an awkward and unnatural parenthesis in the middle of these verses. This view could be stated as follows:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith (and this faith is not of yourselves, this faith is the gift of God), not of works [that is, this salvation is not of works] lest any man should boast."

Hodge is a Reformed theologian and is quite comfortable saying that faith is the gift of God. He is very uncomfortable saying that faith is not of works. The reason for the parenthesis is that men like Hodge are aware of the difficulty of saying that "faith is not of works." Charles Hodge is correct in saying that salvation is not of works; he is wrong in saying that this passage teaches that faith is the gift of God.

Appendix #2

View #2, as discussed in this paper, is the view which understands the gift of God in Ephesians 2:8-9 to refer to salvation. There is a variation to this view which says that the entire salvation process (**including faith**) is the gift of God. An IFCA position paper states it this way: "he [the sinner coming to Christ] realizes that the totality of the salvation process is a gift of God, including the grace of God and his own choice to believe (Ephesians 2:8-9)." [This quote is taken from an IFCA position paper, November 1990, entitled, *Salvation by Grace through Faith.*] John Calvin also held this view. Calvin did not believe that the

pronoun referred to "faith." He believed it referred to "salvation by grace through faith" (to the entire salvation process, including faith). Is salvation the gift of God? This view would answer "yes." Is faith the gift of God? This view would again answer "yes" because faith would be considered part of the totality of the salvation process. Thus, according to this view, not only salvation, but the reception of salvation ("faith") would be the gift of God.

This view confuses the gift with the reception of the gift. [Notice how Romans 5:17 makes a clear distinction between the gift and the reception of the gift.] It is interesting that the IFCA doctrinal statement, in contrast to the IFCA position paper, makes a clear distinction between the gift and the reception of the gift: "We believe that **salvation is the gift of God** brought to man by grace and **received by personal faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ." But in the IFCA position paper which was written in order to clarify "saving faith" (in light of the Lordship salvation controversy) this distinction is lost. In the IFCA position paper faith is included as part of the gift (part of the total salvation process). This leads to an obvious problem. Let me put myself in the place of the sinner. If faith in Christ is itself God's gift, then how do I receive this faith? Instead of asking, "What must I do to be saved?" I must now focus on the question "What must I do to believe?" If faith is God's gift, then how do I get this gift? Do I pray to God and ask for the gift of faith? Do I sit back and do nothing and hope that I am one of the chosen ones who will be given this gift? How do I get the gift of saving faith? It is all very confusing and it takes away from where the focus of the sinner ought to be, which is upon Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Appendix #3

There are some who give another explanation for the neuter gender being used. Mr. Stephen Parker, for example, argues that the pronoun is attracted to the neuter gender of the word "gift," and he cites Mark 15:16 as an analogy. [See Stephen Parker's booklet, *Calvin's Specs Examined and Re-examined*, pages 9-10.] It is true that attraction does take place in Mark 15:16 as Mr. Parker correctly points out. This is one of those rare cases where the pronoun agrees with the PREDICATE when the relative clause is an explanation. Another example would be in Ephesians 6:17: "the sword (feminine) of the Spirit, which (neuter) is the Word (neuter) of God" (the antecedent is "sword" but the pronoun is attracted to the neuter gender). However, we do not really have the same thing in Ephesians 2:8. First of all, in Mark 15:16 we have a relative pronoun, but in Ephesians 2:8 we have a demonstrative pronoun [τοῦτο]. In Mark 15:16 the verb is explicitly stated, but in Ephesians 2:8 the verb is understood (the words "it is" are in italics). The greatest problem, however, is that in Mark 15:16 the word "praetorium" comes right after the word "hall" but in Ephesians 2:8 there is a whole additional phrase which comes between "that" and "gift," and this would make attraction much less likely: "...through faith and that NOT OF YOURSELVES, it is the gift..." In other words, in Mark 15:16 there is only one word (the verb εστιν) which comes between the pronoun and the word to which it is attracted. In Ephesians 2:8 there are five Greek words which come between the pronoun and the word which Mr. Parker claims it is attracted to. This explanation seems highly unlikely, and I did not find this argument in the respectable commentaries that I consulted, even among those men who believe that the antecedent is "faith." It could also be noted that Mr. Parker is wrong when he says that the words "hall" and "which" in Mark 15:16 do not agree in number. They do agree. They are both singular in number

--George Zeller (1/80; revised 6/91, 8/98, 5/07)