



Ephesians 2:8-9 – Get “THAT” Right

THAT

NOT OF YOURSELVES

GRACE

FAITH

SALVATION

“And THAT Not of Yourselves”

The Neuter Demonstrative Pronoun in Ephesians 2:8–9

Few passages in Scripture summarize the gospel of grace more succinctly than Ephesians 2:8–9:

“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, so that no one may boast.”

The key question is the meaning of the word “that.” What is Paul referring to when he writes “and THAT not of yourselves”?

The Greek text uses the neuter demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο (“this,” “that”), which is neuter singular, yet the surrounding words in Greek are not:

- “Grace” (χάριτι) — feminine
- “Faith” (πίστεως) — feminine
- “Saved” (σῳσμένοι) — masculine plural

The pronoun “That” does not “agree” in gender or number with any one of them individually. When this occurs, **the rules of Greek grammar** indicate that the pronoun refers not to one isolated word but to the entire preceding concept.

Thus, Paul is saying:

*“The **whole reality** - salvation by grace through faith - is not from or “of” yourselves. “It” – the whole package, is the gift of God.”*

This grammatical fact safeguards the gospel from distortion by the insertion of *self*-boasting or assuming credit for the part we assume we supply – “faith.” It prevents us from isolating “faith” as the sole reference which the Greek pronoun “that” points to in the text and claiming that faith arises from human will. It also prevents us from limiting the gift only to grace. Both errors are inherent in all Arminian synergistic doctrines and assumptions of the text

which assume and argue faith *is* of ourselves.

Paul sweeps the *entire* saving event - grace, faith, and salvation itself, into one truth: *none* of it originates in us.

This aligns perfectly with the flow of Ephesians 2: we were dead (2:1), God made us alive (2:4–5), raised us (2:6), seated us with Christ (2:6), and created us anew (2:10). **Every verb is God’s work.** Faith itself arises within a heart made alive by grace.

✚ This is why verse 5 – “By grace you are saved” is a **theologically complete** statement – it leaves nothing essential out and allows nothing else in. Verses 8-9 merely “unpack” this, with further explanation – they do not add to it.

Paul concludes: “not of works, *so that* no one may boast.” The neuter pronoun protects the gospel by ensuring all glory belongs to God alone.

In short:

None of this is from you. If any part was, then for that part, you could legitimately boast, which in Paul’s doctrine means, assume credit when humble thanksgiving was the only appropriate response.

Sola Gratia – Grace alone...*always*

Appendix: A Brief Response to the Arminian Objection

No discussion of Ephesians 2:8–9 would be complete without addressing the common Arminian claim that the neuter demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο (“that/this”) refers only to the phrase “you have been saved,” and not to “grace” or “faith.” While this view is often repeated, it is neither grammatically necessary nor contextually consistent. A brief response will suffice.

1. Paul Could Have Referred Only to “Being Saved” — but He Did Not.

If Paul intended τοῦτο to point exclusively to the verb (“you have been saved”), Greek offered clear and natural ways to express this:

- τοῦτο τὸ σωθῆναι — this being saved
- ταύτη ἡ σωτηρία — this salvation

But Paul uses none of these. Instead, he employs the broad neuter demonstrative, a form normally used to summarize an *entire preceding clause* or concept, *especially when the elements differ in gender*. His choice of construction is intentional, and it signals inclusion, not limitation.

2. Limiting τοῦτο to the Verb Collapses Paul’s Parallelism.

Paul’s structure is beautifully arranged:

- By grace
- Through faith
- You have been saved
- And *that* - the whole saving reality - is the gift of God

If τοῦτο refers to only one piece, the parallelism becomes disjointed and the sentence loses coherence. But when τοῦτο is understood as pointing to the entire salvation-by-grace-through-faith construct, the flow is natural and the logic unbroken... but worse, grounds for self-boasting is introduced and Paul’s entire point to exclude *all* grounds of self-boast.

3. The Early Church Never Read It the Arminian Way.

Long before Calvin, Augustine, or the Reformation debates, the Greek-speaking Fathers understood τοῦτο as referring to the *entire saving work*, including faith as its necessary instrument. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Ambrosiaster all write this way. *There is simply no historical precedent for the modern Arminian restriction.* Their interpretation is new and doctrinally driven.

4. The Theological Motivation Is Transparent.

The Arminian limitation does *not* arise from Greek grammar but from theological necessity for their view.

- ✚ If τοῦτο encompasses faith, *then* faith is God's gift; if faith is God's gift, regeneration precedes belief; and if regeneration precedes belief, salvation is monergistic from start to finish.
- ✚ This dismantles synergistic theology at its root. The grammar is narrowed not because the text demands it, but because the alternative is doctrinally unacceptable to the Arminian system.

In Summary

The neuter demonstrative τοῦτο is best read - and has been historically read, as Paul's way of sweeping the *entire saving event* into one glorious affirmation: "this whole reality is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." The objection that restricts τοῦτο to the single verb "you have been saved" is neither required by the grammar nor supported by the context. It serves to protect their pre-decided theology, not exegesis.

In short it is a classic case of the person who says, "My mind is made up. Don't bother trying to confuse me with the facts."

May God give light.