

Eph. 2:8-9

“Saved By Grace Through Faith”

Idea: You are saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, not of works, therefore receive and rest in Jesus for your salvation.

Intro: Let me remind you where we have been so far in Eph 2. In vss 1-4 Paul clearly taught that all mankind is dead in sin. I compared it to being the living dead, spiritual zombies. But then in vs. 5 Paul interrupted the bad news with the best possible news. “But God who is rich in mercy made you alive in Christ.” He has freed you from bondage to sin. He has made you children of God rather than children of wrath.

I reserved vss. 8-10 so as to be able to give full attention to these well known and very important vss. They have to do with the crucial Christian teachings of grace, faith, and salvation. You can summarize these verses, and the gospel itself in this way. You are saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, not of works.

I will take a simple approach this morning, following the order and thought of the verses. 1. You are saved by God’s grace alone. 2. You are saved through faith alone. 3. You are not saved by works.

1. You are saved by God’s grace alone.

Grace and faith are two of the most important concepts of the bible. Paul brings them together in this verse to describe how God has acted to save you. He has saved you based on His grace. As a starting point, think of grace as God’s unmerited favor.

Last week I drew your attention to the mercy of God. He has withheld the penalty we all deserve because of sin. He has not punished us. But more than that, God has also shown grace to us. He has given us what we don’t deserve. He has given us forgiveness, love, life in Christ. Etc. Think of it this way as one commentator puts it:

*When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day’s pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives such a gift anyway—that is a good picture of God’s unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God. - Clip-Art Features for Church Newsletters, G.W. Knight, p. 53*

Let me connect the dots again. Unmerited means that you don’t deserve salvation in and of yourself. You are not capable of earning entrance into heaven. As Paul put so vividly earlier; You are dead in your sin, and living under the power of the prince of the

air. You are by nature children of wrath. That's the prize that you have won, the payment you have earned; God's wrath and eternal judgment.

But Jesus has paid the penalty you and I deserve. You cannot earn heaven. You deserve no award – and yet, by grace you are saved. You receive an immeasurable gift anyway. You receive the gift of salvation by the unmerited favor of God.

As you might have guessed already, grace points you to God. It points away from us. Grace is about what He has done, what He has given, to save sinners. He has given Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus became man to keep God's law for you, and to die for you. Grace is God giving Himself to you.

So how do you receive this incredible gift? Through the instrument of faith.

## 2. You are saved through faith alone.

The Reformer, Martin Luther, famously said that the teaching of justification by faith alone is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls.

Paul's wording is very specific. God saves man through faith. That's very different than saying God saves man because of faith, or because he has faith. Listen again. "For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. "Not of works lest any man should boast." Even faith is not of yourself. It is the gift of God. If God looked for people who believed before He acted, salvation would never happen. In the first place God wouldn't find anybody with faith because even our faith is given to us. We really are that dead naturally. And second, even if it were a possibility, then our believing would then be an act that obligated God. We would do something, a work, that would save us. That would be contrary to verse 9 as well as a host of others.

We have come to speak of faith as the instrument God uses. For instance, my pen is a writing instrument. If I were to write something down on a piece of paper, you would not say that the pen wrote something. It was the instrument I used to write a message. In a similar way, faith is the instrument God uses. As the instrument, faith is not a work of merit in itself. It is the gift of God, the instrument he uses to apply redemption to us.

And faith alone saves; not faith plus works, or faith plus perseverance, or faith plus anything. It is by God's grace alone through faith alone that you are saved.

This leads immediately to the third point.

## 3. You are not saved by works.

"For by grace you are saved, through faith. And this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest anyone should boast."

The phrase, “this not of yourselves,” begs the question, “What does *this* refer to?” This not of yourselves. Grammatically, Paul is referring back to the entirety of salvation that includes God’s grace and your faith. They all come from God as a gift, and they result in salvation which is a gift. Not even faith is a work that we do. You may think it is, but in reality, even faith comes from God as a gift. Otherwise we would boast. We would say, I’ve done something that God must see. I have earned salvation by my action of belief. But not of works, lest anyone should boast.

That Paul would emphasize this makes it clear that we are prone to thinking that we can save ourselves. And we are, aren’t we? Maybe you’ve even thought of salvation in this way. Jesus does 99% of what is necessary, but I supply that last little 1%. I believe. And in this way of thinking, that belief is a work that earns you salvation. While we are convinced that faith is necessary, the point Paul makes is that even your faith is from God, making salvation entirely based on what Jesus does.

Some have illustrated this as a wide bridge over a dangerous river. Eg. GI Williamson. Just imagine that you need to cross that river in order to stay alive. And there’s no way around it and no way to go through it yourself. But lo and behold you find a bridge, a bridge to safety. The only problem is that the bridge only reaches part way across the river. It doesn’t reach the whole way. You’ll have to swim 10yards of raging flood waters to get to the bridge and to safety. But that’s the point isn’t it? We can’t reach the bridge. No one does good. No one seeks for God. No. Not one. Instead, based on the completed work of Jesus, we could say that the bridge reaches all the way across. God brings you to safety by His grace through the bridge or the instrument of faith.

#### 4. How these teachings shape us.

First, it answers the burning question that lies at the heart of every person whether they know it or not. “How can I be saved? How can I, a sinner, come into the presence of the holy God?” We believe that the Bible teaches that God saves sinners by His grace, and that you receive it through faith in Jesus Christ. The message is so good that it can sound too good to be true. God saves sinners. There is nothing you can do to save yourself. But God saves. He has done it all and offers you the gift of salvation through faith. That means that salvation is the work of God’s grace and power. And thankfully so! Since we can’t do it, we need Him to act. We need God to save, and He has done so through the work of Jesus. Then by the instrument of faith, God brings to life what was dead and enables you to embrace Jesus Christ the only savior. How can I come to heaven? Through Jesus, through resting in Jesus.

Secondly, How can I share the good news? Believing that God saves by faith alone prompts us to speak and preach honestly about the human condition. That all have

sinned and come short of the glory of God. It prompts us to not minimize the justice of God that burns against all unrighteousness. And it prompts us to be personal about this. I have sinned. I have fallen short. You can't be perfect, and yet God forgives. As you trust in Jesus, He washes away all of your shame and sin. You can be honest about your failings and struggles, and at the same time hopeful about the goodness of God to save you.

The final point is to ask, Have you received Jesus as your savior? Salvation and faith are the extravagant gifts of God. It's God who takes away our spiritual blindness. It's God who renews our will making us able and willing to accept the free offer of the Gospel. The offer is,

*that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 8:9-13)*

I pray that if you never have, that you would accept the gift of salvation offered in Jesus, trusting in Him alone to save you from your sins. And if you have placed your faith in Christ, then rejoice that God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...