

EPHESIANS 2:8  
The Wonderful Work of Salvation  
Message 9  
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INTRO: We are in Ephesians 2:8. We considered last time the meaning of grace. In my definition of it, grace describes how we get salvation. It is by the unmerited favor of God. Grace is not what saves us. God saves us. Grace is the means by which we are saved. When we receive something by grace, it is given to us. Grace does not describe what we receive. It describes how we receive it. I define grace with regard to salvation as the provision of anything we need to get saved or anything we need to live the Christian life victoriously. Do I need the strength to humble myself and confess some wrong to someone I have wronged? That strength God will give by grace if we obey Him.

In the May 16, 2012 issue of the Lighthouse Trails news letter was an article by Roger Oakland called, "Sexuality in the New Reformation." He said that Philip Yancey, in his book, "What's So Amazing About Grace?" thinks that we need to extend grace to people who can't change their homosexuality. And just what does it mean to extend grace to them? Well, it means accepting this as something unchangeable. But does grace mean accepting sin? No! That is not grace! True grace, biblical grace does not mean accepting sin. True grace empowers the person to overcome his sinful lifestyle! The power to overcome such a distorted drive is grace. If such a person would but acknowledge the extreme wickedness of his bent, and go to the throne of grace, God would grant him power to overcome. The grace taught in today's church does not help anyone overcome sin, it overlooks sin, it accepts sin.

In December 2006, Brian McLaren spoke at the Open Door Community Church in Sherwood, Arkansas. The web site of that church says: "The leadership at Open Door Community Churches are excited to see gay and non-gay Christians worshiping together as one. We believe that gay and non-gay Christians can and should come to the table of the Lord together, side by side, without labels. We believe that as these two historically separate communities join together at the cross of Jesus Christ a healing and a new understanding of oneness in Christ occurs in both groups. We are part of a growing revival of grace-filled Christians

transcending either the terms 'conservative' or 'liberal.' Above all things, we are a GRACE CHURCH! We are a family embracing the full spectrum of race, age, gender, family status, sexual orientation, economic status and denominational background."

But on the contrary, Oakland, whom I mentioned a moment ago, goes on to speak of a pastor, an ex homosexual, who overcame the sin, and this pastor said, "Since when are Richard Foster, Philip Yancey, Tony Campolo and Lewis Smedes experts on the changeability of homosexuality? ...I have lived this issue for most of my 42 years. For seventeen years I've helped hundreds, maybe thousands, of people come out of homosexuality. I've never seen two healings alike. And I've never seen someone who by the grace of God could not be healed. Now that's what's so amazing about grace!" And listen carefully to his last statement. He says this about grace, "It empowers us to live a moral and transformed life in Christ." That is true biblical grace.

And while we have mentioned the subject of homosexuality, let me just slip in here that when we speak of those involved in homosexuality or lesbianism, we ought to be careful how we speak about them. In the May 24 USA Today news was an article titled, "Flock stands by pastor who calls for eliminating gays." In his message the pastor said this, "I figured a way out - a way to get rid of all the lesbians and queers - but I couldn't get it past the Congress..." Then he said this, "Build a great big, large fence -- 50 or 100 miles long -- put all the lesbians in there. Fly over and drop some food. Do the same thing with the queers and the homosexuals and have that fence electrified so they can't get out. Feed them. And you know in a few years, they'll die out. You know why? They can't reproduce."

I have to acknowledge that I might feel like that in my heart as well, if it were not for the grace of God. A while ago I was told that it has been said of this church that we do not allow homosexuals to come here. Though we have never discussed it, it is true that we would not have practicing homosexuals as members. We do not even have those who habitually smoke as members. It is true that if one of our members fell into such sin and did not repent, we would very quickly excommunicate such a person. But it is not true that homosexuals cannot come to church here. And I

would trust that if they would come, the preaching and teaching in this church is such that any person living in these sins would come under conviction of sin. And I trust that if such a person came for any amount of time, that person would fall on his face before God and repent of a very horrible sin and would get saved and all cleaned up, or would decide that this is not a comfortable place when you live in such sins. I recommend that the very best thing that could be done for such people is that the Gospel be brought to them. That their life style would be pointed out to them as very offensive to God and that the Spirit of God would come upon them and they would get saved. And then let me tell you what would happen some day. God would hold up this saved, ex homosexual, ex lesbian to a whole host of other saved people and show of the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward that person! That is what God wants. He wants them to repent of their sins and then get saved by grace through faith.

And with that, tonight we want to look at the word faith. Our verse starts with the little preposition, "For..." The little word 'for' connects this verse to what went on before. In the previous verses we were told that we were raised up together with Christ and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the ages to come, God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. He will be able to do that, "**For** by grace you have been saved through faith..."

In the ages to come, God will be able to show these specimens of people who were homosexuals, who were haters of God, who were thieves and liars and murderers and on and on, and He will be able to hold them up for display and show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward them, "**FOR** by grace they were saved through faith!"

So we want to look at the faith part of verse 8. Romans 4:16 says, "Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all..." and Romans 5:2 says, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. So, we want to look at this second means of obtaining salvation, and that is faith.

(2) Why God released us from

this death - that He might show  
(7-10) cont'd

-The faith

Well, we have come to the second to last message in verses 7-10 which I believe show us why God found it worthwhile to give His only Son to save man, why He released us from so great a death.

Now I must begin by telling you something that we will deal with later, but you need to understand it partly now. Some would tell us that the gift of God that saves us is grace. Our Calvinist friends tell us that the gift of God that saves us is the faith in this verse. If you are one of the elect, God will grant you this gift of faith and you will get saved. If you are not one of the elect, God will not give you that gift of faith and you will not get saved. Now with all due respect to the Calvinist, I want to tell you that saving faith, and the faith in this verse is not the gift. I will prove it later when we come to it. If you must check it for yourself to believe it, let me simply say it like this. The word 'faith' is a feminine noun in the Greek language, and the word gift, if faith is the gift must also be in the feminine gender, but it is not. It is in the neuter gender. That is proof enough for now. I will explain it in a later message.

One other word for your own studies. If you will study the

verses where faith is mentioned as a gift, you will find that this faith is a gift, not of saving faith, but the faith of the saved. God grants to some Christians an incredible amount of faith. For example, George Mueller. But you will find that not all Christians have that gift. However, you will find that all non-Christians can exercise the faith necessary to get saved. That is not the gift of faith, that faith is a responsibility of all who come into contact with the Gospel.

#### -Definition of faith

So, Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." Now let me explain what faith is. The original word is *pistis* and it comes from the verb *peithw*, which means *to be persuaded*. Faith is something we are persuaded is true. So, if you read in the Bible that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life, and you are persuaded that is true, that becomes part of your faith.

Now if the Mormons come and tell me that Jesus and Satan are brothers, and I believe that, that becomes part of my faith. But because I believe something to be true does not make it true or right. It must have sufficient ground to give evidence that it is true. You see, there are all kinds of false faiths out there.

So, Ephesians 2:8 says we are saved by grace through faith. The matters we are persuaded of in John 3:16 are that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

And so, I want to tell you that the grace, the overcoming power that helps us overcome sin, and that saves us is 100% God's power. The grace part of salvation is 100% God's. Second, I want to tell you that the faith part, to believe, is 100% man's part. It is man who must do the believing. God has given man the most objective message to believe in He could have, but man must do the believing! That faith is not a gift. It is an obligation.

Let me try to illustrate this all like this. Let us say a certain man went down with his little airplane and crashed. He had logged his flight path, but had been driven off course. Search was made for him, but he was too far off the flight plan and in such a remote area that they could not find him.

But since he had matches he climbed a tall mountain and packed green boughs from evergreens to the top. When he was ready, on a clear day, when he heard a jet coming his way he made huge smoke clouds. He made one huge cloud of smoke after another. The smoke clouds were spotted by a forestry fire look out tower a long way off. A

chopper was sent to check it out, and the man was saved.

And a newspaper reported that the man was rescued by a helicopter through smoke signals which were picked up by the fire look out station. Now without the helicopter, he could not have been saved. That had to be 100% someone else's doing. But he would not have been spotted without the smoke signals. That was 100% his own doing. So he was saved by a helicopter through the smoke signals. And just so our text says, "For you have been saved by grace through faith." It is God's grace, man's faith.

Now let me just briefly mention out of all the different ways God might have chosen to save man, there was only one way to do it so as to bring about the desired end. That way was by faith. And why did He choose faith as the key for man? Because faith always exalts God and humbles man. It is not possible to come to God in works and faith at the same time. Why is works excluded and faith God's chosen method? Faith excludes works, and thus pride.

-Conversion

Now I must make another point here. We are now considering what is meant by being saved through faith in Ephesians 2:8. Because some texts, like the one we have in Ephesians 2:8, do not say we must repent, some have concluded that repentance is not necessary for salvation. I want to address that. I am hearing more and more that repentance is not necessary for salvation. And then I am hearing more and more that repentance is a work. Both are, in my estimation, very serious errors.

To understand how we get saved and how faith and repentance are related in the doctrine of salvation, it is important to understand at least something of the doctrine of conversion. The basic idea of conversion is a turning. It is a turning away from something and a turning to something. In salvation, it is a turning away from sin; that is repentance. And it is a turning to God. That is faith. For a very clear message on the doctrine of conversion, let me refer you to Trent's message this past summer on the subject. I'm not sure if it is on sermonaudio yet, but it will be.

So, with regard to conversion, listen to these verses: Matthew 13:15, "For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn (be converted), So that I should heal them.'" There must come a turning point.

Matthew 18:3, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Without conversion, there is no salvation.

Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..."

In Acts 28:27, Paul uses the same Scripture Jesus used in Matthew



13:15, emphasizing its importance in salvation: "For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn (be converted), So that I should heal them."

Now, someone has well said that the doctrine of conversion is like a coin. A coin has two sides. Conversion has two sides. The English describes it by the word, to convert, or to turn. When you convert or turn, you turn away from something and towards something. You cannot turn away from something without turning to something else. The turning away from is repentance and the turning to, is faith. We turn from sin to Christ.

If you take repentance away from conversion, you have nothing left. That is what happens to a coin when you take one side away. So Jesus said it as clearly as you can say it in Mark 1:15, "Repent, and believe in the Gospel." In some Scriptures repentance is stressed without mentioning faith. Look at Luke 13:1-5 (read). In others, faith is stressed without mentioning repentance as in John 3:16. We must never conclude that because the one is not mentioned in one text, it therefore is not necessary. That is a fatal error.

So, when Ephesians 2:8 says we are saved by grace through faith, we understand that repentance is included. There is no true faith without repentance. The whole reason for salvation is sin and sin must be dealt with for

salvation to take place, and it is dealt with by repentance.

So, salvation is entirely apart from works. To those who may think repentance is a work, consider 2 Timothy 2:24-25 (read). God gives repentance to people. They do not earn something by it. And how does God give repentance to people? By making the truth known to them. And He uses other people to do this.

On this verse Barnes says, "Give them such a view of the error which they have embraced, and such regret for having embraced it, that they shall be willing to admit the truth."

Gill says, "...repentance here designs a repentance of errors in principle, a change of mind upon conviction, and such as issues in a free and ingenuous confession, and acknowledgment of the truth before opposed; and such a repentance is the gift of God: it is he that opens the eyes of the understanding, and works conviction in the mind, and leads into all truth, as it is in Jesus; and induces men to repent of their errors, confess their mistakes, and own the truth; even as repentance of evil practices is not owing to the power of men, nor to the bare influence of means, but to the efficacious grace of God, it being a grant from him. And though this is not certain, that God will give repentance to such contradictors and blasphemers of his Gospel; yet as it is his will, that all his chosen ones should come to repentance, and that some of all

sorts should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; and seeing these things have been brought about under and by the ministry of the word, it is an encouragement to the ministers of the Gospel to continue their instructions in the manner here directed."

And last, Poole says, "...and God may give them a power, and a heart to repent, and to acknowledge that truth, which they at present oppose; and although this must be God's work, yet he doth it by ministers as his means and instruments, who are to use probable means in order to it; such are not railing and reviling, but meek instructions, and a kind and gentle behavior to them. A foul-mouthed minister is seldom an instrument to cleanse another's heart."

-Present tense salvation

I want to add yet another point to these words, "For you are saved by grace through faith..." The verb 'are' in 'you are saved' is in the present tense. But the word saved is a participle and not a verb in the Greek. Literally it would read like this, "For you are saved ones, by grace through faith." The participle I have translated as 'saved ones' is in the perfect tense.

Now the reason I mention that, though that is a very complicated grammatical point is that I believe salvation is a present ongoing work. Salvation is spoken of in the Bible mostly in the present tense. For example, "For

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes..." present tense. It does not say, "...that whoever has once believed..." That would mean if you ever once believed you would be saved, period. But it does not say that. It says, "...whoever believes..." That is, whoever goes on believing. So, as long as we go on believing, present tense, we are saved ones, perfect tense.

I conclude that after initial salvation by grace through faith, we need to continue to experience salvation by grace through faith. We call this the sanctification. It is present tense salvation. And to continue to experience grace in our Christian lives, it requires that I continue to get to know Him better and better, and repent of my sins whenever they occur, and continue to believe Him for forgiveness. Today there is a growing teaching abroad among conservative Christians who say that when you get saved, your sins are forgiven, past, present and future. That is absolutely not true. Salvation is an ongoing thing.

So, in salvation, there is the initial experience when we repent of our sins and believe Him for the forgiveness of those sins. Then there is the day to day deliverance from the power of sin. It takes grace, God's giving to us what we need; and faith, our believing Him for those things. And as long as we go on believing, we are 'saved ones'.

So, with all that, the question is, what exactly is it that I have to believe in order to be a saved one? Well, I must believe the Gospel. The Gospel is the good news. And the good news is

that Jesus came to earth and was born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life and then was crucified on my behalf. He suffered the death I should have died. He was buried and rose again, and ascended into heaven the victorious One.

Since He died for my sins, He has said that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. This need for confession of sin is also under attack today. But Scripture says I must confess my sins to Him (1 John 1:9). Then I must receive Him as my Lord and Savior (John 1:12). To receive Him as my Lord means that I am now willing to obey His truth as I learn it. He cannot be my Lord if I do not obey Him. And when I receive Him as Savior, I must believe He has forgiven my sins when I confessed them, for salvation is from sin (Matt. 1:21). Now I stand cleansed before Him. And when sin enters, it is dealt with by confession. When I wrong others, I need to take care of this with them. Salvation delivers us from sin. If it does not do that, we are not saved.

Recently I read a testimony of a family from India in the "Hope Horizons" news letter. This family had listened to messages on radio and this is what they wrote in to the station, "We all have repented for our past sinful life. We have accepted Jesus as our Saviour. We have been baptized and now our lives are full of heavenly joy and peace." There is a truly biblical testimony.

-I must make another point with regard to the pronoun 'that' and the word 'gift' So, notice these words in our text. It goes on like this, "For by grace you are

saved through faith, and 'that' (there is the pronoun 'that') not of yourselves, it is 'the gift' (here is the word 'gift') of God..." One of the great difficulties of interpreting this passage is the question what does the pronoun 'that' and the word 'gift' refer to? Whatever the word 'that' stands for is also 'the gift'.

Daniel B. Wallace, in his book, "Greek Grammar Beyond The Basics", says, "This is the most debated text in terms of the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun, *touto*" (334). Well that pronoun *touto* is, I believe, our word 'that' in 'that not of yourselves'.

I had a good friend who was also a staunch Calvinist. One day when we were discussing whether faith was a gift or a responsibility he said something like this, "Well, you check out Ephesians 2:8, and tell me that faith is not the gift." And so I did just that. It is a rather demanding study.

I came to the conclusion back then that the gift is neither grace nor faith. That is not hard to conclude from the Greek. If the word 'that' referred to either the word grace or faith, it would have to be in the same gender. It is not hard to find out that both 'grace' and 'faith' are feminine in the Greek and the word 'that' and the word 'gift' are neuter. You can rule out both grace and faith as being the gift.

And to reduce a long study, there is a simple ellipsis in this verse that clears up the whole difficulty. So, let me read the verse supplying the elliptical or left out word. "For by grace you are saved through faith and that

salvation is not of yourselves,  
it is the gift of God, not of  
works lest any man should boast."

Now someone may be listening to these messages, and that someone may be a staunch Calvinist as well, or a student of the Greek NT. And he may do a little study and say, "Aha! You made a mistake there! The word 'salvation' is also feminine! So, if the word 'that' cannot refer to either grace or faith because those words are feminine, then to be consistent you have to allow that it cannot mean salvation either." That is true, for the most part. But on occasion it is spoken of in the neuter. Go with me to Ephesians 6 (read verse 17). Here the word *salvation* is in the neuter. It is my conclusion that when the word *salvation* refers to the whole of salvation, it is in the neuter gender. In that way, the pronoun 'that', and the word 'gift' and 'salvation' are all in the neuter and our passage falls fully into conformity with regard to gender.

Now let me read the whole verse like that, "For by grace you are saved through faith and that *salvation* is not of yourselves; that *salvation* is the gift of God, and that *salvation* is not of works lest any man should boast."

-Works

Now I want to make a brief comment on the word 'works'. God has made salvation available in such a way that it can never be earned in the tiniest, teensiest little way. Certainly having salvation made available by grace excludes all works. And believing, having faith is not a work. And repentance is exactly

the same as faith in the sense of it not being a work. When someone says, "I sinned by lying to you, and I humbly ask your forgiveness", is that a work? Of course it is not! Conversion, which includes both repentance and faith is entirely apart from works, and it is entirely by grace.

And so, I conclude that those who have truly believed, have also repented. And those who have truly repented, will also believe. And they will receive the gift of salvation, and not one part of that salvation will come because it has been merited. It is entirely by the grace of God!

CONCL: So, we have looked at Ephesians 2:8-9 in the last two messages. And the conclusion is that all of salvation is by grace through faith. The grace is God's part. It is giving to us whatever we need to humble ourselves before Him and to come to Him in repentance, and confess our sins and believe the record in the Bible of His Son's death, burial and resurrection on our behalf.

You see, salvation is by grace through faith in order that when salvation is completed, man is left with not even one thing to boast about. He must come in humility and receive from God the power to and humility to repent and believe. This salvation is achieved in just such a way that it will never allow for boasting. And if ever there is boasting, there never was a true salvation.

God has chosen a means of salvation that is so incredible, the devil has tried to figure it out but couldn't. Angels desired to look into it, but couldn't. But man can experience this salvation by grace through faith. This salvation leaves God as God, God as Creator God. And it leaves man as man, the creature, the created.