

SOTERIOLOGY (113)

No matter how clever, how convincing, how entertaining or how scholarly we may think our presentations are, the truth is none of those things convicts or saves a person. God alone, through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and through the power that is in His Word, saves lost souls.

Ephesians 2:8-9 is very clear to reveal that the salvation of a soul is by God's grace. There are no human works involved and there is nothing man can do to merit salvation. Salvation is a gracious gift of God.

No human will ever comprehend the full depth of the grace of God involved in saving a sinner. But any true doctrinal study of soteriology will try as best as possible to grasp as much as possible concerning the "Amazing Grace" of God that saved and continues to save sinners.

QUESTION #42 – What really happened at the moment of salvation?

At the moment of salvation, there are at least 33 divine achievements that are all of God's grace.

All of these achievements have the following in common:

- 1) They are not experienced –although they are very real, no human can boast claim to having experienced them in some emotional or tangible manner. Many are very confused on this point and, as a result, wonder if they are really saved.
- 2) They are not progressive –none of these achievements mature with time or progress as the individual spiritually advances and develops.
- 3) They are not earned –none of these achievements may be earned. They do not rest on the merit of a human being; these rest on the finished work of the Son of God.
- 4) They are eternal –all achievements given to a person at salvation are eternal, not temporal. In fact, the gift is called "eternal life."
- 5) They are revealed –all of these achievements are found in the Word of God. They are not invented by men or the result of human imagination or speculation. These are achievements God has declared and revealed in His Word.
- 6) They are God-wrought –all of these achievements are God's work for man. In fact, no man is capable of doing for man what God does for man at the moment of salvation.
- 7) They are not man-wrought –none of the 33 achievements can be attained by any human. All man can do in regard to these accomplishments is stand in awe of the grace of God.

When considering the above matters, one begins to scratch the surface in understanding that salvation is by grace.

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There is not one thing man can do or say about these achievements, for at the moment a person believes on Christ, they are instantaneously and simultaneously appropriated by God. Even though a sinner has no idea that these things are happening according to the Word of God, they are happening and do happen and thus bring the student of the Bible to more and more understand that salvation is “all of grace.”

The 33 achievements are as follows:

Achievement #1 - At the moment of salvation, a person is part of the eternal elective plan of God.

Although this is certainly not realized by any human mind, such biblical words as foreknown, predestinated, elect, chosen and called, which are clearly used in connection with one who comes to faith in Christ (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-14; I Pet. 1:2), clearly establish that when a person believes, he has been singled out by Almighty God for His eternal, elective plan. When any believer realizes he has been the recipient of the sovereign grace of God in a plan designed from all eternity, he must stand in humble awe concerning this achievement.

Achievement #2 - At the moment of salvation, a person is redeemed.

At the moment of salvation, the price Christ paid for the sins of that person is judicially applied by God to the believer and he is immediately set free from his sin (Rom. 3:24; I Pet. 1:18-19). No amount of faithfulness after salvation has anything to do with this tremendous theological truth. This, as all these achievements, is all of God's grace.

Achievement #3 - At the moment of salvation, a person is reconciled.

At the moment of salvation, a person is so completely changed that he is totally and completely reconciled to the Holy God forever. The relationship is instantly changed from hostility to harmony with God. Even though the person has no real knowledge that this instantly happens, it really does instantly happen (II Cor. 5:18).

Achievement #4 - At the moment of salvation, a person is related to God through propitiation.

Everything that needs to be appeased making it possible for a sinful human to have a relationship with the Holy God takes place at the moment of salvation (Rom. 3:25). Although the person is not aware of the righteousness of God and the wrath of God that both need to be appeased in order for a relationship to occur, they were both completely and fully appeased at the moment of salvation.

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Achievement #5 - At the moment of salvation, all sins were forgiven.

Not only were all sins forgiven at the moment of salvation, but also the person was freed from all condemnation (Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 1:14; 2:13; 3:13; Acts 13:39; I Cor. 6:9-11). Although many believers and many churches don't realize this point yet, the biblical truth is that when a person believes on Christ, he is forgiven all sin including past, present and future. This is exactly why no condemnatory charge can ever be brought against one of the elect (Rom. 8:33-34).

Dr. Chafer said, "None of the believer's positions before God, when rightly apprehended, is more a blessing to the heart than the fact that all condemnation is removed forever, God for Christ's sake having forgiven all trespasses" (Vol. 3, p. 239).

Achievement #6 - At the moment of salvation, a person eternally united with Christ has a new life.

Romans 6:1-10 and Colossians 2:12 inform us of a remarkable union that took place when we believed on Jesus Christ. In the mind of God, we were co-crucified, we co-died, we were co-buried and we were co-resurrected with Jesus Christ. Certainly no believer, at the moment of salvation, is aware of such a remarkable union that instantly occurs; but when we come to faith, it does instantly occur.

Achievement #7 - At the moment of salvation, a person is freed from the Law.

Until a person comes to faith in Christ, the Law of God was tabulating a full mouth-stopping sin and guilt chart against him (Rom. 3:19-20). But when a person comes to faith in Christ, he is totally freed from any condemnation of the Law of God (John 1:17; Rom. 6:14; II Cor. 3:6-13; Gal. 2:16). Certainly no believer is aware of this at the moment of salvation.

Achievement #8 - At the moment of salvation, a person becomes a child of God.

John 1:12-13 makes it very clear that this wonderful classification is immediate when one receives Christ. Dr. Chafer says, "To be born anew by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit into a relationship in which God the First Person becomes a legitimate Father and the saved one becomes a legitimate child, is a position which is but dimly apprehended by any human being in this world" (Vol. 3, p. 241).

We may testify that there have been times when we have tried to explain to a new Christian the fact that now he/she is a child of God. We soon realize in such an attempt that the newly saved really does not even begin to grasp what has happened. Truth is we will probably never fully grasp ourselves what it means to be a child of God. But this certainly shows the amazing grace involved in our salvation.

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Achievement #9 - At the moment of salvation, we are fully adopted.

A passage like Ephesians 1:4-5 makes this point very clear. Divine adoption is much different than human adoption. In human adoption, one person is adopted to become a member of another family. In Divine adoption, a child already born into the family of God is given a full adult status, thus giving him immediate access to all of the benefits and blessings of the Father. Every believer is born legitimately into the family of God and is adopted into full sonship at the moment of his birth. No child of God can ever miss the eternal blessings of his sonship.

Achievement #10 - At the moment of salvation, a person is fully accepted by God.
Eph. 1:6; I Pet. 2:5

From the moment of one's salvation, that person is fully acceptable in the sight of God. This is a remarkable truth. There are two major realities that exist for every Christian:

- 1) Imparted eternal life (John 20:31), and
- 2) Imputed righteousness (II Cor. 5:21).

Not only are these two things true, but also every believer has been set-apart unto God—sanctification (I Cor. 6:11). In view of this, it is clear that at the moment of salvation a believer is fully accepted by God.

Achievement #11 - At the moment of salvation, a person is justified. Rom. 5:1

Dr. Chafer's words on this subject are very profound and weighty:

“Theological definitions respecting justification are more traditional than biblical. Only inattention to Scripture can account for the confusion of justification with divine forgiveness of sin. It is true that each of these is an act of God in response to saving faith, that none are forgiven who are not justified, and that none are justified who are not forgiven; but in no particular do these great divine undertakings coalesce (unite, blend, mingle). Likewise, though they are translated from the same Greek root, the terms righteousness (imputed) and justification represent wholly different conceptions. The believer is constituted righteous by virtue of his position in Christ, but he is justified by a declaratory decree of God. Righteousness imputed is the abiding fact, and justification is the divine recognition of that fact. ...It is the Christian's right to count this work done and to say, as in Romans 5:1, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Vol. 3, p. 246).

Justification is another tremendous benefit of grace that occurs the moment a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Achievement #12 - At the moment of salvation, a person is brought near . Eph. 2:13

It is very clear that at the moment of salvation a new relationship occurs between God and the believer. There is a closeness that previously did not exist. There is a whole new positional reality in that one once far removed from God is now brought close to God. This positional reality becomes the potential possibility for every believer to live life in close, intimate harmony with the Holy God of the bible. This potential of having a close relationship with God began at the moment of salvation (James 4:8; Heb. 10:22).

Achievement #13 - At the moment of salvation, a person is delivered from the power of darkness . Col. 1:13

As we have already seen in this study, prior to salvation, a person is totally under the dominating power of Satan (II Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-2; I John 5:19). However, at the moment of salvation, the believer is delivered from that power (Acts 26:18). Although believers are destined for a war against satanic forces, it is also revealed in Scripture that if the believer arms himself properly, he can victoriously win every skirmish (Eph. 6:10-12). Only the believer has been delivered from Satan's power, the rest of the world is still dominated by him.

Achievement #14 - At the moment of salvation, a person is placed into the Kingdom of God . Col. 1:13-14; I Thess. 2:12; II Pet. 1:11

The kingdom the N.T. believer is placed in is far different than the Jewish Kingdom longed for by Israel. We are not looking or longing or hoping for a kingdom, we are already in it. Although it is doubtful that any believer will fully grasp the significance of this important reality, it is clearly revealed that at the moment of salvation a person is not only delivered from the powers of darkness, but is delivered into God's Kingdom. This means that instantly a person becomes part of God's family which immediately entitles him to share in God's eternal program and wealth.

Achievement #15 - At the moment of salvation, a person is placed on the rock .

At the moment of salvation, a believer has a life that is instantly established on the only right foundation. Jesus Christ referred to this concept in Matt. 7:24-27. In this He taught a very important principle—any structure build on the foundation of the rock is one that will withstand anything. Later, Paul would use this imagery to teach that anyone who had the foundation of Jesus Christ would stand, even if his works were burned (I Cor. 3:11-15). Those who have not believed on Christ have their foundation on the sand and someday they will crumble.

Achievement #16 - At the moment of salvation, a person becomes a gift to Christ .

Every believer in Jesus Christ is a gift from God the Father to Jesus Christ. That fact is clearly brought out in Jesus' prayer found in John 17 (17:6-9, 11-12, 24).