

Saved By Grace Through Faith – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul outlines the central tenet of the gospel message: salvation by grace through faith
2. aim – to cause us to understand the core of the gospel message and its power in our lives
3. passage – Ephesians 2:1-10

b. outline

1. The Predicament in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:1-3)
2. The Power in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:4-7)
3. The Purpose in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10)

c. opening

1. the **question posed** in **2:1-10**
 - a. why have you (or I) been saved? for what purpose has God extended his power to raise us, as dead sinners, to new life in Christ?
 - b. so we can “go to heaven” when we die? so we can avoid hell? so we can have our “best life now” and experience all the “goodies” God has in store for those who come to Jesus?
 - c. **IMO**: most church-goers get this wrong because they assume that their salvation is all **about them**
2. the **theological** thought in **2:1-10**
 - a. Paul’s prayer is that we fully **understand** the power of God, **embrace** it, and **live in** it
 - b. **vv. 1-10** sets forth **how** the power of the God is manifested in the life of the believer
 - c. **vv. 1-10** sets forth a **central** tenet of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:
 1. that salvation is entirely of **grace**, and not of human choice or human desire or human power
 2. so, to truly **understand** grace, it is **imperative** to first understand our **natural spiritual condition**
 - a. **i.e.** that the human race is **spiritually dead** and unable to desire righteousness or cooperate with God towards any goal of holiness in his presence (**vv. 1-3**)
 3. and, to truly **understand** grace, it is **imperative** to also understand **what God has done**
 - a. **i.e.** that God has exercised his power to **raise us from the dead** and include us in all of the riches that the Father has promised to the Son (**vv. 4-7**)
 4. now, to truly **understand** grace, it is **imperative** that we understand **why God has done this**
 - a. **i.e.** that the power of God is not just to raise us to “life,” but to actually raise us to a state where we are **useful and productive** in what he has purposed for us to **be**
 - b. **i.e.** so that we might **live**, not just be alive
 - d. the discussion of **vv. 8-10** will be along these lines: the *popularity* of the pericope → its *grammar* → its *flow* → its *application* to us (specifically, in *how God sees the matter*)

III. The Purpose in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Content

a. the **popularity** of the pericope

1. **Ephesians 2:8-9** is a highly popular, often-quoted passage, by many branches of the church
 - a. **i.e.** everyone seems to “get” that something important is contained herein
 - b. **e.g.** I myself have contended that the Gospel “rotates” around this statement, with both *sola gratia* and *sola fide* appearing here as the “core” of a biblical soteriology
 - c. **i.e.** even Paul understood it – he repeats “*by grace you have been saved*” from **v. 5**
2. however, there are a number of **errors** that are made in regards to this passage (**in general**)
 - a. it is often pulled from its context = the salvation gleaned from within it is *void* of the deep darkness of sin and death outlined in **vv. 1-3** – **i.e.** “*saved*” from *what*?
 - b. it is often treated as overly simplistic = the concepts of “*grace*” and “*faith*” are watered-down from their radical nature to something more innocuous or “easy”
 - c. it is often ended before its done = the conclusion of **v. 10** is (often) *left out* of the quotation because it is “uncomfortable” – **i.e.** it implies something inconsistent with the “default” view of humanity
3. **principle: a robust understanding of Ephesians 2:8-10 will not only give you a good view into God’s understanding of salvation, but will also give you purpose from within his purpose**

b. the grammar of the pericope

1. various grammatical issues arise here, including both *referential* and *definitional* ones
2. a **referential** issue: to *what* do the words “*this*” and “*it*” in v. 8b refer?
 - a. clearly, a reference *back* into the immediately preceding statement – what is it that we have not done; what is this “*gift*” to us? or, what is the **antecedent** of “*this*” and “*it*” (and “*gift*”)?
 - b. **solution #1**: “*this*” and “*it*” are references to “*faith*” – that faith is a gift from God
 1. certainly true, given the *natural* condition of the human race spoken of in **vv. 1-3**
 - a. **i.e.** the ability/desire of rebel human beings to trust God for anything is certainly not “*natural*”
 - b. **contra** the synergist = faith *must* be an “*inherent*” ability (**see solution #2**)
 2. thus, if the condition of humanity is one of utter *faithlessness*, then faith must be a gift to believe
 - c. **solution #2**: “*this*” and “*it*” are references to “*grace*” – that grace is a gift from God
 1. certainly truth, since grace (**by definition, see below**) is a choice on the part of God to act benevolently, than the “*gift*” must be the very act of God *choosing* to save us
 2. thus, if salvation is entirely the choice of God, then grace itself can be the gift
 - d. **solution #3**: “*this*” and “*it*” are references to “*saved*” – as a *whole* salvation is a gift from God
 1. grammatically, “*saved*” is the verb (action), while “*grace*” and “*faith*” are *aspects* related to it
 - a. thus, it is the *logical* antecedent since it is at the *heart* of the sentence in reference
 2. **LOW**: our *entire salvation* (from beginning to end) is a gift from God, and it includes the grace of God to grant it, along with the induction of faith as the means to embrace it
 - a. so, it is true to say that faith is a gift of God, as long as that is said within the larger picture
 3. **note**: the statement of v. 9 clarifies this assertion (Paul anticipates the question)
3. the **definitional** issues:
 - a. “*of works*” (v. 9) = claiming any human effort within the framework of salvation
 1. **note**: the word “*works*” appears again in v. 10, but its use is *positive* there (“*good works*”)
 2. **here**: something achieved (or achievable) by fallen humans; a form of **synergism**
 - a. the synergist believes that “*some*” amount of effort is required for salvation, even if that is just “*stepping out*” in faith – they deny it as a “*work*,” but they contradict that when they insist that human beings “*can*” come to faith without any *direct* work of regeneration
 - b. but, per Paul, anything that we can point to *in ourselves* is ultimately a form of a “*boast*”
 - c. **i.e.** works (for the sake of “*standing*”) are the *antithesis* of faith (**see below**)
 - b. “*by grace*” (v. 8a) = the **radical choice of God** to include and draw a people for his own glory
 1. **note**: a seriously deficient understanding of grace permeates the church
 - a. **e.g.** grace is not a tangible gift; grace is not a wink by God at the “*seeker*”; grace is not a “*lowering*” of his expectations upon humanity; grace is not a willingness by God to “*change*”
 1. true, Paul says “*the grace given to me*” in **1 Cor. 3:10**, etc., but he implies that grace itself was followed with the tangible “*thing*” he needed (**i.e.** as a builder of faith)
 - b. **e.g.** and, grace is more than just the simplistic “*unmerited favor*” (**i.e.** as for children)
 2. radical = grace is a *radical* choice because it is a choice no “*sane*” person would ever make
 - a. **meaning**: given the *rebellious* nature of man, and his *utter hatred* of God, grace is radical because it is beyond belief that God would actually *choose* to be good to anyone
 3. **principle: grace is God moving beyond the scope of our imaginings, in that he would actually choose to rescue an enemy from his own judgment over them as creatures**
 2. radical = faith is a radical trust in the promises of God (now visible in Christ Jesus) that permeates every aspect of the one exercising it
 - a. **meaning**: faith is only faith when it changes our *allegiance* – when it forces our loyalty and our hope to Jesus *and away from ourselves*
 3. **principle: faith is moving away from a trust in ourselves to a trust in someone else**
 - c. “*through faith*” (v. 8b) = the **radical trust of the believer** in the promise of God manifest in Christ
 1. **note**: a seriously deficient understanding of faith permeates the church (no examples needed)
 2. radical = faith is a radical trust in the promises of God (now visible in Christ Jesus) that permeates every aspect of the one exercising it
 - a. **meaning**: faith is only faith when it changes our *allegiance* – when it forces our loyalty and our hope to Jesus *and away from ourselves*
 3. **principle: faith is moving away from a trust in ourselves to a trust in someone else**
 - d. “*workmanship*” (v. 10) = something made; a creation; lit. something crafted for a specific purpose
 1. the act of grace that leads to faith is a work of God to *form* something, to make something new
 2. the act of grace that leads to faith creates a people to do “*good works*”
 - a. “*good works*” = preordained acts to be carried out by the elect in accordance with his purposes in the world – those things which God uses his people to accomplish
 - b. **e.g.** worship = the good work of honoring God in the place he rightly deserves before us
 - c. **e.g.** prayer, evangelism, ministry, service, etc.

c. the *flow* of the pericope

1. **v. 8** = Paul states *how* God has exercised his power in the elect: choosing them and saving them through the means of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (*sola gratia* and *sola fide*)
2. **v. 9** = Paul clarifies that this power in the elect is *purely divine*: it does not rest in anything that we in our human strength can (or would) do in cooperation with the Lord Jesus Christ
3. **v. 10** = Paul establishes that this power in the elect *gives them purpose*: we are saved for so much more than just “getting into heaven”
4. **LOW**: this answers the question: “why does God exercise his power to save people; why am I saved?”

d. the *application* of the pericope

1. fact #1: Paul writes to a church filled with people who have already trusted in Christ
2. fact #2: Paul thanks God that these people are included in his divine decree (in his purpose)
3. fact #3: Paul prays that they would deepen in their understanding of God's power
4. fact #4: Paul outlines how that power comes to bear in their lives
 - a. dead in sin → raised with Christ → a life through which the power of God flows
 - b. i.e. there is no reason to believe vv. 8-10 if you don't believe vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-7
 - c. the true follower of Christ (the one saved by grace alone through faith alone) denies himself
 1. he denies that he deserved to be saved or cooperated in getting saved
 2. he denies that he gets to determine his future for himself
 3. he denies that he is any longer “in charge” of his earthly existence
 - d. the “typical” Christian today fails to deny these things (generally) – he thinks that being a Christian is only about the “afterlife” and is free to live like the pagan or the heathen in the here-and-now
 - e. **principle: to truly experience the fullness of the power of God is to trust in Christ so radically that you submit every aspect of your life to him, to be used as he wishes**