

## Saved by Grace through Faith Alone

**Text:** Ephesians 2:8-9

### Introduction:

1. Review: The Apostle Paul has just outlined in another long sentence (Vs. 1-7) how the Ephesian Christians had experienced the supernatural power of God in raising them to spiritual life.
2. Now Paul further expands on the theme of the riches of God's grace in Vs. 7 and his brief mention of salvation by grace in the parenthesis of Vs. 5. In these verses he explains that salvation is all of God's grace and has nothing to do with human works or efforts.
3. These verses contain one of the most powerful and succinct summaries of the Gospel in the New Testament. They answer the age-old question asked by the Philippian jailor to Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)
4. What do we mean by the terms 'salvation' and 'saved'? These are Bible words that describe being delivered from sin and hell. The word 'saved' means "to deliver, rescue from danger."
5. In these verses we will note four truths about salvation.

### I. THE GRACE THAT PROVIDES SALVATION (VS. 8a)

#### A. The Definition of Grace

1. The word occurs 12 times in this book. Wuest explains that in classical Greek, grace was "something conferred **freely**, with no expectation of return, and finding its only **motive** in the bounty and free-heartedness of the giver. It was also used to describe an act that was **beyond the ordinary course** of what might be expected. This favor was always done to a friend, never to an enemy." There is a human grace of this character that is exhibited amongst those whom we love.
2. The grace of God is infinitely higher than any sort of human exercise of graciousness as it was shown to those who were His enemies (Rom. 5:6-10). The word therefore means, "God's kindness towards undeserving people" (Wiersbe). It is God's unmerited, undeserved favor.
3. Mercy is not giving me what I deserve (a withholding) whereas grace is giving me what I do not deserve (a bestowing). Praise God, He is rich in both (Eph. 1:7; 2:4) which means they are in abundant supply.

#### B. The Action of Grace – 'saved'

1. The word 'saved' is in the passive voice, meaning the action was performed on our behalf, we were acted upon.
2. The word 'saved' is in the perfect tense which speaks of action completed in the past which remains true in the present. Hence why the translators express it "**are** saved." God views our salvation as something that is finished and complete. It is not "being saved" or "saved eventually."

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3. Because grace is the basis of salvation and not my works, it means it is impossible to lose my salvation. My forgiveness (Eph. 1:7) is “according to the riches of his grace”. Not “out of” but “according to”. My salvation is backed by all the riches of God’s eternal, infinite grace.

### II. THE GRASP THAT RECEIVES SALVATION (VS. 8b)

The next key word to consider is the word ‘faith’.

#### A. The Definition of Faith

1. “through faith” = this means that faith is the channel by which we receive salvation. Grace is the basis for my salvation and faith is the means of receiving it. The fact Christ died for you doesn’t make you saved automatically. If that was the case, we would believe in universal salvation. You are saved when you personally put your trust in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. God’s grace made provision for our salvation but we must make a personal choice to avail ourselves of the salvation He offers to us.
2. The word ‘faith’ at its core means ‘trust’, ‘confidence’ and ‘reliance.’ This reveals that faith is not a vague feeling with no object. Faith has Christ and His finished work on the cross as its object. It is not faith in my faith but faith in Christ.

#### B. The Illustrations of Faith

1. Faith is the hand that receives – John 1:12 “But as many as **received** him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that **believe** on his name.” This verse makes it plain that believing involves more than just an acceptance of facts in my heart, as important as that aspect of believing is. To know the facts of what Christ has done for me in my mind is not enough. I must receive Christ into my heart.
2. Faith is the eye that looks - John 3:14-15 “And **as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness**, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (Num. 21:8 – Look and live). Isaiah 45:22 “**Look unto me**, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else*.” Salvation comes by looking to Christ, and Christ alone. Not by looking to a church or a religious system, not by looking to a religious practice or ritual but by looking to Christ and Christ alone.
3. Faith is the heart that rests – Acts 16:31 “And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Just as one trusts in a chair for support because it is trustworthy, so one trusts in God’s gracious salvation because God is reliable and trustworthy.

### III. THE GIFT THAT PICTURES SALVATION (VS. 8b-9)

“To make it clear, Paul not only presents the source of salvation, but he also states the opposite, namely, what is **not** the source of salvation.” (Hoehner)

#### A. What Salvation is Not (Vs. 8b & 9)

The text plainly states that salvation does **NOT** come from two sources:

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1. It is not found in an individual's person (Vs. 8b)
  - a. The word 'of' is the Greek word 'ek' meaning "out of". Salvation does not come out of you! There is no hope to be found in yourself!
  - b. Yet this is exactly the message that is proclaimed in our culture which has largely forsaken God's Word and the Gospel. It is proclaimed widely that the solution to one's addictions and failures is to believe in themselves, to discover the champion within and all will be well. But looking within to yourself is a fool's errand that will bring no victory, deliverance or peace. Salvation is not in self!
2. It is not found in an individual's performance (Vs. 9)
  - a. "not of works" = works are our own efforts, what we can do. Words could not be plainer and clearer. No human efforts, no matter how sincere, can save us from sin and earn us eternal life in heaven. "If you work, you put the one by whom you are employed into your debt, and he does not get out of your debt until he has paid for your labour. If by works we could earn salvation, we would put God in our debt." (Harry Ironside)
    - i. Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." If God sees my good works as filthy and offensive to Him, how much more serious must my sin be!
    - ii. Romans 4:4-5 "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that **worketh not**, but **believeth** on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Righteousness is received, not earned.
    - iii. Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then *is it no more of works*: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be of works*, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."
    - iv. Titus 3:5 "**Not by works of righteousness which we have done**, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"
    - v. The Roman Catholic Church is an example of adding works to salvation. "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA" (Sixth Session, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 12).
  - b. "lest any man should boast" = boasting is an expression of pride; it is pride verbalized. The word means "to glory". Here it refers to a prideful glorying in oneself and one's own achievements. God will not have any boasting in His presence. His glory he will "not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8).

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- i. If salvation were by our achievements that would be cause for us to boast in God's presence. Romans 4:2-3 "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to **glory** (same word as 'boast'); but **not before God**. For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."
  - ii. Romans 3:27 "Where *is* **boasting** then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."
  - iii. Ephesians has already made it abundantly clear that God's grand design and purpose in the plan of salvation was to glorify Himself – "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (1:6), "that we should be to the praise of his glory" (1:12), "unto the praise of his glory" (Vs. 14), "that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace" (2:7).
  - iv. The true believer makes his/her boast in the Lord – Psalm 34:2 "My soul shall make her **boast** in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad."
  - v. The true believer glories in the cross – Galatians 6:14 "But God forbid that I should **glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."
  - vi. Jeremiah 9:23 "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: **But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me**, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD."
- c. The Scriptural equation of salvation is: Eternal life = salvation by grace through faith +/- nothing. Faith and works cannot be mixed. If you trusted in Christ's work on the cross but also believed your baptism or some other work played a role in your salvation, that wasn't saving faith.

### B. What Salvation is (Vs. 8c)

1. "it is the gift of God" = salvation comes from God as a free gift. The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that salvation is given, not earned.
  - i. Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God** is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
  - ii. 1 John 5:11-12 "And this is the record, that God hath **given to us eternal life**, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."
  - iii. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he **gave** his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
2. This gift must be received – John 1:12 "But as many as **received** him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to

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them that **believe** on his name.” The word ‘received’ means “to take with the hand, lay hold of” (Strong’s).

3. Remember the simply salvation sequence of Eph. 1:13? They **heard** the Gospel, **believed** it and **received** it. The very moment they exercised saving faith, the Spirit of God indwelt and sealed them.

### IV. THE GOAL THAT FOLLOWS SALVATION (VS. 10)

This further expands further on the theme of our salvation not being by works (note the word ‘for’). It also reveals the goal God had in view when He saved us. There are two key words in the verse – ‘workmanship’ and ‘walk’. Let’s consider each of those in turn.

#### A. The Workmanship God Created (Vs. 10a)

1. ‘for’ = a further explanation of the previous statement (Vs. 9). The conjunction ‘for’ tells us why this salvation is not of human origin or by human works. We cannot be saved by our works when we are ourselves a work, a Divine work of God.
2. ‘workmanship’ = “the word was used in classical times for the work of a craftsman, such as the making of a crown.” (Hoehner)
  - a. Our English word ‘poem’ comes from this word. A poem is developed by someone with special talents and requires deliberate thought and meditation. In like manner, our all wise, loving God has re-made us in Christ through the work of salvation. Ironside writes, “Creation is God’s first poem, but redemption is His second poem, and you and I who are saved constitute the syllables in God’s great poem of redemption.”
  - b. The only other time this word is used in the New Testament is in Romans 1:20 where it speaks of “the things that are **made**”, referring to the physical creation. The first reference (Rom. 1:20) speaks of the physical handiwork of God and the second refers to the spiritual recreation of God in the believer’s life.
3. ‘created’ = further expands the figure of God’s workmanship. This word is used to describe God’s acts of creation in both the physical and spiritual realm. For example:
  - a. Mark 13:19 “the creation which God **created**”.
  - b. 1. Cor. 11:9 “Neither was the man **created** for the woman...”
  - c. Eph. 3:9 “who **created** all things by Jesus Christ”
  - d. Eph. 4:24 “the new man...**created** in righteousness”
  - e. Note: In Christ, we are a new creation! 2 Cor. 5:17 “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
4. “in Christ Jesus” = we are made new creatures in Christ. Outside of Christ, there is no salvation. We are not made new in baptism or any other work, only in Christ.

#### B. The Walk God Ordained (Vs. 10b)

1. “unto good works” = the word ‘unto’ “denotes the purpose of goal. God’s workmanship was not achieved by good works, but it should result in good works as God has purposed them (Titus 2:14).” (Hoehner) We were not saved by our works but we were saved

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unto good works. As someone wisely put it, “you aren’t saved by works, but if you are saved, you’ll work!”

- a. ‘good’ = These works are truly ‘good’ in the sight of God because they are produced in our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit as opposed to our own efforts which were tainted by sin and therefore offensive and filthy to God.
  - b. Note: Good works are an evidence of salvation but let us always remember that the emphasis of the passage is on God’s work, not ours. Therefore, let us be careful not to bruise new babes in Christ by expecting that they will automatically exhibit within a short time frame the maturity level of someone who has been saved for 10 years! If they are truly saved, there will be fruit but it may be small and gradual to start with. “Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works.” (Wiersbe)
2. “before ordained” = the word means “to prepare before, to make ready beforehand.” (Wuest) The same word is translated “afore prepared” in Romans 9:23. Vincent says, “God prearranged a sphere of moral action for us to walk in.” “His final object was to make good works the very element of our life, the domain in which our action should move.” (Expositors)
- a. Ephesians strongly emphasises that we were saved with a purpose. We were chosen to be holy and blameless (1:4) and predestinated to adoption (sonship) and to an inheritance (1:11).
  - b. Now we see that God’s plan of salvation took into consideration my walk on this earth, my present life. He pre-planned our service, how we should live for Him now. Titus 2:14 “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works.**”
3. “walk in them” = we have already seen how we used to walk before we were saved (Vs. 2). Now we learn of the new walk God has for us as His children. This walk will be outlined in detail in the section of the Book (Chap. 4-6) where the believer’s walk is the dominant theme. See 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15. We are to walk...
- a. Worthy (4:1)
  - b. Differently (4:17)
  - c. Lovingly (5:2)
  - d. Purely (5:8)
  - e. Circumspectly (5:15) The word literally means looking on all sides; looking round and therefore means to be cautious, prudent, vigilant and watchful. (adapted from Webster)
  - f. Note: We don’t in them, we walk in them. These works are produced in and through us by His grace and power as we walk with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not about you doing a work for God but about God doing a work in and through you. Phil. 2:13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

**Conclusion:** Have you received God’s gift of grace? Are you 100% sure of your salvation or are you resting on an unclear profession? How is your walk going?