

Saved by Grace

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[0 : 00] Let us join together in the worship of God, we shall sing to his praise the first psalm.

Psalm 1. That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinner's way, nor sitteth in the scornish chair, but placeth his delight upon God's law and meditates on his law day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never. And all he doth shall prosper well, the wicked are not so, but like they are unto the chaff which wind drives to and fro.

In judgment therefore shall not stand, such as ungodly are, nor in the assembly of the just shall wicked men appear. For why? The way of godly men unto the Lord is known, whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown.

The whole of the first psalm to God's praise, that man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray. That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray.

[1 : 37] In counsel of the Lord is known, nor stands in sinner's way, nor sitteth in the storm of sin, but blessedness, who walketh not astray.

Blessedness in the storm of sin, but blessedness, who walketh not astray. Blessedness, who walketh not astray. Blessedness, who walketh not astray. Blessedness, who asketh not astray. Blessedness, who walketh not astray. Blessedness, who walketh not astray.

women define a God can be like a year is my all which in this season gives us good and this day they deliver and all leaders shall prosper well the wicked heart of soul the right thing unto us shall which when bright to unknown in judgment there shall no sound such as the glory are nor in the assembly of the just shall we in the name of him for why the will of God the men unto the Lord is told where as the way of wicked men shall wide be on the road let us join together in prayer let us pray

Lord help us to pray help us to conduct this act of worship not simply as an exercise where the faculty of mind or heart are involved but in a strange way disengaged help us so that every faculty of souls collaborating in the sense that our worship is meaningful that we acknowledge ourselves to come in need to a God who is able to meet that need the one who has made provision for us in the greatest of needs in the passion of your son Jesus Christ in whose name we come pleading his merits thankful that you have given light to us of the activity wrought by him in this world that your word speaks of him as being one with you and that you are one even as the God who is the triune God

Father, Son and Holy Spirit we marvel at the description that your word gives to us that enables us to believe that to be true of you while at the same time holding out such a God to us as one who defies our understanding because of the limitations that possesses us creatures and not just creatures but fallen creatures at that we acknowledge our sin and that we do sin against you our God in thought, in word and in deed we pray that you would remind us through your word of the need that we have as we come to your word that the eyes of our understanding would be open that you would guide us by the hand of your spirit into the truth for your word is truth we give thanks for the fact that you are God who is able to do what no other can that we are on a level playing ground as far as our inability is concerned by nature all have sinned and come short of your glory and there is not one, no not one who is outside of that number and it is not to do with our capacity to learn or to grapple with the truth in a positive way that we will achieve the end by which we will come to know you as God for no matter the giftings that you have bestowed upon us out of your grace and out of your mercy you have not left us as of equal capacities or abilities there are in this world many, many different gifts that you have bestowed upon the children of men you have enabled men and women to develop these gifts so that we are encouraged to believe that you have appointed some who will be scientists some who will work and operate within the sphere of medicine some who will be instrumental teaching others there are so many departments of learning there are so many departments of learning that are in this world and it is not just a matter for us to believe that there is within the realms of education so many who are superior to many others but also within this world we are also seeing giftings of a different sort we have those who are able to demonstrate the love that they have by working within the community and sharing that love in the manner in which they conduct themselves and bestow upon others love that they would not have from other sources we give thanks for those who have demonstrated the power of motherhood for the power of parenthood we give thanks for those who exercise diligence in the political realm who exercise themselves in seeking to bestow upon others the wherewithal by which to live in comfort

[10 : 06] and to do their utmost to ensure that those who are suffering deprivation for whatever reason that they would be lifted out of the morass into which sin has caused us to descend we give thanks for the giftings that are apparent in the way in which there are men and women who are able to use their gifts in a constructive way in allowing us to live in homes that have been built from scratch and enabling us to live in these homes comfortably we give thanks for those who have the ability to to use these gifts in engineering, in construction those who have a mental capacity for research for penetrating the darkness of the unknown and who is very bent towards that and for that reason we see so many privileges that we enjoy because of their endeavours we are so much in your hand enable us to believe that that is true of us because we enjoy so many blessings blessings by virtue of your creating creating all things well so as I come into your presence we do so thankful that while all these things may be true while all these gifts may be seen in the sphere of exercise whatever it may be we do so that there are things that you have not left up to us that you have not left it open to us to save ourselves because that is something that was beyond us and in the person at your right hand you have shown that he has come into the world to seek and to save the lost something that we could not do we could not save others and we cannot save ourselves so we give thanks for the Gospel and for those who proclaim it by virtue of your own calling bless the preaching of the word today bless all who are under it in whatever way we give thanks for the churches that are able to gather in public though the numbers may be limited we give thanks for the opportunity to gather we bless you and thank you for everyone that is able to to worship in public we remember those who are constrained by virtue of the current pandemic to stay away from the places of worship for whatever reason we pray for your blessing to be upon the means ordained by yourself by which your word is distributed through the media through CDs through DVD through radio and television we can hear preaching from all over the world if that preaching is called by yourself to be delivered in your name we give thanks that you are willing to bless it and to that end we give thanks for all you have called to that work so remember us under your word remember our homes, our families, our communities may your spirit be poured out upon us that we may know a day of blessing a day of power a day of quickening we pray that you would remember us at this time thankful that we are able to have a positive outlook

because of the possibility of remedies not only being sought but being found we pray that they would fulfill their potential and all who in short in a short space of time will be delivered a vaccine that they may benefit from it and that your blessing may be upon it above all else we pray that we would acknowledge your hand as the giver of every good and perfect gift so visit us in mercy guiding the hands of those into whose hands we are entrusted to deliver such care bless them we pray remember those who have suffered remember those who have succumbed to the virus and who may as yet be in need of of the help that others may give to them we pray for doctors and nurses and carers within hospitals and care homes and communities we pray for those who are in mourning we remember them to you and pray that your healing hand would be upon them in all these things we pray that our eye would be upon you so we pray for this world in which we live with all its current and diverse need we pray that you in mercy would visit us and direct our eyes heavenwards pour out your spirit upon us as a generation we ask that you would be our light in the darkness that you would be our food in the poverty of need that we have that you are the bread of life you are the water of life you are the word that that edifies more than any other so help us to look to yourself we pray now that you would bless your word to us as we read it and as we reflect upon it cleanse from every sin in Jesus name, Amen we are going to read from

Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 2 and you hath it quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins where in in time past you walked according to the course of this world according to the course according to the prince of the power of the air the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath even as others but God who is rich in mercy for his great love for which he loved us even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ by grace ye are saved and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus for by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them wherefore remember that ye being in time past

Gentiles in the flesh who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands that at that time ye were without Christ being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off and made nigh by the blood of Christ for he is our peace who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle part wall of partition between us having abolished in his flesh the enmity even the law of commandments contained in ordinances for to make in himself of two one new man so making peace so that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross having slain the enmity thereby and came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh for through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets

Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord in whom you also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit and so on may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of our word and to his name be the praise then we again for a short time turn our attention to words that we have read in chapter 2 there reading again at verse 8 for by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them in this epistle to the Ephesians in chapter 1

[20 : 37] Jesus Christ is shown to be the true revelation of God he is central to God's purposes of salvation it is in him that all blessings past, present and future are bestowed when we get to chapter 2 it echoes the main teaching of unity through and in Christ Jesus peace is experienced and established between God and man so that those who were formerly objects of God's wrath are now shown to be objects of God's love and that is truly a remarkable transformation the verses we have here are a brief and a concise summary one would argue and many often do of the teachings that we have in Paul's epistle to the Romans and again in Galatians to show forth the exceedingly great riches of God's grace

I want us to look at these words and look at them in the light of five questions that we could ask first of all, when it comes to salvation how does God save?

secondly, what is the channel or the medium or the means of that salvation? thirdly, how can we know how salvation is not possible?

what does God not do in order to save? or what do we not do in order to be saved? what is, fourthly, the evidence that we have of faith which is the grace that is exemplified or the principal grace that is referred to in this passage and fifthly, why should there be such evidence?

why can we believe that we can find such evidences to prove that we are indeed numbered amongst those who are saved?

[23 : 28] when we think of the grace of God when we think of the grace of God we know that there are many ways in which that word itself is a word that has very wide meaning it has many meanings or many applications rather than meanings the late what is Bruce Nicholson when he was talking about grace he maintained that to begin with or in the first instance grace is to be understood as the goodness of God to men and in order to appreciate it you must understand that that goodness is found contained within God himself and ultimately it is revealed through God's dealings with men and women when we look at this passage asking this question how does God save?

the answer is God saves by grace by grace God saves it is done because he wills it to be done he is the initiator of it theologians read these words in this passage and there is a measure of debate as to whether the passage refers to the grace of salvation or or in particular faith salvation is all of grace and faith is the prince of graces what is clear is that the passage is a strong expression of the very freeness of salvation in the first chapter we find there that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him the eyes of our understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power who does the enlightening who does the calling who presents the riches of his glory and the inheritance to the saints who undertakes to use his power to exert such a saving influence we must I am sure agree on the basis of what the apostle is saying the apostle is saying that the whole work of salvation as far as Paul is concerned and indeed the scripture is concerned it is God's doing this is God's work if a man is to be born again if a man is to come to faith if a man or woman is to believe it is of God the apostle John says he that believes is born of God does not matter what aspect of your salvation you consider when you think of salvation you might focus on elements that are part of that salvation that you recognise that you appreciate must be part of it whether it is your effectual calling who does the calling well God clearly is the one who calls the sinner to himself who justifies who reconciles before we can experience salvation there must be peace between ourselves and the God who is angry with us and it is God that reconciles us to himself it is God who adopts is it God who sanctifies it is God who glorifies so that you must say all is of grace so what is the channel of that grace?

the channel of that grace we are told that it is by faith that we are saved and that not of yourselves by grace are ye saved through faith he says and that not of yourselves it is a gift of God the theologians theologians theologians think of faith as being able to be understood in its constituent parts as having to possess knowledge of Jesus Christ belief in Christ trust in Christ some others would explain it as a heart response or a commitment or a commitment to that Christ whatever way we use based upon the word of God it describes to us where we who are sinners receive or apprehend the offered blessing as it is in Christ Jesus now does that mean that faith is inherent in all men and merely under God's blessing comes into use when he chooses to endow us with grace?

faith again is itself the product of God's grace it is God that works faith in us as the shorter catechism puts it by applying the redemption the burden of God is being purchased by Christ and working faith in us the Puritan Thomas Goodwin uses an illustration that is very visual he has a picture of the beggar asking for alms and when he is asking for alms he stretches out his hand and takes the bread that is offered merely taking and receiving nothing in return focus on the hand that takes we can regard this as a subjective feeling or something else focus on the response of the one healed striving, stretching and so on but no these things are not our salvation our salvation is in Christ and we are enabled to lay hold of Christ by laying hold of him as as the Saviour and the ability to lay hold of him is not ours by nature for we are dead in sins the scripture tells us but when and only then the spirit quickens us makes, creates in us this life then we begin to move with the motion that takes us to the Lord Jesus Christ we would not in any way move towards him without that that's where the third point is question how does he not save that is not by works we are not saved by works he says by grace you are saved through faith that not of yourselves that is the gift of faith not of works lest any man should boast there is always a danger in laying claim of salvation as something that we have aspired to and taken hold of by reason of our own strength some think of admiringly of those who have strong faith as if that strong faith is the reason for their salvation if they have strong faith it is God that gave them strong faith just as surely as he has given weak faith but if it is faith that has rested and received rested upon Christ and received the same Christ and without that taking place salvation is not possible if we think of the words of verse 5 through to 7 even he says when we were dead in sins has he quickened us together with Christ

by grace you are saved and have raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of the grace whose grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus you could not do anything of that if you were dead Paul writes in Romans there is none righteous no he says not one there is none that understandeth none that seeketh after God they are all gone out of the way altogether come become unprofitable he doesn't qualify or explain what the work is it's not ceremonial or legal or evangelical but all if work then debt and reward would come into it it's not because we are good at praying it's not because we are good at praying it's not because we are better than others at praying or preaching or doing anything that would compare to to Christian works no doubt these works must be there as the next question says what then is the evidence of faith?

[36 : 02] the evidence of faith the evidence of faith is good works it is not the means by which salvation comes but without these works salvation cannot be trusted as being a real salvation some teach that you are justified by faith with works faith works but you are justified by faith Paul says and because you are justified by faith you do the work of faith and it is God's teaching God's guiding that tells you that you are to maintain a balance between a moralist, a legalist and an antinomian Christ says except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven he is not saying to you that it is by reason of that righteousness that you shall see heaven but without it you will not see heaven that is not the same thing is that the right of law work nor does a life right a conduct that betrays a walk with God something that is greater and better if you as a believer have been accused of doing your duty as a Christian then that that experience of guilt might be a burden to you but what you are commanded to do is work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God that worketh in you to fear and to do of his good pleasure this is what the word of God commands us to be doers as well as hearers of God's word we are not men pleasers we are not called to give eye service we are called to give God the service that is the service of the believer who by grace is saved we are as workmanship Paul says created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them

God has done and is doing a work in them everything you ever did prior to God working in you the best and there are many people who are content with that best they are thinking that they have added on the positive side of the account book but anything that is not of faith we are told is a sin but when you are made a new creature in Christ when you bear his name you are called to show forth his glory and his work is a work that you do for that glory not your own and what you do is never never shoddy or haphazard scripture tells us that these people are a people who are peculiar and zealous of good works and that they will be presented through all ages as tokens of God's good grace we look at the word of God and it tells us that this is what God has appointed us to if indeed that is true of us that we are provided for by God and his grace is there to not only enable us to live our lives for his glory we are reminded that he that has begun a good work in us will continue it to the day of Christ Jesus in part that reminds us of his provision that would enable us to fulfill our calling as those who have believed in him to the saving of our souls are you amongst them are you a believer have you by grace put your trust in Christ Jesus the alone saviour of sinners let us pray

O Lord our God we give thanks that your word encourages us to put our trust in our living saviour enable us to live out our life looking always to him cleanse us from every sin go before us each one and now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen