

By Grace You Have Been Saved

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[0 : 0 0] well good evening everyone it's very nice uh to be with you all to be able to bring god's word to you and just to be with uh brothers and sisters in christ uh i've not really been to glasgow city before except for guif and going back many years uh g2 i think it was called the youth club that my parents would take us through to uh on on friday night so uh very happy memories uh of these things but that's a long time ago now let's not think about how uh long ago that is but our passage tonight as was just read is uh ephesians 2 and verses 1 through 10 and uh especially just to focus these words um by grace through uh faith that's really what we're thinking of grace itself grace is a familiar word to to many of us possibly a misunderstood word by some as well to some people perhaps um out in the world it's this nice thing that god does where he turns a blind eye to sin a bit like a teacher or a parent letting off a child for misbehaving because they're simply in a good mood but grace is something so much deeper than that so much greater than that another way we might think of grace is as something that enables us to do good that that gives us this inner power to do better until finally we're okay with god but when we think of grace like that we kind of turn it into um something like water being drunk in the middle of a race a boost of energy to keep us going it's not quite right although we do see at the end of this passage that uh god has prepared good for us to do and that says grace but when we talk about grace we're talking about well it's the unmerited favor of god it's a free gift we're we're talking about something that god does and something that we simply don't deserve and i wonder if sometimes and i know i can be guilty of this is if we forget all that god does and just start to look at ourselves a bit more instead and the things that we have done or do grace is something though that the the bible is really about and it's something that goes against our society against an individualistic society uh one that looks to the self and and hates the idea of of god himself and especially of needing forgiveness and needing salvation uh so as we look at this passage we'll be we'll see that being saved is what god does for us he saves us through his beloved son through christ as has been said by many to talk about grace is to talk about christ we of course are thinking about jesus as you could probably tell as as the passage was read that's exactly what paul does he he speaks uh about jesus and says how we've been made alive with christ and even raised up with him in the heavenly uh places so uh tonight i just want us to uh very simply really follow what paul tells us about grace here about our salvation about god's mercy and about the faith that we have um simply looking under two headings following the passage first of all dead in trespasses and sins and second of all our main thing really saved by grace so dead in trespasses and sins and saved by grace and dead in trespasses and sins our first point verses one to three really tells us our uh desperate situation of sinfulness it alerts us to the reality of our sin the great need that we have

for god for jesus for a savior verses one and two really tell us that we're we're dead men walking paul says that the ephesians that you're dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live he says uh in which you once walked it's the way that they lived their lives every step it was their way of life every step you could say that they took was in sin and of course it was no different for us but you know in these films that have the the death row prison scenes and the phrase is often heard called out dead man walking the person is on death row they're waiting for their sentence to be carried out they're they're not dead yet physically but that sentence has been passed over them that is what they are waiting for and without grace without god that's a bit what we're like we have that that sentence on us and we may live here as if nothing is wrong but the reality is is that we're already dead because of sin and we do sin we sin as we disobey god's words uh and we um trespass or transgress as he says uh in verse one as we uh miss the mark as we we may try but we fail we miss the standard that his laws that his word gives to us the the sad truth is that without grace we aren't even aware that we're dead we're blinded to reality and we go on in life

thinking that we're good enough that we may not be perfect but we're not as bad as that person or these people or that group but really what we do is as we walk through life outside of Jesus we're following as verse two says uh the prince of the power of the air and of course that is the devil he's the one working against us we do a good enough job ourselves working against ourselves but he's been working against us since the garden of eden to to bring sin uh to us to bring temptation to us and to accuse us but he's he's working he's working in the the sons of disobedience and that phrase sons of disobedience it really shows us who we are doesn't it it shows us that we're we're born in sin in other words it's our nature it's who we are sinners sinners all belong to the same family to humanity those who rebel against gods and it's not that we're unwilling participants that it's an accident that it just happened what we do is we we love our family uh before we're saved we go along happily thinking that it's the way to freedom the way to satisfaction thinking that we can uh build up our lives and uh block everything bad out and uh make enough for retirement or whatever uh it might be and and just not think about the hard things we think that we can just go on and on disobeying god and the language is it's severe isn't it but Paul simply emphasizing how hopeless it is we're dead if we're outside of god's mercy and grace in Jesus Christ that is what he says and it is something that that affects all of us verse 3 really tells us that that sin is universal we're not speaking here uh just speaking about a certain group of people we're talking about all of us Paul says among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind it was all of us it's the life that each one of us at some point has lived a life of of our own desires of of self-gratification as as you could translate it we live for ourselves uh it shows itself in the way we we work to make as much money as we can or or we we we have ambition to satisfy ourselves or even we use our families to to make ourselves feel good uh about ourselves or or some people go for relationship after relationship for the sake of pleasure and self-worth and even the good things that we might do like helping those in need are so often so that other people can see what a good person we are or so that we can even convince ourselves that we might be good people it's so that we can feel good about ourselves and really it's what sin does it turns us in on ourselves we live for ourselves it's a self-centeredness even when it might be doing good for others it's it's it is gratifying the desires of the flesh it's pleasing ourselves and as we said this is universal none of us can think of ourselves as better than anyone else this is or was true of all of us it's our nature it's inescapable not one of us can sit or stand here this evening and say that we've never sinned and say that we were not dead in sin and really what we deserve well verse 3 tells us we're by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind we deserve god's wrath we're we're the sons of disobedience and that means we're we're children of wrath god is just and good and holy and perfect and he can't ignore sin and and to be good he needs to do what is just and right he needs to punish sin uh as as we even was hinted at in the Heidelberg catechism there he does what is right he he doesn't clear uh the guilty he he punishes sin and this may sound like dark and depressing points for a a Sunday evening and this is just the first few verses but really what I want to uh to focus on for the rest of our time is what god does instead what god does that we really really as I hope we've seen do not deserve and yet we can receive gratefully uh by faith second of all we are saved by grace we do like to think of ourselves as as great climbers though we we climb the uh career ladder or we just focus on general self-improvement and we all think that in every aspect of our lives we can better ourselves but one thing we can't climb up is the the ladder to god we can't climb our way up to god it's him who does it all he does it in his mercy and his love he does it through Jesus and of course by grace that's what we see twice in these verses verse four to the end by grace you have been saved and that's what Paul's saying by grace you have been saved but but verse four starts and it's always well usually good when we see a but at the start but god being rich in mercy despite our deadness despite all that's wrong with us but god but god has a plan but god is going to do something and he's rich in mercy we are spared that the wrath the judgment we're no longer seen as children of wrath because he is rich in mercy not because we climb up to him because he is rich in mercy he's full of mercy he's not going to run out of it and he's not rich in the sense that he's hoarding it up just putting it away out of sight of everyone keeping it in the bank no he's he's spending that mercy he's letting everyone share in it who comes to him he's generous and it's not that he will show mercy

it's who he is it says god being rich in mercy this is who he is this is his nature his character uh he's he's the one who is love of course god is love well that means as well that he is uh rich in mercy he can't do anything but be merciful that's what he he he loves to do and he is merciful to us because

of the great love with which he loved us it's because of his love and again forgiveness grace it's all from from his love not from from what we do love is the the key and we understand i'm sure all of us the power of love to motivate us to to kind acts love drives us to sacrifice our time our ambitions our our money even for others some do give their life for love and yet all these things are only a shadow of the love of god god's love is the love that does make us alive even when we were dead in transgressions it's the love that that brings us life when we do loving things more often than not it's because we believe that that people are good or that the person we care about is a good person that we like and that they in some sense deserve our love but god shows his great love to us knowing our sins knowing us better than we know ourselves knowing every awful awful thought that we've had that we'd never ever dream of sharing with any anyone else god still saves us god still loves us he makes us alive with christ that's what he does even when we were dead and he says by grace you have been saved that is the love of god that is the rich mercy of god that is the grace of god we were dead we were dead we were without hope but god gave his beloved son grace wasn't free to god you could say it was what uh dietrich bonhoeffer called costly grace the price was his own beloved son and it was paid uh for us so we can enjoy free grace and verse six really emphasizes all that god has has done for us uh not we were dead but now we've been raised up with by god and seated with christ in the heavenly uh places uh in uh in christ jesus paul's saying you're already guaranteed heaven you have been saved it's done by grace you were dead but look at you now look at where you're going look at what you've been given you have eternal life you were dead in your sin but now you will live forever we were cold dead corpses but brought to life through the gracious love of god we couldn't fix ourselves we couldn't restore ourselves we need god's mercy and his love and that's what we have verse five it is by grace you have been saved god gives his mercy and his love freely but he also gives it liberally he gives it lavishly he saves by grace it is freely given he does it all though it's his loving gift of mercy to you and to me and really what we're seeing is god's heart for us he saves us by grace he does all this for us this is who our god is this is the one who loves us what an amazing incredible great god that we have and this grace that that puts us with christ is shown to us in christ uh jesus as we're told at the end of verse six without without jesus we couldn't speak of grace as we do without jesus we couldn't have salvation or god's rich mercy it was it was grace it was mercy it was love that brought jesus to earth and brought him to the cross to die for us and it was all part of god's plan to to save people to save sinners dead in their sin like me and you and if it's him if it's jesus that you trust in that you have your faith in then you're someone who is in christ jesus and and this phrase paul keeps repeating it being in christ jesus the end of verse seven as well and so on this is what this is who we are we're joined to christ almost like a husband and wife are joined together it's a bond that doesn't break it's a union of of two people it's so much greater than marriage though um but it's a union that will never end in divorce um we may uh be unfaithful many times but god never chucks us out god doesn't look at us sinners and only see our sin actually we're in christ jesus we're joined to him instead what god sees is his own son and his goodness this is what god has done and he's done it well we're told so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in christ jesus in other words it's also that the world can see his goodness it's also that he can be glorified every person from now until the end of time can see his riches the immeasurable when they look at a believer or when they themselves even better are saved by grace saved by gods what we're seeing is that that god saves sinners by the unmerited favor of grace in his son jesus christ that's how each one of us is saved it's only because of jesus and it's only because god gives it to us freely it is all of grace and that's freeing because it's not dependent on us that's liberating because we will fail if we try we'll fail but we have the freedom knowing that he's the one who saves us that he has done it it is by grace and of course it is by grace through faith as verse 8 tells us not just as in verse 5 by grace you've been saved but by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing it is the gift of god even as christians we may put the focus on ourselves and we may end up thinking more about the strength of our faith and we we might base our walk with god on on how we feel every day and when we fail as we will we feel like god couldn't possibly love us and we feel like our faith is too weak but the problem is we're relying too much on how we feel and we need to remember that that we're told here that even faith is the the gift of god that that is what he gives to us faith uh is important but it's who we put our faith in not the strength of our faith but it's who we put our faith in the object of our faith as some people uh say it's faith in jesus that we need and and god in his grace gives that to us as the disciples pray to increase our faith we we need god's help but we're

we're trusting in christ alone and and part of this i think is to to not overthink and wait for some miraculous experience or or think that there's some sort of uh magical feeling that we need to have we we we trust

[20 : 09] in what god has done through jesus we we trust we have faith in him and and that's how we're saved it's not what we do it's what god has done and continues uh to do it is by grace through faith simply through trust in christ and it is uh not a result of work so that no one may boast our works won't add anything and again that's freeing that's assurance for us isn't it uh many through the ages have doubted their salvation many have questioned whether they're good enough maybe they think there's too much wrong in their past or maybe even too much wrong in their presence but again it's that that problem of relying on feelings rather than the objective truth that god has done it that he that as he said on the cross it is finished he did it he he brought us forgiveness true assurance is found in the fact that god has done it our salvation cannot be in doubt because it isn't reliant on us or our works or anything like that simply on what god has done and and as verse 9 says there is no work to do not by work so that no one can boast if any one of us had gained our salvation we would be proud wouldn't we we might be tempted to boast we might look down on others and maybe we do these things anyway and we might have a sense of superiority and most crucially we won't see our need of god but from start to finish we need him we need his grace we need that rich mercy for us again it's freeing if it depended on us we we would never know if we were saved there would always be that doubt but because god does it there is never any doubt about each one of us being saved when we have placed our faith in jesus there is no doubt whatsoever he has done it and what god does uh sticks uh and see the lengths he's gone to as well we could go on and on but he's he's given his son do you really think god would go to such length simply to to reject us to to turn us away when we come to him in faith we're saved by faith and that cannot be changed not by works no one can boast we are his workmanship he's made us he's created us he's formed us he's given us new life but what he has created us to do is for good works and sometimes it sticks with people and they think oh but i've i've got to do good works but really what it's telling us is that good works are possible now we maybe have the sense as we hear all this that god has done such a great thing for us and yet all we seem to do is throw in his face and we we keep we keep messing up um we keep getting it wrong as as colin was praying in our words our thoughts our actions and well the first thing i would say is that this is the experience of every christian who's ever lived i think we're waiting for jesus to come back uh and for us to be made perfect for now we struggle or maybe on the other hand we think well god's saved us we don't need to worry too much uh we don't really need to do anything just sit back do what makes you happy but when we understand when we really understand the lengths god went to we're thankful and we want to do what's good and i'm sure that's true for all of us we we want to do what's good and we can be encouraged though by by the last words uh of this we've been created in christ jesus for good works which god prepared beforehand that we should walk uh in them god has prepared them for us these are even in grace our good works god's got them prepared we strive to do what god says is good we we fight every day against sin we keep

going we work out our salvation with fear and trembling but as verse says 10 that good things are prepared for us by god it's still god's grace and i personally find that so encouraging because it's not about me it's about god who has prepared these works and that's no excuse to laziness or just sitting back it's simply trusting in him and following his will we can be encouraged he will be there he's prepared these things for us and that covers so much of life doesn't it it means that when we share the gospel for example as uh as we want to do yet we feel afraid and we feel like we don't have the right words to say well it's not dependent on us it's god who works it's god who's prepared these things it's god who saves as we've seen so much and as we live in this world with our families and our work and we we wonder how we um how we witness to our families or how we witness to our colleagues yet god has prepared these things even as we do our work um you know god has prepared these things for us us to do it's an encouragement and as well he says that we should walk in them notice the the change in uh verse two it was dead and trespasses and sins in which you once walked well now is here where we walk here's the change at the end of the passage he's prepared good works for us beforehand that we should walk in them we were walked in our in our deadness in our transgressions in our sin we were we were dead men walking well now we can walk in the good works that god has prepared for us beforehand we go forward trusting in god and again this isn't so that we can boast in all of this and all that we've been talking about there's

something that that's really necessary of course it's faith but it's humility as well we're sinners we're incapable of saving ourselves and as we said even the faith we have is in god's grace all we bring to the table is our sin and that that should be humbling we need him we need god and nothing else and this humility means it should impact every part of our lives even as we we do good works we have this realistic view of ourselves and this great view of god as the one who has saved us and so we go on we don't judge others we don't look down on others we understand that no matter who we are that we are saved by grace no matter how different someone seems to us no matter how far removed our our lifestyles may be from others our identities even we're all saved by grace we're all saved in the same way we're all saved by the same god and we're all saved from the same judgment and we're we're all shown the same love and that's what we want people to know how good god is how gracious he is how rich he is in mercy we want them to know we know the the cost that it incurred how desperate our own need was what else could we do but tell others about the grace of god and christ jesus and let me just finish by saying if if you if you don't know that god who is gracious who is rich in mercy who who who loves so much that he gave his beloved son if you don't know that son well we'll see this passage see what god has done see how good he is see how kind and compassionate he is see what a wonderful god he is and see how he saves us by grace where else can any of us go but to him in faith trusting for uh forgiveness and for eternal life may god bless these thoughts to us let me just pray uh before we move on our heavenly father we give you our praise and our thanks simply for who you are a god who is rich in mercy whose nature is to be merciful to be gracious to be kind to be compassionate we praise you and give you our thanks and father i just want to uh give you thanks for this time in your word this time with brothers and sisters in christ thank you that we can have this time to worship you to enjoy fellowship with one another do pray that you would bless each one of us um in all our lives lord and whatever we're facing today this week over the past weeks or looking ahead we do just pray that you would be gracious to us that you would be with us and give us strength pray that you'd be with us as we um seek to share that grace to share the gospel with our friends with our families with our colleagues with all around us that you would give us confidence knowing that it is you working that you will do it and that you are with us and you never leave us or forsake us lord thank you for this time thank you for jesus and we do pray all this in his precious name and for his sake amen