

Salvation by Grace Alone Through Faith Alone

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[0:00] Please be seated. Good morning.

Good morning. Good morning. Good to see your faces this morning.! Some familiar faces as well. That's all we can see.

We'll continue this morning in our study of Paul's epistles to the Ephesians. We're in chapter 2. If you can open your Bible.

If you don't have a Bible, there should be one in the pews. It's on page 1160 in the pew Bible. And we left off last week in verse 7.

We'll be continuing this morning in verse 8 to 10. Let us pray. Lord, we come before you this morning knowing and trusting that your word gives life.

[1:07] Lord, knowing that you are our bread. You feed us. And only in you can we have life. So we pray that you will, by the power of your Holy Spirit, come now, speak through me, enliven the words that I will preach this morning.

And also, give us receptive ears to hear the truth of your word, that it will change our hearts, that it will conform us more to the image of your Son, Jesus Christ.

All this we pray in the name of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. So we'll continue where we left off last week in verse 7.

And if you remember that Paul began the chapter, chapter 2, reminding us of our state, our status. He says, we were dead. The signs of death. The signs of death is that our heart was totally depraved. Our understanding was darkened.

[2:14] Our will perverse. Our affection disordered. Our general walk of life was marked by bondage to sin. Bondage to the world, the devil, and the flesh.

But Paul says that God, but God, but God intervened in his mercy. He quickened our spirit, making us alive with Christ.

Now, this process that Paul summarizes, Paul summarizes as salvation by grace. And he repeats himself often in these just few verses.

Salvation by grace. Our new status now, because of God's mercy, our new status now reads that we are alive in Christ, Paul tells us. Raised up with him, he tells us.

We are seated with him. In fact, that is that we are enthroned with him in the heavenlies. This is our new status in Christ. And as if he couldn't contain the truth of the whole matter, Paul seems to have blurted out in mid-sentence.

[3:21] By grace, you have been saved. He did this to make us aware that this new life that we have in Christ is entirely the product of grace.

God's grace. He now goes on in the remaining verses, verse 8 to 10. He now goes on to explain the critical importance of this fact of our salvation by grace.

In many ways, Paul had been emphasizing already from chapter 1 that salvation is all of God's grace and to all of God's glory.

Now, this strong emphasis may lead us to ask, if salvation is all of God's sovereignty, his grace, to his glory, what part do we play then in salvation?

I think Paul, in these verses, maintains the line, though. We are saved by grace. But he now shows us, in the following verses, he shows us that this salvation, though, although it is all of God's doing, and it all is for God's glory, it is applied to us.

[4:29] It is a personal, relational thing that we obtain. The truth Paul espouses in these verses was almost lost in the church until God raised up about 500 years ago an Augustinian monk, a German Augustinian monk, to remind the church that the Bible insists on God getting all the glory and salvation.

Other men came alongside Luther or followed him in affirming the biblical foundation of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. This is one of the foundational texts that helped the church reclaim that truth.

And it's important that we hold firm to that truth. You know, no one really disputes, if you think about it, no one really disputes that salvation is by God's grace. No man who claims to be a Christian will try to claim that God is not to be praised in his salvation.

Yet, where the tension lies, where the tension comes is when we insist that some of the credit, maybe 10% of the credit, maybe .00001% of the credit is due to us.

But the notion that salvation is a contribution of human effort, any notion that human effort contributes to salvation is no salvation at all.

[6:03] Remember what Paul says. We were dead in sin.

It's not God saves us. We don't have to have complete knowledge. We don't have to have complete know-how of our salvation works. Otherwise, then that would be dependent on our own knowledge. And maybe then that's a contribution that we have offered in salvation. But God saves for our benefit and completely for his own glory. So while it's true that God gets all the glory and salvation, all the benefits of this great salvation is ours to enjoy.

There might be people that claim that .001% of salvation is due to them. That doesn't mean that they're not saved.

But it means that they don't have a full grasp and the full benefit and the full comfort of knowing that salvation is not of them. It is all of God. As believers in Christ Jesus, it is important we know this foundation of biblical truth.

[7:31] It is to our credit and our comfort and our assurance that we know this biblical foundation of truth.

That salvation is all of God. And we contribute nothing to it. But it is the human condition, isn't it, to seek credit. To look at things and see how can I contribute to it.

It's all of human religion actually. It's constructed on the fact that you work, you do something, you contribute towards being right with God. But Paul insists on the fact that it is all of God.

It is all of grace. And he says, he continues, that it is grace through faith. Notice that Paul never says that we are saved by faith.

Rather, it's through faith. This little distinction, this difference in preposition is vitally important for us to grasp. Faith is the instrument by which we are saved, by which we receive grace.

[8:53] Faith is our response to God's grace. Now, oftentimes, even in Christian circles, we think of faith as an abstract concept.

We throw the word around a lot, carelessly even. We talk about increasing our faith, having more faith. Now, there is truth to it.

As we walk in Christ, as we grow in Christ, our faith does increase. God works in us to increase our faith. But it's not the increase of our faith that saves us.

I think of the parable of the, in Mark chapter 9, a man comes to Jesus and asks Jesus to save his son who was demon-possessed.

And Jesus asks him, do you believe? And the man says, I believe. But then immediately uttered, help my home believe. That is a sign of great faith.

[9:55] It might not look like it. It is a sign of great faith. Because this man recognizes that even the faith that God is, that Jesus is asking him, that does he have, it needs God himself to help him to exercise that faith.

Oftentimes we think that faith is something that we have to gin up in ourselves. That we have to work up in ourselves. But we ought to know that faith has no power in and of itself to do anything. Faith is not an emotion that must be ginned up. Now, in Christian circles, there is this idea, in the world as well, the idea of positive thinking.

Faith is positive thinking. Thinking rightly, trusting, saying the right words, sowing the right words into the ether as it is.

It's actually not Christian. It's a very pagan concept. But you might hear it in Christian circles as well. But that is not what biblical faith is. Faith is not positive thinking.

[11:05] Think of Peter. When he comes out onto the water to meet Jesus as Jesus is walking on the water. Now, does Peter have faith to walk out there on the water?

Yes, he did. Did his faith falter? Yes, it did. Did he, because of his faith. Now, he didn't have, he couldn't gin up in our faith. Did he die and drown in the water?

No. The object of his faith was the one who plucked him out and saved him and delivered him from death. This is what faith looks like. It is, biblical faith is a receiving and resting grace.

What do we mean by that? Biblical faith is a receiving and resting faith. Grace. It's because faith by its very nature, biblical faith by its very nature, has no energy in and of itself.

Faith depends on another. In fact, even the faith that it takes for all of you to sit in those pews depends not on you, but you've trusted that we have put pews in this sanctuary, in this church, that will hold all of you up.

[12 : 23] When you go into the airplane, it is not your level of faith that brings you from Syracuse to wherever your destination is. It is not that you have a lot of faith and that gets you there.

It is the fact that you put faith in the expertise of the pilot and in the engineering that you've been, you're in a airplane that can carry you over the high seas, over the head to your destination.

This is how faith works even in day-to-day life. Faith is not something that is internal to us. It's something that is external to us.

And biblical faith especially depends on another. It requires us to look to something outside of us to place our trust in.

Now, people look outside of themselves to place their trust in. There are different ways. We are not, Christians are not the only people that are faith people, people of faith. But it is important that the object of our faith is in Jesus Christ.

[13 : 32] This salvation that Paul is talking about, that is by grace alone, through faith alone, it's faith in Jesus Christ. He's the object of our faith. That is vitally important.

Biblical faith requires us to make Christ its object. That is, that we trust, that we trust in Jesus Christ and his work on our behalf.

We rely on him completely and not ourselves. There is a doctrine that has been reclaimed, especially during the Reformation.

It's called the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Christ, what Christ has done for you and I, as believers in Jesus Christ, is imputed to us. So when we say that we put our faith in Christ, Christ is the object of our faith, what we're essentially saying is that we have placed our trust in Christ's work and merit for us.

So we're saying that the punishment for our sins, the wrath of God towards us has been borne by Jesus Christ upon the cross.

[14 : 50] And so that he is taking our punishment. But not only that, he is also, is perfect obedience. His righteousness has been given to you and I, if we're in Christ.

This is the content. This is the object of our faith. This is why Paul emphasizes, this is why Paul emphasizes, that even this faith that allows us to trust in Christ, even this faith is not our own doing. It is the gift of God. It seems now that Paul is just intent on beating this horse to death, isn't it?

He repeats it constantly. It is not your own doing. It is not of you. It is before the foundation of the world. And here, explicitly, it is not your own doing.

It is not of our worth. Faith, indeed. Faith is our response to God.

[16 : 06] It's our response to God's grace. But, this is vitally important for us to understand. It is not our contribution to our salvation. That distinction is clear.

Faith is our response to God's grace. It is a gift that God gives us. But it's not a contribution. We are not contributing to salvation when we put our trust in Jesus Christ. Your faith in Jesus is not affected by your works.

It is affected by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. If it is affected by your works, if you have contributed to it, then you will have room to boast.

Wouldn't you? Even if it is 0.00001% that you have contributed to your salvation. You can boast 0.00001% that you have contributed something to it.

But Paul says here, we have no room to boast. As it is, we can never boast when it comes to salvation.

[17 : 10] Because remember what Paul had said earlier in these verses. We were dead. Dead people don't contribute anything. Dead people don't contribute anything. Dead people don't contribute anything. So even the faith that responds to God's call, it's God's own gift or contribution to you.

As someone else puts it, faith draws everything from Christ and contributes nothing to him. That is, faith draws all the benefits.

It's a gift by which we, it's an instrument by which we can draw all the benefits of salvation. Grace that comes, the mercy of God, the benefits that is ours in salvation.

Faith draws it all from Christ. But our faith does not contribute anything to that salvation. This is why Paul exhorts us in 1 Corinthians 1 that our glory, if we are to glory in anything, our glory must be in the Lord.

Then Paul goes on and he continues and he says in verse 10, we are his workmanship, God's workmanship. We've already said that faith is a gift of God which we exercise.

[18:30] But in this verse 10, you can sort of see the parallel here. A parallel in verse 7 of our text and in verse 10 as well.

Paul had said that so that in the coming ages, in verse 7 of chapter 2, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Now he says it in verse 10 too, that we, that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

In verse 7, Paul tells us we are a visible display of his grace towards us in Christ. You and I, the church of Christ, we are a visible display of God's grace towards us in Christ.

It is to God's glory. We are a display of his glory. And in verse 10, the parallel is there. This display is so that we might exhibit in our lives God's workmanship.

[19:39] There's a wonderful balance here. Faith is a gift. We must exercise it. But God is the one that enables us to exercise that faith.

There's a comfort for us to know that as Christ's workmanship, that Christ created, created in Christ Jesus for good works, we are God's workshop.

That's where our Sinclair Ferguson puts it. We are God's workshop. You and I, the church of Christ, is God's workshop. What does that mean? It means that God, the divine artist, is still painting his likeness on the canvas of our lives.

It means that God, the divine potter, still has the clay in his hands, molding us, and shaping us into the image of his son, Jesus Christ. There's a deep comfort in this as you look around at your brothers and sisters.

Now, it's important to note that outside in the world, there are moral people, upright people. Right? In fact, you might think of, you might know some non-Christians that are better, more upright, than yourself.

[21:06] Let's just say yourself. Don't look around the room. You might know, I mean, that person is more upright, more upstanding person, than I am.

But here, Paul tells us, that this, this working, that God works in us, it's something that can only be done for those who are in Christ, who have received grace.

all the good works, all the good works, out there in the world, amounts to nothing, unless, that person doing the good work is in Christ.

And it's been called by Christ, and grace has been extended to him, the gift of faith has been given him, to respond to that grace, and that person is united with Christ.

Christ, all our good works, is nothing. But, if we are in Christ, here's the, here's, here's the comfort, our good works, all our working, no matter how in fits and starts they may be, is, already been prepared beforehand, by God.

[22:23] Think about that. God has prepared beforehand, that you should walk, in this.

Remember, the way we used to walk, according to what Paul tells us, in the beginning of chapter 2, we were walking, we walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now our work, in the sense of disobedience.

There is, that's the way we walked, before we were in Christ. Now, Paul tells us, at the end of this, verse 10, we have, God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk, in this workmanship, that is created for us.

In this good works, that is created for us. So, let me ask you then, if it's, God that is saved, he's the one that is giving you, the gift of grace, and he's prepared beforehand, the good works, that you should work in them, where is the room, then for you to boast?

If you are to boast, we boast, in what God has done, in his great mercy, that has been extended towards us. And if we are to look, then we, we put our trust and confidence, in the fact that God is

working in us, and through us, still.

you might feel, that, you might look around, and you might think, that you know, my faith, my walk with Christ, I'm not where I ought to be.

[24:01] You might even, question whether, whether you are a believer in Christ, because you are stumbling. There is that particular besetting sin, that, trips you over, continually.

Here is the comforting word of God, that he is working in you, that he is, giving you faith, even the faith that you have, to respond, the faith to be convicted of the sin, is a gift of God.

It is the Holy Spirit, working in you, abiding with you, God's presence in you. And here is the comforting word, he is not done with you. He will bring you, you and I, he will bring us, remember that, that he is, what Paul had said, early on in chapter one, he will present us, holy and blameless, on that day.

It's not because, of our works, that would, that would make us, holy and blameless, it is because of what he is, already done and accomplished, for us. Lastly, I think this should give us, a level of forbearance, with one another, as believers in, in the household of faith.

Forbearance, patience, our God is, patience and long suffering, with us. Oftentimes, we are like, the ungrateful, ungrateful, ungrateful worker, we insist, on perfection, from our brothers and sisters.

[25:41] We, we, we are so quick, to judge, we are so quick, maybe to be impatient, but here, God is working, God is at work in us, and through us.

So that should give us, a level of forbearance, and it should give us, a comfort, to rest, in what God is doing. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that, you have called us, from death to life.

You've given us, in your mercy, by your loving kindness, you've redeemed us. You've given us, the gift of faith, to respond, to your call, upon our lives.

To trust you, to place our, life, and our trust, and our hope, in you, and your finished work, upon the cross. And not only that, Lord, you've, promised, that you are still, working in us.

Do you still, mold in us, but help us, Lord, to rest, in these promises, Lord. Help us, Lord, never to look, at ourselves, as the means, by which we're saved.

[27:11] Help us, Lord, to look outside, of ourselves. But not just outside, of ourselves. Help us to look, every day, continually, to you. To look to the cross, where you've, paid the price, and borne the wrath, of God, upon, upon, upon your home body, for our sake.

And to look, to you, seated, at the right hand of God, enthroned, in majesty, with all authority, knowing that you, intercede for us, yet still.

And you send, your Holy Spirit, to us, molding us, and shipping us, into the image, of, of your son. Help us, Lord God, to know this. Help it to be a comfort to us.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.