

Salvation by Grace & Faith

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Eph. 2:1-10

Basic Christianity Series

We are likely to be saved before we gain an understanding of the theology of salvation. This seems consistent with the Apostle Paul who sends the letter to the Ephesians. They had responded to his preaching for salvation when he was in Ephesus. Now, while he is in prison, he sends a letter to them giving them instruction in the faith. Part of that instruction is an explanation of the theology of the gospel of grace.

First, Paul reminds them of the process by which they were saved. He lines this out in chapter 1:13-14

Ephesians 1:13-14 NASB

¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

Here, clearly Paul describes the process of salvation:

- **Hear the gospel. (proclaim)**
- **Believe in the message. (faith)**
- **Marked by the Holy Spirit (saved).**

Paul also speaks about predestination. Yet, if we take his “we” and “you” pronouns seriously, we should understand that his use of “we” and “you” in the letter are usually a distinction between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. The Jews were the first to believe. The Gentiles were accepted later. Thus, in terms of his comments on predestination, he is referring to the role of the Jews to hear the gospel first.

Eph. 1:11-13 NASB

¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him, you also

Then in chapter 2, Paul lays out the theology of salvation by grace and faith.

Ephesians 2:1-10 NASB

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

1. Before salvation through grace we were spiritually dead toward God.

Let us look at some phrases:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²

Before we were saved as Gentiles, we were spiritually dead toward God. We had no life, no relationship with God. Sin had cut us off from God. We were not under God's power. We were under the devil's power.

² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,

The devil, Satan, who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden held mastery over our minds and souls. Before salvation, he served as our master. He injected his false ideas into our minds and souls so we would follow the way of sin. We were thus no under God's power to overcome the sin nature.

the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

The devil is still the master of the thoughts of unredeemed souls in our world. In fact, the whole world is under the curse of sin as long as he remains in force. People, apart from God can do many an evil work. Look at nations that reject God. Historically, they become cruel. Atheism, the abject rejection of God has always led to immorality, debauchery, and cruelty.

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

The Gentiles are not alone in spiritual death. Paul includes himself. When he says "we," he includes all those who first believed, the Jewish believers. As he would say in Romans 3:23, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

No one can claim they do not need salvation. Since sin first entered the world, sin has been part of the human nature. It is this sin which separates us from God. It is this sin which makes us lost and in need of salvation. You may think to yourself there are worse people than you. God does not evaluate you on a bell curve. Your sin nature is like everyone else. It breaks your spiritual fellowship with God. Salvation is God's provision to restore that relationship.

2. God saved us by grace in giving us mercy to be made us alive toward God.

We were lost in sin, yet, God acted toward us in mercy to save us. That mercy is called grace.

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Grace is often defined as God's unmerited favor. It means God extends favor, acceptance, forgiveness toward us when we did nothing to deserve it. God did not send favor to those who were nice, who were good people, who followed the Law, or kept the rules. He extended his favor to us when we were sinners, guilty of sin.

Why would God do this? He did this because of His love for us. God is motivated to save us by His love. This is where we learn what it means to have agape love. Agape is what we see in God sending His Son to die on the cross to cover our sins.

Mercy is given to people not because they have done something of worth or merit. It is given because the judge who could prosecute you for your crime decides to have pity upon you. God could have let us go to perdition. Instead, when he sees our faith response to the message of the cross, he extends his hand of mercy and we receive grace.

Notice, that when we are saved by grace, we are made alive toward God.

⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,

Before salvation, we served the devil and were destined to the devil's final place of torment, hell. Yet, now we are saved, we have been raised up to a new level of life. We are now seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. What does this mean? It means that the Holy Spirit who lives in the saved person connects our spirit to His Spirit. We have a direct link with God in heaven from that point on. This is the meaning of the new birth. It is a real, true, spiritual birth. It is a new spiritual life connection in which we live with God's presence both now and in the future.

⁷ in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Our salvation has as its purpose to bring glory to God. God gets all of the glory both now and in the eternal eons to come. He gets the glory because it

is His salvation plan and His salvation work, motivated by His eternal love toward sinners. In salvation, we have no boast. Yet, God can boast forever.

3. Salvation is through God's grace and our response of faith; yet the work is all of God.

So, salvation is God's work. It is He who has extended the scepter of grace to us that annuls our guilt.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*;

Salvation is both God's act of grace and our response of faith. People want to dissect the membrane between God's part of grace and our part of faith, yet, this is best left in the realm of God's mystery. Only God can know the difference. As I showed earlier in the message, there is a clear path that is taken. The gospel preached and heard, the response of faith and belief on our part, then the sealing of the soul toward God by the Holy Spirit. Calvinism and Armenianism have arm wrestled over the dissection of the difference between the roles of grace and faith for centuries. Both end up in philosophical and human reason. I say it is best to leave it as it is. Grace is God's acceptance without our acting and faith is the requirement we are called upon to respond to this message. We are required to have faith because we are commanded to believe.

***it is the gift of God*; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast**

Yet, salvation remains God's work. It is not based on an accumulation of merits or good deeds. No. Instead, it is God's gift. Hear the words: "It is the gift of God." A gift is not something you earn. A wage is earned; a gift is received.

Again, the emphasis is on God's work so He may receive the glory. It is not man's accomplishment. The Hindus say there are many roads up the mountain (many paths to reach heaven). Yet, the Word of God says no paths will reach God. God alone paved the path through the cross of Jesus. One Savior came from God. One Son of God died on a cross to pay our debt. One Christ rose from the dead to give us eternal life. If we were able to

accomplish our salvation we would have a boast. Yet, because only God worked salvation, no one may boast. All the glory remains with God.

Yet, some may ask: If we are truly saved shouldn't we do good deeds? The answer is yes. We are saved to do good deeds.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

We are saved not so we can reach heaven, but so God can reach us. The goal is to allow the presence of God to dwell with sinful humanity once again. When God is present, God directs our hearts to do things that are good and pleasing in His sight. Good works are the direction of the Holy Spirit living in the believer's life. It is God's purpose in saving us so we become like Him.

Both grace and faith are God's means of salvation.

We were dead in sin. Yet, God in mercy extended the scepter of grace to us because He loves us. His grace met our heart's response of faith in the message of the cross. When we are saved, God begins to work his grace of transformation to conform us to His holy nature by our doing of good works.

If you have not received this grace and faith in Jesus, seek God in prayer. Ask for Jesus to give you salvation.