

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Ephesians 2

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing and powerful letter that the Apostle Paul – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – writes to the saints in Ephesus – and by extension to us here this morning - reminding us how God had blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

All by grace

Paul began his letter with a song of praise – the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the lives of the saints – all by grace

Then we see Paul's prayer at the end of chapter 1 – that God would open the eyes of our hearts – to God's amazing grace

And we currently find ourselves in the portion of Ephesians where Paul begins to preach about grace –

We looked at this last Sunday.

This one long opening sentence where Paul gives us a vivid description of our condition apart from Christ – we were all spiritually dead

But then Paul tells us what God did – because of His great love with which He loved us

made us alive together with Christ

And then Paul tells us why God did it.

God has chosen the saint – to display His kindness forever and ever through us and to us.

And so – this morning Paul is going to continue to look at Paul's sermon.

The verse we are going to study this morning are the heart of the gospel.

God's grace

This is what makes the message of Christ GOOD NEWS!

This is what makes our faith unique

Without this, Christianity is just like every other religion and philosophy of man

And so – my prayer for the saints – that we may truly grasp His grace. And that our response to His grace would be to kneel before the majesty of God in heartfelt thanks and praise.

And that the lost would come to receive the gift of forgiveness Jesus offers -

Let's pray...

Read Text with congregation – out loud

What we just read

This single scripture proves false and untrue every man made religion – every works based system of righteousness – every world view that entertains the notion that human being can be saved apart from grace.

That we can have a right relationship with God because of something we do.

That salvation is earned or by merit

That we can simply follow a list of rules

That the good things we do simply have to outweigh the bad things we do.

That we just have to try harder

This is what Martin Luther struggled with (1500s)

He followed the pattern of millions during that time.

He fasted, kept long prayer vigils, beat himself, and walked for long distances on his knees

All of it - in an attempt to gain some sense that he had paid for his sins and had finally gained God's favor

But the sense of guilt only grew

And he opened up his bible and meditated on one verse –

[Rom 1:17 NKJV] 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

That salvation is the result of what God does – not what we do.

Let's look at our text -

[Eph 2:8-10 NKJV] 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God,

The basic idea of “grace” is that of a gift.

An undeserved gift.

This verse is saying that God gave us some sort of a gift that brought about our salvation.

What was that gift?

God gave us His Son.

[Jhn 3:16 NKJV] 16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Every world religion is based on the idea that salvation is earned.

I work off my debt, I show God I am worth saving, I claw my way into Paradise through one effort or another and thereby my reward is salvation.

That's not Christianity. Salvation is not won by keeping the Law or being baptized or converting a certain number of people or by speaking in tongues or by any other activity to show God how serious you are.

Salvation is a gift of grace, offered to those who in no way deserve it.

Saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone

Some people argue – “It can't be that simple”

“There must be some human effort involved”

“There must be something I have to do”

You see, there is something in our broken and bent condition that wants to contribute to our salvation –

But the bible is clear - For by grace you have been saved through faith

We are saved by God's gift.

We are saved by grace.

Grace isn't the starting point.

It's the whole point.

We are saved by grace and we continue to walk in grace – day by day.

When we understand that none of us deserves to be saved – we begin to understand God's grace.

God's gift of salvation is something He wants to give.

While God extends the gift to all, not all take it

And the way a person receives it is through faith.

It is not only the belief – the faith Paul is speaking of here is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ

it's belief in Him as the Son of God and God the Son

it is the firm conviction that when He died on the cross, He died in my place and paid for the penalty and guilt of my sins - all of them, past, present and future

and it is the trust that just as Jesus rose from the dead to new life, I now by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit have new life too.

this is how you and I are saved

- a. we simply take God at His word
- b. and we lay hold of it
- c. and by doing so, it becomes ours

God's way is for you to trust Him.

God's way is for you to trust that Jesus has paid for your sins and that in God's sight you are forgiven.

The blessing of forgiveness comes when we learn to trust that He will forgive us, not because of what we've done, but because of what He's done. He will forgive us because Jesus died in our place.

BTW - Every book of the New Testament uses this word faith –

Except the Gospel of John and 2,3 John

Paul emphasized the object of our faith, while John uses a different form of the word (verb) to emphasize the action of our faith (believing)

The last portion of the verse –

and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God

What is Paul talking about here?

Salvation

this is the way God opens heaven to us - and it is the ONLY way

Freely given to us – with no strings attached

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Turn with me to Romans 4

Because there will be some who will try to make the argument that belief / faith in itself is a work.

[Rom 4:1-5 NKJV] 1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has [something] to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

Paul makes it clear that wages are not counted as grace

Wages have nothing to do with grace

And so as one reads ch 4 – Paul tells us that Abraham was justified not because of circumcision or keeping of the law – but by faith – because he believed God's promises – which came by grace

Salvation comes to us as a gift! It is not, nor can it ever be a reward or a wage paid for good works

Why? So that no one may boast!

Imagine what heaven would be like if salvation were the result of our works and what kind of lives we lived.

When we are in heaven, there won't be a single person who will say, "Look what I've done!"

Instead, we will be saying, "Look what God has done!"

Ephesians reveals that we're all equal - we're all dead in trespasses and sins.

Now, having been saved, Paul is going to show how we're all equal in God's sight and equal recipients of His love and grace and power.

So, we as believers should not be boasters in ourselves about anything we've done.

We need to boast in what God has done for us

[Gal 6:14 NKJV] 14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

We need to understand that there is nothing that we bring to the table.

Here is the thing to understand loved ones –

In life, we will always trust in one of two things –

Self or Christ

The person who struggles with always being down on themselves – "I can do better" or "I must try to be a better person" who are they putting their trust in? self.

Paul wants us to truly understand that salvation has nothing to do with us

We need to stop trying to work for it or earn it because we take away grace.

Adam and Eve – when they fell, they tried to cover themselves

And that is what our human tendency is

To try to trust in self to cover ourselves

I want my good works to cover my bad works – maybe then, God will be a little bit more accepting of me.

We fail to understand that we are taking away grace.

We minimize the work of Jesus upon the cross when we think that we can somehow add to His work of salvation in any way.

An old dead dude –

“Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works. Grace means salvation completely apart from any merit or works on our part. Grace means that God does it all for Jesus’ sake”

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

So a question arises: If we are saved by grace through faith, and not by works

What about works?

Do they have no place in the Christian life and faith?

Certainly they have a place

While we are not saved BY works, we are saved FOR them

From the beginning it was God's plan to save us so that we might live saved lives

But notice where the good works come in our lives

Observe the order of things Paul reveals here . . .

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works

It all begins with God's work IN us - in fact, we are His work

God is the one doing the work.

And salvation isn't the only work.

God is continually at work in us, molding us, shaping us, guiding us.

(Phil 2:13 NKJV) for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Think of Moses.

Moses was born a beautiful baby.

He would be the one that would set Israel free from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.

For forty years he grew up in Pharaoh's palace with the best the world could offer.

He was really something. Until he murdered a man and ran for his life.

Then he spent another forty years tending sheep and talking to sheep in the wilderness, becoming a "nobody".

At last he was usable to God, and God called him from a burning bush. God's work in him made him ready for the next forty years of his life, where Israel was delivered and he shepherded an entire nation.

The word "workmanship" in Ephesians 2:10 - means "masterpiece."

What an astonishing thing to consider: The stars, the heavens, the planets in orbit - those are just God's handiwork,

but the saint – those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus and His finished work - we are His masterwork.

We get our word poem from the word that Paul uses here for workmanship.

We are God's finely crafted work of art - His poem - and each day He writes a new line revealing His grace and glory

We are a like a song that was meant to be heard –

Turn with me to Matthew 27

Here in Matthew 27 –

We see Matthew's account of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross -

[Mat 27:51-53 NKJV] 51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Now imagine –

These saints that were raised – instead of them going into Jerusalem and appearing to many - if they would have said, “I am good – I am just going to hang out here in the tomb”

What a waste that would've been!

They were raised and came out for a good work.

Paul reminded us last week – that apart from Christ, we were all dead.

But God raised us up –

His plans for our lives extend beyond salvation

We are made by God and then we are made new by Christ.

We are created for a purpose

[2Th 2:16-17 NKJV] 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given [us] everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

So, how do I discover these particular plans God has prepared beforehand for me?

Hebrews 13 tells us that the God of peace will Shepherd us and equip us with everything good to do His will.

As we walk with Him, sticking closely to His heart and His mind and His word, we discover where He wants to lead us and which opportunities He has set aside for us.

The Lord has plans for us that flow from His kindness and grace and affection and tenderness for us.

Paul gives us this perspective and says, "Here's what God has been doing for you since before time began, here's what He's doing now, here's the certain goal He is bringing you to."

So stick to the Savior and stick to His plan.

God saved us when we were pitiful, when we were dead.

But He has recreated us, in Christ

And He now is working in us and through us to display His glory and His wonder.

Our life is simply existing for His glory and praise.

On the Sermon on the Mount –

Jesus tells us the following -

[Mat 5:14-16 NKJV] 14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all [who are] in the house. 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

This is why God saves us -

Salvation is always by blood, is always by a person and is always by grace through faith

Grace alone changes the heart -

Because we understand that it is undeserved and unmerited– and that alone should cause us to be gracious to others.

He molds us

He shapes us

And Paul wants us to understand – that everything that we are, everything that we have, every gift that we have been given, every talent that we have been bestowed with, everything that makes us who we are - is so that we can express our love, our commitment, our belief and our trust in Christ.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I

accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

