

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 26, 2025 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

T H E B O O K O F

EPHESIANS

How to live the Christian life

EPHESIANS: HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – PART 10
“Salvation by Grace through Faith Alone, Part II” - Ephesians 2:8-9

“¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His 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, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.” -Ephesians 2:1-9 (NKJV)

KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR EPHESIANS

To gain a better understanding of the Book of Ephesians, consider the following background information:

1. **Authorship:** The Apostle Paul - Traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul.
2. **Date of Writing:** A.D. 60-63 - Likely written around A.D. 60-63 during Paul's Roman imprisonment.
3. **Place of writing:** Rome – Paul wrote the book/letter of Ephesians from a Roman prison
4. **Audience:** Ephesian Christians at Ephesus and surrounding area Addressed to the Christian community in Ephesus, a major city in Asia Minor. Ephesians is considered a “circular letter” meant to be circulated to church in the area of Ephesus... possibly the same 7 churches

5. **Purpose: How to live the Christian life** To strengthen the faith of believers and address issues of unity and spiritual maturity.
 6. **Themes: Grace, the church, and holy living** - Key themes include grace, the church as the body of Christ, and the importance of living a holy life.
 7. **Structure: Ephesus is divided into two main sections** - Divided into two main sections: doctrinal teachings (chapters 1-3) and practical applications (chapters 4-6).
 8. **Cultural Context: Ephesus was center of commerce and religion** - Ephesus was a center of commerce and religion, known for the Temple of Artemis.
 9. **Significance: Mystery of the gospel and inclusion of Gentiles** - Emphasizes the mystery of the Gospel and the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan.
 10. **Spiritual Warfare: Ephesians' emphasis on the spiritual battle** Concludes with a call to spiritual readiness and the armor of God (chapter 6).
-

“¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.” – Ephesians 2:1-9 (NKJV)

AMAZING GRACE – HYMN #330 **“Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound”**

Perhaps the most popular Christian hymn of all time and no doubt a favorite to many would have to be “Amazing Grace.” Believe it or not, this great inspirational hymn was born not from an experience of love, but from a sordid tale of human depravity and exploitation. However, if there were to be a “National/World Anthem” for Christians it would have to be “Amazing Grace.” This song titled with the word “amazing,” has an amazing accompanying story, some of which is quite well known to many, yet there may be some surprising and little known facts as well.

John Newton was born in London, England, on August 4, 1725. His father was a hardened sailor who owned a slave ship that sailed the Mediterranean. The elder Newton was gone from home for months at a time. Mrs. Newton was a loving Christian mother who loved God’s word, the church and was devoted to prayer. She loved her son and took a vital interest in her son, in raising him up right and to know the Lord, praying for him often and

pointing him to God. She was also known to be very sickly even as a young woman and was said to be chronically ill and physically weak. From the time that he could walk, John had the run of the house, and he was quite a mischievous and rambunctious child... always in trouble.

At the age of eleven, John followed in his father's footsteps and became a cabin boy on a ship. Even as a teenager Newton became hard drinking and ill tempered. His public brawls were legendary. He could often be found either in jail or in a ship's brig. Newton would later describe himself as a "godless monster."

Newton's difficulty with the law and his attitude finally drove him out of Europe to the west coast of Africa where he discovered a group of men who were as wild and depraved as he. They were responsible for untold suffering and death during the next few years. Newton and his shipmates would seek out tribal chiefs and bribe them with guns, spices, liquor, etc. for strong young men and women to be sold as slaves. As many as six hundred of the slaves would be chained shoulder to shoulder in the hold of the ship and transported to the new world to be sold. Between 20 and 40 percent of them died on the journey. When a crew member would drag one of the dead prisoners across the deck to throw him or her into the ocean, Newton would simply say, "So be it." When the ones who survived were sold as slaves, Newton and his shipmates shared in the bounty, at this stage of his life, Newton was considered as the lowest of those who sailed the seas.

Newton's mother never quit praying for God to get a hold of John's heart and transform His life. Her tears shed over her son no doubt touched the heart of God, and the teaching she had instilled in him early on must have at least left a conviction mark on his life. In 1758 for some reason John Newton began reading a classic Christian work entitled "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas A. Kempis. He was so engrossed in the book that he did not notice an approaching storm until it was too late. Newton really believed that his shipmates and the ship would not survive the storm, and all would be lost. While others cursed and cried, thinking the end was near. Newton thought back on his own miserable life. He then thought about the only one who had really loved him, his Christian mother, and how disappointed she would be. Holding onto a rope, Newton fell to his knees and prayed for God's mercy on his life... something he had never been willing to extend to others who he enslaved and sold into a life of slavery. But He vowed to God, that if God would give him a second chance he would change, he would become a better man, a moral man.

Miraculously, no lives were lost in the storm and the damaged ship was able to complete its journey and deliver its cargo. For the first time, when Newton was given his share of the profits, he did not seek out a bar to celebrate. Instead, he returned to his ship and read the Bible.

Within two years of the storm, John Newton became the captain of a slave ship. He could

no longer look upon his trafficking in human cargo with a “So be it” attitude. Newton’s Christian convictions caused him to resign his duties as a slave trade captain. He returned to England and he began to look for ways to make amends for his terrible crimes and failings. He vowed to begin to serve Christ.

Under the guidance of Charles Wesley, father of the Methodist movement, John Newton, the former drunkard and slave trader gave his life to the Lord and God truly began to transform his life. His testimony of God’s change in him became particularly gripping to others who would hear what God had done in his once vile and evil life. Many were changed by his story. John Newton, so changed by God’s grace, more and more became a preacher of the transforming gospel. Twenty years after John Newton was literally and spiritually saved, he was pastoring a church in Olney, England. One Sunday morning as he was preaching a sermon on the grace of Jesus, Newton spoke about his life at sea and admitted his past sins. He told the congregation how the Lord had come to him during a violent storm. He completed his message by singing an autobiographical song. The song began with this now forgotten verse, “In evil long I took delight, unawed by shame or fear, till a new object struck my sight, and stopped my wild career.”

Although Newton might have composed the song for a single service, it quickly made its way into song books and eventually into the United States. In America Newton’s song was matched to a folk tune called both “Kentucky Harmony” and “Virginia Harmony.” The final verse was added by another (I’ll share who late). By the start of the Civil War, “Amazing Grace” was one of the best known Christian songs in the world. It was so closely associated with the early American missionary movement and America in general, that most believed that the song was composed by an American author, In 1971 “Amazing Grace” climbed out of the song books and into the mainstream. Among others, Hank Williams and Elvis Presley sang “Amazing Grace” at many of their concerts.

Although John Newton did not have America or Americans in mind when he wrote “Amazing Grace,” at the age of eighty-two, he said something that all Christians can cling to in times of both triumph and trial, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things — that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior.”

7 FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT “AMAZING GRACE”

- (1) John Newton wrote “Amazing Grace” for a New Year’s Day church service in 1773
- (2) Newton later helped William Wilberforce end the British slave trade
- (3) Newton died in 1807, the same year the slave trade was abolished in England
- (4) William Walker added the current melody, “New Britain” to the lyrics in his 1835 hymnal (*Note: Virginia Harmony is the first American Shape-note Hymn Book where a recording of Amazing Grace with the New Britain tune appeared, that arrangement was written by Edwin O. Excell*)
- (5) There are 972 known arrangements of the song and over 3200 recordings.
- (6) “Amazing Grace” is considered to be the anthem of the Cherokee Nation because this was the song they sang on the Trail of Tears in 1838-39.
- (7) The hymn’s final verse was not written by Newton. It was added by Harriet Beecher Stowe to a version she included in her novel, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” which was an anti-slavery abolitionist novel.

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come.
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me. His Word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

(1) Why do you think Newton would describe “grace” as a “sweet sound”? What “sound” do you think grace makes? Given the story of John Newton’s life, what might have been the “sounds” he was most familiar with... the sounds of a mother praying, the sounds of the church early in his life, the sounds of a profane father, then the sounds of sailors and shipmen (cursing, coarse talking, profanity, vulgarity), sounds of barking orders from a commanding officer, sounds of drunken cries from years of drinking and carousing, sounds from a life lived in unsavory places, bars, saloons, and mean streets, then the sounds of cries of children ripped from the arms of their mother, mothers crying for the loss of their children, the cries of pain and suffering from men, women and children in torture, pain, chains, brokenness of slavery, pain and suffering, the cries of the auction block where men, women and children were sold as slaves to brutal slave holders... there may be some of the sounds of John Newton’s life. Contrast that with the sounds of grace that came to Newton’s life.

- (2) *Given that what do you think that Newton may have been telling us about “grace” when he mentions it saving a “wretch” like himself (originally “worm”)?*
- (3) *In verse 2, how does “grace” teach our heart to fear? In what way? Fear what? Why fear? **'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.***
- (4) *According to verse 3 what role does “grace” play in our lives even before we come to know the Lord? What is grace doing before we even know it and see it? **Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come. 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home.***
- (5) *In verses 4 and 5 what are some of the accompanying promises of “grace” in our life?*
-

One of the exploratory questions that most witness training classes (CWT, EE) ask in sharing one’s faith is this one, **“If you were to die today and stand before God and He asked, ‘Why should I let you into My heaven?’ what would you say?”** The question gets to the heart of, “What are you trusting in for eternal life?”

As such, there is no more important question in the world to be crystal clear on! If you place your hope of eternal life in something, only to find when you stand before God that it will *not* get you into heaven, you’re doomed! There are no makeup exams at the judgment seat! You’d better get it right before you die!

From every possible angle I try to make clear what the Bible says about this crucial question. But even so, it is not uncommon to have people that have sat under my teaching for months answer, “I’ve lived a good life and done the best that I could do.” Or, “I am a basically good person and I’ve never tried to hurt anyone.”

When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal savior, we are forgiven for all of our sins. We are given eternal life and a place in heaven. **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).**

Statistics on how Americans believe they are saved: These are some interesting statistics that come from various sources (Gallup, Barna, Lifeway, Christian Post, Pew Research) that reflect the confusion concerning salvation and the place of grace in salvation.

- **35% = number of Americans who believe in the traditional biblical view of salvation** - Only one-third of American adults (35%) embrace the traditional biblical view that salvation comes through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ by grace through faith.
- **52% = number of American Christians who believe they are saved not by grace but good works** - Among Americans who consider themselves Christian, 52% believe they are saved by their good works rather than by faith in Christ as Savior.

- **54% = number of U.S. adults who believe they will go to heaven no matter what** - Overall, 54% of U.S. adults believe they will get to Heaven after they die and only 2% believe they are going to hell.
- **63% = number of adults who believe saving faith is more important for salvation than a denominational faith or faith tradition** - 63% of adults believe “having faith matters more than which faith you have”.

All of that represents some very mixed-up notions concerning getting into heaven, of salvation and the place of grace and faith in salvation! Of course, getting into heaven is not just a matter of answering a question correctly.

Paul answers this crucial question in these verses. He wrote these truths to those who were already saved, to clarify and solidify their understanding of these vital matters. When you share the gospel with others, their misunderstanding of God’s grace and the relationship between faith and works will be the major issues you will need to clarify.

Also, as I mentioned last week, even if you have known Christ for many years, you should be growing in your understanding of the gospel. It is an inexhaustible subject and it should thrill your heart every time you think about it or hear it proclaimed. If you find the gospel boring, you should be concerned about your own soul! We all need to be clear on these matters for our own sakes, and so that we can share it clearly with others.

When you include verse 10, Paul’s message is that salvation is by grace through faith apart from good works, but it inevitably results in a life of good works. But we are only going to focus on verses 8 & 9 today, where Paul says,

KEY THOUGHT: Salvation is by grace through faith alone, not as a result of good works, so that God alone gets the glory

To get a handle on this text, you must understand five key concepts: “saved”; “grace”; “faith”; “gift” (as opposed to “works”); and, “boast” (or, glory).

5 Key Concept for Understanding Ephesians 2:8-9:

“⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.”-Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

(1) **SAVED** – Perhaps, one of the most misunderstood word in the Bible is also one of the biblical words we use the most is the word “saved.” And not just the word *saved*, but the other words in the same word family, such as *save*, *salvation*, and *savior*. How often have we heard pastors and teachers tell us of our need to “get saved”? How often do evangelists ask people if they have “been saved”? How often do people argue about whether or not we can lose our *salvation*, and how to know for sure if we are really *saved* or not? This is common terminology, right? It is heard in countless sermons, read in countless books,

and used in countless evangelism methods. The problem is that the word doesn't usually mean what we think it means.

Most often, when Christians use the word “saved” we think about the following concepts:

- getting forgiveness of sins
- escaping hell
- going to heaven when we die
- receiving eternal life

We think that people “get saved” by doing some (or all) of the following:

- ask Jesus into our hearts
- confess our sin
- repent of our sin
- get baptized
- believe in Jesus
- trust Jesus
- believe that Jesus is God
- believe that Jesus died on the cross, and rose again from the dead
- believe that we are sinners and that Jesus died for our sin on the cross

But did you know that the word “saved” (and the other related words like save and salvation) are rarely used to express any of the concepts above? The closest we get is in...

- **Acts 16:30-31** – *“³⁰ And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*
- **Romans 10:9-10** – *“⁹ That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*
- **1 Corinthians 15:1-2** – *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.”*
- **Ephesians 2:5-9** – *“⁵ Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His 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 of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

And I am not convinced that even in these passages, the word “saved” means getting forgiveness of sins so we can escape hell, get eternal life, and go to heaven when we die. Taking a detailed look at each of these texts is a study in itself but let me just summarize what the word *saved* means in the Bible.

The word “saved” means “deliverance.” To be saved means to be delivered. And when we understand it this way, it opens up a whole new range of possibilities. We can be “delivered” from almost anything, right? In a spiritual sense, as Paul said in the 2nd chapter of Ephesians, we are saved (delivered) from death to life, from wrath and judgement, from the penalty of our sins, from separation from God. We can be saved from slipping into sin so that destroys our life and witness. We can be saved from ruining our marriage and family by not treating them with the love and respect they deserve.

Saving faith is a conviction, brought about by the Holy Spirit, of the truth of the gospel and trust in the promises of God in Christ. It involves repentance from one's sin and a complete trust in the work of Christ to save from sin and make one righteous. Saving faith includes deep, passionate belief in the essential facts concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, such as that Jesus is Lord and that he died and rose again. Saving faith must also include the concept of trust.

(2) GRACE –

Listen as the following verses of Scripture are read and answer the corresponding question:

- **Ephesians 1:7** – *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”*
 [1] *Who is grace from?*
 [2] *In what ways are the two things named in this passage evidence of “riches of His grace?”*
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *“For by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.”*
 [1] *Who is grace from?*
 [2] *What is grace according to Ephesians 2:8-9?*
- **1 Timothy 1:12-14** – *“¹²And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, ¹³although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”*

[1] *Who is grace from?*

[2] *What relationship does this grace have to our sin? In what way?*

- **Titus 3:4-7** - *“⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

[1] *Who is grace from? What are some signs of His grace?*

[2] *What does it mean to be justified and how does grace fit into our justification?*

- **Hebrews 4:15-16** – *“¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

[1] *What do you think is behind the idea of a “throne of grace”? What might that mean for us?*

[2] *Of what benefit is grace to us according to this passage? Explain.*

- **Dr. John MacArthur** – *“Grace is God’s unmerited favor by which He saves us and makes us righteous. It is based solely on His sovereign love, which is manifested in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sin. It is not the result of any worthiness on our part. Once we are saved we stand in grace.”*
- **Grace Acrostic** – Each letter of the word “GRACE” stands for a part of the definition and understanding of what grace is.

G - God’s

R - Righteousness

A - At

C - Christ’s

E - Expense

- **The Difference Between Grace and Mercy** – “Grace” and “mercy” are often used in scripture to picture God’s salvation toward us. These two words key words seem almost interchangeable and yet they are distinct and separate. Understanding one may help us understand and define the other...

Ephesians 2:4-9, *“⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together*

with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His 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 of works, lest anyone should boast.”

2 Descriptions:

1. **Mercy** – Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve – In other words we aren't going to get what we deserve because of God's mercy toward us
2. **Grace** – Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve – We get from God what we do not deserve in spite of our sin. We get His grace!

Why grace? Why is grace necessary at all? – A very apparent answer to that question would be that apart from grace man could not be saved, but a thorough investigation of the question (Why grace?) reveals an even deeper understanding of grace itself and a believers eternal security.

Why Grace? The 2 Part Short Answer:

- (1) **Our total inaccessibility to God** –
- (2) **Our sole source of accessibility to God** - Our sole source of accessibility to God is only through Christ, who is His grace gift to us (*see John 3:16*). We are totally helpless and hopeless on our own. God is not accessible to you except through Christ! You can't approach Him!
- (3) **FAITH** – The Bible defines faith in *Hebrews 11:1*, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”

What faith is and isn't:

1. **Faith is belief... but it is not just belief, it's trust** – It is not enough to just believe facts and trivia about God, and Jesus, and what the Bible says. Faith is much more than that! And saving faith is much, much more than just believing. *James 2:19* reminds us, “*¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*” Even Satan and his emissaries (his demons) even have belief.
2. **Faith is trust... but it is not just trust, it's action** - Trust means “relying on,” “place confidence in,” or “lean on.” *Faith* and *trust* have similar meanings, and often people will use the words interchangeably. Even *Merriam-Webster* defines *faith* as “*belief and trust in and loyalty to God.*” For most people there is no practical difference between faith and trust; to them, the two are synonymous. Any differences that exist are very fine, but there is a difference.

Difference between “faith” and “trust”:

➤ *Faith involves belief in something without proof, often spiritual or religious.*

- **Trust is earned through dependability and reliability based on experiences and evidence.**

Again, in Scripture, *faith* is defined as **“the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1)**. In other words, faith involves trusting in something you cannot explicitly prove. Faith is inseparable from trust in one sense; it’s the confidence that God can and will do what He says in His Word. Faith includes both intellectual assent to something and trust in it. So we believe something to be true, and we also place our trust in it—we rely on it. But trusting and relying on something isn’t, knowing it to be “reliable” and “having confidence” in it isn’t enough if we don’t actually step into it... lean the full weight of our being on it... and take action toward what we trust in.

- 3. Faith is action... but is action based in belief and trust** - Faith recognizes that a chair is designed to support the person who sits on it, and trust demonstrates you believe it to be able to sustain you, but true faith by actually shown by sitting in the chair. Faith without action is not faith. Belief without reliance is empty. Many people believe certain facts about Jesus Christ, but knowing those facts to be true is not what the Bible means by “faith.” The biblical definition of faith requires putting our belief and trust into action—a commitment to—the facts. Remember James’ words in **James 2:14-20**, *“¹⁴ What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”*

Dr. John MacArthur said, **“Although men are required to believe for salvation, even that faith is part of the gift of God which saves and cannot be exercised by one’s own power. God’s grace is preeminent in ever aspect of salvation.”**

- (4) GIFT** – **Ephesians 2:8-9**, *“For by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.”* The word “gift” is an important one in the Bible, and it is good that we understand its definition and implications. In the New Testament, there are several Greek words translated “gift.” Some of these words are used in contexts other than God’s gift of salvation. However, when it comes to the matter of our salvation, the New Testament writers use different Greek words—words that emphasize the gracious and absolutely free quality of the gift.

Here are the two words most commonly used for the gift of salvation:

1. **Dorea** = meaning “a free gift” - This word lays particular stress on the free (costless, toll-free, cost-free, gratuitous) nature of the gift—it is something given above and beyond what is expected or deserved. Every New Testament occurrence of this word is related to a spiritual gift from God. It is what Jesus offers to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:10... *“¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’”* It is the “unspeakable [or indescribable] gift” in 2 Corinthians 9:15, *“¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”* This gracious gift is identified as the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38; 8:20; and 11:17. The adverb form of this word is “dorean,” translated “freely” in Matthew 10:8; 2 Corinthians 11:7; Revelation 21:6; 22:17. In Romans 3:24, immediately following God’s pronouncement of our guilt, we have this use of dorean, *“Being justified FREELY by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* The gift of salvation is free, and the motive for the gift is nothing more than the grace of the Giver.
 2. **Charisma** = meaning “a gift of grace”- This word is used to define salvation in Romans 5:15-16. Also, in Romans 6:23, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the GIFT [charisma] of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* This same word is used in conjunction with the gifts of the Spirit received after salvation (Romans 12:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10). Obviously, if something is a “gift of grace,” it cannot be earned. To work for something is to deserve it, and that would produce an obligation—a gift of debt, as it were. That is why works destroy grace (Romans 4:1-5; 11:5-6). When presenting salvation, the New Testament writers carefully chose words that emphasize grace and freedom. As a result, the Bible could not be more clear—salvation is absolutely free, the true gift of God in Christ, and our only responsibility is to receive the gift by faith (John 1:12; 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- (5) **BOAST (or GLORY)** - In the context of Ephesians 2:9, the word “boast” refers to giving self the glory for obtaining salvation. However, Paul is cautioning against this idea, emphasizing that salvation is purely a result of God’s grace and cannot be achieved through personal accomplishments.
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *“For by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.”*
 - **Titus 3:5-7** - *“⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; ⁶ Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; ⁷ That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*
 - **Romans 11:6** - *“⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.”*

- **2 Timothy 1:8-9** – *“⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”*

Now with that somewhat deeper grasp of these five key concepts words (“saved”; “grace”; “faith”; “gift” [as opposed to “works”]; and, “boast” [or, glory]) in our passage let me give you these 5 truths concerning salvation and grace...

“⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.” -Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

5 Truths of Ephesians 2:8-9:

- (1) **To be saved means that the Lord Jesus Christ has rescued us from God’s wrath and judgment**
- (2) **Salvation by grace alone means that we did absolutely nothing to earn or merit salvation**
- (3) **Salvation through faith alone means that we receive salvation through trusting in what Jesus did for us on the cross**
- (4) **Salvation is God’s free gift to us**
- (5) **Salvation gives all the glory to God and none to us**

TO BE SAVED MEANS THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS RESCUED US FROM GOD’S WRATH AND JUDGMENT

As we saw in Ephesians 2:1-3, we were formerly dead in our trespasses and sins, and *“were by nature children of wrath.”* God’s wrath is not a popular topic in our day, but if you get rid of the concept, you may as well throw out your entire Bible, because it is throughout both the Old and New Testaments. It reaches a climax in the Book of Revelation, which shows that God will pour out His wrath on this evil world, culminating in the final, eternal judgment of the lake of fire. Because of sin, we all are alienated from God in His holiness. All who are not saved are under God’s righteous judgment, objects of His wrath.

- Theological liberals have always emphasized God’s love and denied His wrath.
- But in our day, this kind of watered down thinking is not only in liberal circles. It is also popular among those who profess to be evangelicals.
- A while back *“60 Minutes,”* did a segment on **Joel Osteen**, pastor of America’s largest church and author of the best seller, *Your Best Life Now* [Warner Faith].
- 60 Minutes host was surprised at the absence of any mention of God or Jesus Christ in the main points of Osteen’s latest book, *To Become a Better You*, and questioned Osteen about it!

- Osteen's response was, "That's just my message. There is scripture in there that backs it all up. But I feel like I'm called to help people...how do we walk out the Christian life? How do we live it? And these are principles that can help you. I mean, there's a lot better people qualified to say, 'Here's a book that going to explain the scriptures to you.' I don't think that's my gifting."
- He got that right! But then why is he a pastor? How can you genuinely help lost people if you don't point them to the cross of Christ?
- Theologian, Michael Horton gave his take on this. Horton is a professor of theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California. Horton rightly observed: "[Osteen's] core message is God is nice, you're nice, be nice..." (The above taken from, <http://psalm8611.blogspot.com>.)

The point is, if we are not under God's wrath, then Jesus didn't need to go to the cross and we don't need to be saved. By going to the cross, Jesus paid the penalty that we are under because of our sin. Paul here says, "*For by grace you have been saved....*" Either you have been saved or you haven't. There is no middle ground. Either Jesus has rescued you from God's wrath or you are not saved. The next word to understand is, "grace."

SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE MEANS THAT WE DID ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO EARN OR MERIT SALVATION

As we've already seen... simply defined, *grace is God's unmerited favor...*

- If you did anything to earn it or deserve it, it is not grace.
- If God owes it to you because you're a pretty good person or you've tried to do the best you can, it is not grace.
- If God gives it to you because He foresaw that you would believe in Him of your own free will, it is not grace.

Grace means...

- 1. Grace means that you get the opposite of what you deserve**
- 2. You deserve God's wrath because you have sinned against Him**
- 3. Instead, He saves you by His grace**
- 4. Grace cuts directly against the grain of human thinking, because it is not fair. We value fairness. If someone does wrong, he should get what he has coming. If someone does right, he should be rewarded.**
- 5. If someone does wrong and gets rewarded in spite of it, we protest, "That's not fair!"**

THE THEIF: Take a guy who is a thief. He has stolen from hardworking people. On some occasions, he has hurt his victims or even killed them. But he shrugs it off and continues his life of crime. Finally, he is apprehended and convicted. On death row, he hears that God will forgive all of his sins if he will trust in Christ, even though he does not deserve it and he cannot make up for what he has done. At first, he can't believe it. It sounds too good to be

true. But then he does believe it. He trusts Christ to save him from eternal judgment. He dies and goes to spend eternity with God in heaven. That's not fair!

THE RELIGIOUS: Or, take the case of a guy who is very religious. He prays several times a day. He fasts twice a week. He gives ten percent of his income to charitable causes. He doesn't swindle people out of money. He treats others fairly. He has been faithful in his marriage. He thinks that doing all of these things will commend himself to God. But, he dies and goes to hell. We cry, "That's not fair!"

But, I didn't make up these stories. The thief was hanging next to Jesus on the cross. Jesus paid his debt and the thief went to heaven that very day (Luke 23:39-43). The religious man was the Pharisee in Jesus' parable who thought himself to be righteous (Luke 18:9-14). He was not justified from his sins, because he was trusting in his own good works to save him.

If God were fair, we'd all go to hell, because we all have sinned. God did not compromise His righteousness or justice to forgive us. His justice demands that the penalty be paid. Jesus paid the penalty on the cross for all that trust in Him. In that way, God can be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

We've already see this, but it bears repeating... **G-R-A-C-E** has been defined as **"God's Riches At Christ's Expense."**

We naturally resist God's grace because it robs us of all our pride. But there is no other way of salvation. It is by grace alone. But we also need to understand, "faith."

SALVATION THROUGH FAITH ALONE MEANS THAT WE RECEIVE SALVATION THROUGH TRUSTING IN WHAT JESUS DID FOR US ON THE CROSS

Many people misunderstand the nature of saving faith...

- **A general view of faith** - Some have a sort of general, vague faith in God, whoever He may be, that is kind of like positive thinking. "I believe for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows! I believe in the basic goodness of people and the goodness of God. Everything will turn out for the good in the end." But that is not saving faith.
- **A mere assent to fact kind of faith** - Some think that faith is mere assent to certain facts. In other words, they think that making a decision to accept Christ constitutes saving faith, even if there is no repentance and no subsequent obedience to Christ as Lord. That kind of mere assent to the facts of the gospel is *not* saving faith.

To understand saving faith, you need to grasp two things:

2 Things to Grasp to Understand Saving Faith:

(1) **Saving faith includes knowledge, assent, and trust** - First, there must be *knowledge*. There is content that must be understood. Some say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere.” That’s like saying, “It doesn’t matter what medicine you take, as long as you’re sincere.” It matters greatly that you take the right medicine in the right dose, or you could die! To be saved, you must know something about God. He is righteous, holy, just, and loving. You must also know that you have sinned against God and stand guilty and condemned before Him. You must know that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who took on human flesh, born of the virgin Mary. He lived a perfect life and died on the cross as the substitute for sinners, paying on their behalf the penalty that God demands. But God raised Him from the dead and He ascended into heaven. He will return bodily to judge the living and the dead, but also to save all that have trusted in Him. These are basic facts, revealed in the Bible, that you must know to be saved.

But, also, you must give *assent* to these facts, or agree that they are true. A student could know all of these facts well enough to pass an exam, but not affirm that they are true. Saving faith includes intellectually assenting to the truth of the gospel. But if that is all that saving faith entails, then Satan and the demons are saved. They know these things and they know that they are true.

The third element in saving faith is *personal trust, or commitment*. To illustrate, you may be an expert on aircraft. You know that a certain plane is well constructed and mechanically sound. You may also agree that the plane will fly. You’ve watched it fly many times. You affirm that it is a good plane. But knowing these facts and agreeing to them will not get you anywhere. To get to a destination, you must commit yourself to get on board the plane. Saving faith is personally trusting Jesus Christ, committing your eternal destiny to what He did for you on the cross. Just as you entrust your life totally to the pilot when you get on board a plane, so you entrust your eternal destiny totally to Jesus and His death as your substitute on the cross. You trust God’s promise that He will justify the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). And, implicit in “getting on board” with Christ is that you can’t keep one foot on the “terminal” of sin, and the other on board with Christ. You must commit yourself to follow Him as your Lord.

(2) **Saving faith does not originate with us** - After saying that we have been saved by grace through faith, Paul adds, *“and that not of yourselves...”* There is debate about what “that” refers to. In Greek it is neuter, whereas both “saved” and “faith” are feminine.

- Grammatically, it is possible that it refers to faith, and no less a scholar than Charles Hodge argues for this interpretation. He argues that it best suits the design of the passage, where Paul is arguing, *“You are not only saved by faith in opposition to works, but your very faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* Also, to say that salvation is not of yourselves doesn’t add anything to what has just been said, that you are saved by grace.

- But Calvin and most modern expositors argue that “that” refers to the entire process of salvation by grace through faith. It is all from God, not of ourselves. Whichever view you take, there are other Scriptures that show that saving faith and repentance (which are inextricably linked) are not from ourselves, but are God’s gift. For example, in **Philippians 1:29**, Paul says, *“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”* In Acts 11:18, the response of the Jewish Christians when they hear of the Gentiles getting saved is, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.” (See, also, Acts 3:16; 5:31; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 12:2.)

Saving faith is different. To the natural man, the cross is foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18). He cannot understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). He is blind to the light of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). He is not able to submit to or please God (Rom. 8:7-8). For the unbeliever in this darkened spiritual state to believe, God must first impart new life to him. His immediate response is to believe in Christ. **C. H. Spurgeon**, the great Baptist pastor, explained it this way (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* [Pilgrim Publications], 61:474): *“I ask any saved man to look back upon his own conversion, and explain how it came about. You turned to Christ, and believed on his name: these were your own acts and deeds. But what caused you thus to turn? ... Do you attribute this singular renewal to the existence of a something better in you than has been yet discovered in your unconverted neighbor? No, you confess that you might have been what he now is if it had not been that there was a potent something which touched the spring of your will, enlightened your understanding, and guided you to the foot of the cross.”*

So Paul has shown that salvation—being rescued from God’s wrath—is by grace alone through faith alone in what Jesus did for us on the cross. Also...

SALVATION IS GOD’S FREE GIFT TO US

He adds, *“it is the gift of God, not as a result of works....”* He is at pains to show that the entire process of salvation comes to us apart from anything in us or anything that we do. Some will argue that God chose us for salvation because He foresaw that we would believe. But then salvation would not be a gift by God’s grace, but rather something that we merited by our faith. **Spurgeon** answers this error (*C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography* [Banner of Truth], 1:167), *“What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I should get that faith myself, and that I should believe on Him of myself? No; Christ could not foresee that, because no Christian man will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the working of the Holy Spirit.”*

Paul adds that God’s gift is *“not as a result of works.”* It is completely free, stemming from God’s grace alone. The Roman Catholic Church muddies the grace of God at this point, teaching that we are saved by grace through faith, but *not* by grace through faith *alone*.

Rather, we must cooperate by adding our works. As a result, not even the pope can say for certain what Paul says in **verse 8, “you have been saved.”**

The tense of the Greek participle shows that salvation has happened in the past with continuing results. It’s a done deal! But when the last pope died, the present pope urged the faithful to pray him into heaven. If even the pope can’t be certain about being saved, how much less the rank and file of the church! Under that system, you can never be sure that you have enough works to merit heaven.

But the Reformers rightly argued that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. But there is a final point that Paul makes.

SALVATION GIVES ALL THE GLORY TO GOD AND NONE TO US

He concludes **verse 9, “so that no one may boast.”** Or, as he puts it in 1 Corinthians 1:31 after arguing that salvation rests on God’s choosing us, **“Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”** If any part of salvation, including the faith that saves, comes from us, then we have some grounds for boasting. No, Paul says, if salvation is totally of the Lord, then He gets all the glory.

CONCLUSION

Paul here (in Ephesians 2:8-9) proclaims 4 things...

4 Things Paul is Reminding Us Of:

- (1) Salvation is by God’s grace alone**
- (2) Salvation is through faith alone**
- (3) Salvation is in Christ alone**
- (4) Salvation is for God’s glory alone**

If that is true, then there is hope for every sinner. Salvation does not depend on you, but rather on God, who is mighty to save. Flee for refuge to Christ and these wonderful verses apply to you, **“By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**