

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 29, 2018

By Grace
Ephesians 2:8-10

I. God's grace in salvation (2:8-9)

- Ephesians 2:1-3 discussed the depravity of man and his sinfully separated condition from God
- Ephesians 2:4-7 brought the good news of God's intervention to make us alive and unite us with Christ in the heavenly places
- Ephesians 2:7 ended stating, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
- Now, in Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul explains why it is that the immeasurable riches of his grace will be on display in heaven
- Most notably, Paul demonstrates this by highlighting God's grace in salvation as we see clearly stated in verses 8-9

A. The gist of salvation

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith.

- Paul gives an overview of salvation in a concise statement at the beginning of verse 8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith"
- In this statement, we are reminded that salvation is God's gracious work
- We see this in three clear ways
- First, Paul reminds us that salvation is initiated by God
- This is seen in his first statement, "For by grace"
 - The beginning and basis of our salvation is the grace of God
 - Grace has often been referred to as unmerited favor
 - This is exactly what Paul has described in detailing our salvation
 - We were in no position to earn, deserve or merit God's favor
 - In fact, we were by nature children of God's wrath (2:3)
 - Instead of treating us as children of His wrath, He has blessed us and made us alive with Christ
 - This is favor with God that we could never earn ourselves
 - This is grace
 - It is God, in His grace, who initiates salvation
 - As context (2:1-7) has made clear, we are the ones who were dead and He is the One who was alive

- This means that in order for anything to happen, the Living One had to act upon those who were spiritually dead in sin and transgression
 - His grace motivated Him to resurrect us from spiritual death
 - We had nothing to offer in that situation because we were a lifeless corpse, but His grace initiated our salvation from such hopelessness
- Second, Paul reminds us that salvation is accomplished by God
- This is seen by the next phrase, “You have been saved”
 - This phrase reminds us that salvation had an active and passive agent
 - The active agent in salvation is God
 - God accomplished His purposes for salvation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - God the Father planned salvation in eternity past
 - God the Son accomplished salvation in His earthly mission
 - God the Spirit applies salvation to sinners now
 - We are the passive agents receiving salvation and deliverance
 - We did nothing more than receive the eternal life that God has offered to us in His Son
 - It is this simple phraseology that we even use when talking to one another
 - “When were you saved?” “I was saved”
 - Salvation is accomplished by God and we are the recipients
- Third, Paul reminds us that salvation is received through faith
 - After God’s initiation and accomplishment of salvation, Paul addresses our contribution in the process
 - Paul says that God’s grace has saved us, “through faith”
 - Faith is the only proper response we can have to God’s work in salvation
 - The New Testament uses two words that commonly describe our response to salvation
 - *Pistis* - “Faith” and “Belief”
 - John 1:12 “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”
 - Romans 10:9 “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”
 - The means of receiving salvation is surrender to and belief in what God has already done in Jesus Christ
 - This is how faith works
 - It is a complete trust or reliance in someone or something outside of yourself

- “Faith, itself a gift of God, is the human response by which we receive God’s salvation. It is a confident trust in God whereby we refuse to justify ourselves based on our achievements but gratefully receive what God has already accomplished in Christ”¹
 - Even the very response of faith reminds us that salvation is all of God!
 - God initiates salvation, God accomplishes salvation, and we simply receive salvation

B. The gift of salvation

And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

- At this point, Paul expands on the phrase “by grace”
- The first way that Paul reaffirms that salvation is by grace is through his denial of our contributions to salvation
 - This is clear when he says, “And this is not your own doing”
 - What is the “this”?
 - The whole previous statement in verse 8
 - And *that* statement “For by grace you have been saved through faith” is really a summary of verses 1-7
 - The point is that Paul is reaffirming that salvation is not our own doing
 - We could read the phrase in this way, “And salvation is not your own doing, it is the gift of God”
 - Literally, “And this not from you”
 - The NASB gives a more literal rendering of this phrase, “and that not of yourselves”
 - After clearly denying man’s contribution to his own salvation, Paul reiterates the point of God’s grace
- Thus, the second way that Paul reaffirms that salvation is by grace is through his description of salvation as gift
 - Paul explicitly states that salvation “is the gift of God”
 - This is the best way to describe salvation—a gift
 - What a clarifying metaphor for us as humans!
 - And Paul’s point could not be clearer
 - Romans 3:23-25a “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

¹ Douglas J. Moo, “The Letters and Revelation,” in NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2402.

C. The glory in salvation

9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- In verse 9, Paul expands upon the fact that we “have been saved” from verse 8
- Paul both restates what it means to be the passive agent in salvation and he explains the implications of such an understanding
- First, he elaborates on what it means to be saved
 - He does this by reminding his readers that salvation is “Not a result of works”
 - Being the passive agent in salvation, Paul states you did not work for it
 - In fact, our works would be worthless anyway
 - Isaiah 64:6 “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”
 - Instead, Paul relentlessly teaches that we have done nothing
 - Titus 3:5 “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...”
 - Thus, Paul’s point stands that salvation is accomplished by God, not us
- Second, Paul gives a major implication for God’s accomplishment of salvation
 - Paul states the conclusion in this way, “So that no one may boast”
 - Our sinful condition and God’s gracious actions in Christ give all the credit in salvation to God
 - This is why Paul returns to a similar and repeated concept
 - Who gets the glory in salvation?
 - Who alone is worthy of praise?
 - God and only God
 - Paul makes it clear that no one else may boast!
 - Galatians 6:14 “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...”
 - Isaiah 42:8 “I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.”
 - It is God’s gracious working that makes all of salvation possible
 - Thus, God deserves all the praise and glory as Paul has stated multiple times

II. Our goal in salvation (2:10)

A. The purpose for good works

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

- First, we find that God has plans for us that include what we are to do right now, in our present lives
 - Paul reminds us that we are HIS workmanship

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- We are God’s handiwork and creation
 - We belong to God
- We belong to God because He gave us life in Christ
 - Paul states that we have been “Created in Christ Jesus”
 - God has given us life in His Son
 - It is in Christ that we have all the spiritual blessings already mentioned in Ephesians 1:3-14
- While these blessings of salvation have already been explained in Ephesians, Paul now introduces an important implication
- Paul states that we have been “created in Christ Jesus for good works”
 - God has graciously given us a purpose for the remainder of our time on earth
 - We have been called by God to do good works
 - Notice how this passage gives us the proper understanding for the relationship between faith and works
 - God’s Word calls us to live holy and upright lives
 - In living lives of holiness, there will be an abundance of good works
 - Unfortunately, some people have elevated these works as necessary in order for one to be considered saved at all
 - This is not the teaching that Paul has given us here
 - God’s grace in salvation first and foremost saves us from the punishment we deserved from God due to sin
 - Then, and only then, may we live lives of faith filled with good works pleasing our God (Hebrews 11:6)
 - God’s grace does not just address the penalty of sin
 - God’s grace gives us hope and power over sin
 - This power over sin is best seen when we align ourselves with God’s purpose for our lives by engaging in good deeds
 - Titus 3:14 “And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.”

B. The plan of good works
which God prepared beforehand,

- Paul states that God actually prepared good works for us to walk in
 - It is not only our salvation that has been planned by God
 - It is also our good works in sanctification that God has planned
 - God’s grace extends from salvation to sanctification
- What exactly are these good works that God has planned?

- They are the result of our holy lives that we live for Christ
- They are the obvious mandates of the New Testament
- They are the results of believers living Spirit-filled lives who inevitably produce the fruit of the Spirit
- They are God's specific way of bringing glory to Himself while we still live on this earth

C. The practice of good works
that we should walk in them.

- Paul gives this final statement as a command to those of us who have been saved by grace
- We must now walk in these good works
- God has purposed for us to do good works
- God has gone so far as to plan these good works for us
- Now, we must respond to the grace of God
- Now, we must walk in these good works
- This is not just important because Paul commanded it
- This is important because it forms the significant structure for the latter half of Ephesians
 - Ephesians 4:1 "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to *walk* in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called"
 - Ephesians 4:17 "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer *walk* as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds."
 - Ephesians 5:1-2 "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And *walk* in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."
 - Ephesians 5:8 "*Walk* as children of light"
 - Ephesians 5:15 "Look carefully then how you *walk*, not as unwise but as wise"