

God's Grace Saved You To Do God's Work

6-07-09

Eph 2:8-10

READ 2:8-9

Great Bible passages have great verses in them

That is true of the Book of Ephesians

We are only in chapter 2 and we have studied great verse after great verse

But none is greater than today's text

This passage is one of the most well known in the Bible

And rightly so – it ought to be

It contains the greatest message that anyone can hear

This verse has been called the working out in our lives

The truth of John 3:16

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life

For by grace you have been saved through faith – it is the free gift of God

God freely gave His Son for you – and He freely gives you salvation

Isn't that great

The first thing our passage tells us is that Salvation is all of grace

For by grace you have been saved

Grace means you didn't deserve to be saved – but God saved you

You weren't all that special that God picked you out of the crowd

You weren't living a wonderful righteous life

You didn't shine above everybody else

In fact some of you did shameful things

Some of you did things that might have been worthy of jail

No you weren't living lives of great merit

So that God just had to say – I like the cut of that person

Just the opposite - You were just living your life – doing your own thing

By the way - Doing your own thing is not good

But you were doing your own thing – caught up in the ways of the world
And God reached down from heaven - and saved you

Have you ever asked – why would God choose me

Well you cannot understand the choices of God by looking at the choosee

To understand God's choices you must look into the heart of God

There you will find the compassionate heart of a loving Father

God chose you with His heart not just His intellect

From His heart flows grace and mercy

And from grace comes salvation

Grace is God giving you something you don't deserve and couldn't have without God

Grace has been defined as God's unmerited or unearned favor

It has been called G R A C E - God's Riches At Christ's Expense

What it means is - God who chose you before the foundation of the world Loves you and does nice things for you

The nicest of which is salvation

And you don't deserve any of it

Imagine that you are an angry bitter beggar

You absolutely hate those who have more than you

And you especially hate the richest man in town

In fact the more money he puts in tin cup the more you hate him

And every time he passes by you, you show him your dislike

Then one day his servant picks you up and takes you to his mansion

The richest man in town tells you that this is your new home

He dresses you in the finest clothes- you take your meals with him

Then he tells you that he has adopted you and all that he has is yours

This house is your home – the food your food – the clothes are your clothes

He hands you his checkbook - your name is on it

And as he hands it to you he says – don't be afraid to use it

You are no longer a beggar – you are his son and heir

That is exactly what God has done for you – that is grace

The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world

Which is at war with His Father and died - for you

So that you could have His riches in glory

Christ became the means by which an utterly hopeless situation was transformed

His words are incredible but it isn't His words that save us

His miracles are astounding but it isn't His miracles that save us

Jesus didn't come to put a patch on a broken vessel

He didn't come to assist us or to reform us

Jesus came to recreate us

He didn't come to give us medicine and make us better

Jesus came to give us life

Not just any life – **Jesus came to give us His life**

And the term we use to describe all God has done for us is – grace

All that Paul wrote about in chapter 1 is by grace

For all spiritual blessings come by grace

Being chosen was by grace

Adoption is by grace

Redemption is by grace

Forgiveness is by grace

Our inheritance is by grace

Our eternal salvation is by grace

Nothing you have received from God came to you because you deserved it

Everything you received when you received Jesus as Lord came to you by God's grace

You weren't good to God but God has been wonderful to you

The Christian life is not one of reciprocity

It is not tit for tat or quid pro quo

You do something for God so God does something for you

All that you have has been freely given to you by God who loves you

Did you work hard to have your sins forgiven – no

Did you deserve adoption – no

Do you deserve eternal life – no

Do you deserve heaven – no

You were born again and God just said – Here

That is grace

For it is by grace you have been saved

C H Spurgeon – Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that can ever be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy and grace of God

Salvation is all of grace

And salvation comes to you by faith

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

The grace that saved you came to you by faith

God who chose you called you

He opened the eyes of your heart so that you could understand truth

And understanding the truth you said yes to Jesus

It's that simple

Most of us think like this

We were walking down the street one day and thought – why don't I choose God

But that isn't quite the way it happened

You see - Long before you chose God, God chose you

You were born with an eternal destiny

God wanted you then – He wants you now – He will want you forever

Now listen – God never, never changes His mind

Once you are His – YOU ARE HIS

By God's definition - and that is the one that counts

You were saved before eternity began

God will never give up on you – God will never cast you away

In grade school one of my best friends was athletic

At recess when we played games Johnny Mac was always a captain

I wasn't very athletic – but I had a friend

Johnny Mac always chose me – I knew he would – he knew he would

The whole class knew he would

Nobody else would have chosen me – but Johnny Mac always did

I wasn't athletic or popular – but I had a friend

If Johnny wasn't the captain I would have been one of the last picked

How many of you have heard this statement before

Class we cannot play the game until someone picks Ken

Well I had a friend - and I - got - picked

Well you have a friend – He is the God of the universe and He picked you

Maybe nobody else would have ever picked you but God did

Maybe you have been told that you are worthless – God doesn't think so

Maybe you believe that you are beyond help and completely unlovable

But you have a friend in God and He loves you

And God cannot lose so that means you are on the winning side

The grace that saved you came to you by faith

The daily grace you receive comes to you by faith

Salvation is that simple – the Christian life is that simple

You came into the Christian life by faith

You live the Christian life by faith

What is the key to unlocking all the blessings of God – faith

What is it that summons the very power of God – faith

Your faith opens the doorway to the very power of God

We use two words that are completely misunderstood by the world

Hope and faith

The world thinks hope means wish

Our great hope is heaven – the world will say that we are wishing real hard to go to heaven

But Christian hope is grounded in the Word of God and based on the promises of God

It is not wishful thinking

We have God's assurance of the things we hope for
The world also believes that faith is a mindless belief in God
Whom we cannot see
So the Christian faith has no more validity than any other religion
But our faith is not based upon attitudes and feelings
I am not saved by my feelings
I feel like I love Jesus today or I don't feel like I love Jesus today
If that were true then salvation would be unstable – but it isn't

Biblical faith is real and it has three elements; Knowledge, Heart response and Commitment

Let's take a look at these

**First comes Knowledge – by any sense knowledge must be first
To believe in Christ we must first have a knowledge of the Gospel**

It's really that simple

Before you can come to faith you must hear the Gospel

Paul asks in Romans

How can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without a preacher?

By the way when Paul says preacher he doesn't mean pastor

He defines anyone spreading the Gospel as a preacher

John Calvin wrote – We shall possess a right definition of faith, if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence to us, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit

After hearing the Gospel comes Heart response

Faith doesn't come from intellectual assent to certain truths

Faith comes from a heart response initiated by the Holy Spirit

Paul in Romans – **I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation**

The Gospel itself contains power

Just giving the Gospel to someone has long-term repercussions

Some of which you won't see or understand this side of heaven

The Holy Spirit takes the Gospel and impacts the heart of the hearer

Don't be concerned or upset if the person you witness to
Walks away from you or even verbally rejects you
They are not rejecting you – they are rejecting your Savior
Your job is to give the Gospel

It is the Holy Spirit's job to drive it home to the heart

John Calvin – It now remains to pour into the heart what the mind has absorbed. The
Word of God must take root in the depths of the heart.

When you have knowledge followed by heart response

You will come to a Commitment

Commitment is that time when you recognized Christ as He is

You recognized yourself as needy and received Him as Lord

The truth of the Gospel combined with power of the Holy Spirit

Goes from the head to the heart and from that springs forth commitment

That's faith

Marriage is a good

A good marriage is a culmination of a process of learning about someone

Responding to him or her in the heart and then making a commitment

The better the marriage the deeper the love grows over time

When you first got married – you thought

I can't love this person more than I do right now – isn't that true

But over time as you begin to discover more and more about your mate

You love them even more

Men – how many of you can honestly say that you love your wife more now

Than when you were married

By the way you'd better raise your hand

Well that is the way it is with faith

The more you get to know God - the more you trust His love and power

The more your faith grows

Now raise your hand again if you have a greater trust of God right now

Than when you first became a Christian

You see - Over time your faith becomes based upon more experiences – and it

grows

That is just the way it is

We've looked at grace and faith

Let's take a quick look at how does God not save us

Know for certain – God does not save us by our good works

There is nothing you can do to deserve eternal life

From start to finish salvation is all of God and grace

Paul tells us that even the faith we have is a gift from God

You will not meet one person in heaven

Who will tell you they deserved to get in

Not Adam or Noah or Abraham or any other soul is there by merit

One of Dave Szabo's favorite questions is

When you die and God asks you - Why should I let you into My heaven – What will you tell Him

People will tell you they are good – they go to church – they help the poor

That is all nice and even worthy – but not worthy enough to save them

Faith in the finished work of Christ is the only doorway into heaven

An old hymn puts it pretty well

Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling

Naked, come to Thee for dress; helpless, look to You for grace

Foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die

Rock of Ages cleft for me; let me hide myself in Thee

I want to close by looking at

Who we are and what God has for us (READ VS10)

Every serious Christian will eventually ask the question

Why did God save me – what is my purpose

That's the reason the book The Purpose Driven Life was so successful

Serious Christians want to know – where is my place in the body

And some get the feeling that perhaps they don't have a place

When that happens

Discouragement sets in and they just stop trying

They may even leave the church and stay at home

Or go to a huge church where they can remain anonymous

But Paul tells us two things

First - You are a special creation of God

In Psalm 139 David writes that God knit him together in his mother's womb

Every person on this planet is a unique individual created by God

But this verse goes beyond that

When you became a Christian

In effect - God began to recreate you

You are God's special project of love

So in every situation you face God is there

During the good time and particularly during the bad times

God is there tinkering with your character your purpose and your desires

All of these need to be changed

Sin and self corrupted what God intended for you

So when you were born again God began a new work of love in you

For some of us this work takes longer than for others

But God is patient

And this work will continue as long as you live on planet earth

And will not be finished until you reach heaven's glory

You are a special creation of God who is busy in your life

He is making you fit so that you are able to do

The work which God has ordained for you to do

This is the paradox of the Christian life

You are not saved by good works, but you are saved - to do good works

Although they have absolutely nothing to do with gaining salvation

Once you have been saved

Good works are an essential role in working out your salvation

Jesus said – By this is My father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples

A modern translation might read – By this is My Father glorified, that you do many good works and so prove to be My disciples

Now listen carefully

Good works do not make you a disciple they show your faith is genuine

As I said - before you do good works, God does His work in you

The same power that created you in Christ Jesus

Empowers you to do the good works for which He redeemed you

These good works are important in that they are God's plan for you

And in doing them you glorify God

You do not have the excuse that you are not able

Paul told Timothy that the believer is equipped for every good deed

You are the believer he was writing about

God has equipped you for every good deed He has for you to do

What God wants from you is the passion to do them

To Titus Paul wrote that **Jesus died to bring to Himself a people zealous for good deeds**

This is important

Just as you were given everything necessary for salvation

Grace gives you everything necessary for faithfully living the Christian life

Don't look for more – don't expect lightning to fall on you and change you

Generally speaking – God doesn't work that way

Remember He didn't save you unto good deeds and then abandon you

He made you a new creation and He gifted you

God has given you all you need to do what He has called you to do

John MacArthur - The greatest proof of a Christian's divine empowerment is his own salvation, and the resulting good works that God produces in and through him. These good works are expected, because God prepared them beforehand that we should walk in them, and that is why James says that faith is illegitimate if works are not present

I am not going to beat this into the ground

Because it is not my purpose to guilt you into doing God's work

I am here to talk about grace – conviction is the Holy Spirit’s work
So I’m going to wrap up
This past Wednesday I went to Mickey O's Bible study
He has been leading a group of men through the Book of John
And Wednesday we arrived at John 17 – Jesus’ High Priestly prayer
Within this prayer Jesus gives a summation of what He accomplished on earth
At the end of the study
Mickey passed out a summary of Christ’s accomplishments
Which he called Christian Responsibilities
I want us to finish today by just going down through Mickey’s list
They are in your outline - let’s read them responsively
I will read the verse – you read the contents of the verse

Christian Responsibilities from John 17

At the end of our lives we should be able to say

Vs 4 – I have glorified you on the earth

Vs 4 – I have accomplished the work which you have given me to do

Vs 6 – I revealed your name to the people whom you gave me

Vs 9 – I pray for them

Vs 12 – I protected them and kept them safe

Vs 14 – I have given them Your Word

Vs 18 – I have sent them into the world

Vs 22 – I have given them the glory that You gave Me

Vs 26 – I have make known to them Your name