

# GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFT OF SALVATION

## Ephesians 2.8-9: Message 13: God gives life by grace through faith

**What must a sinner do to be saved? Can he “do” anything? Or is it God who does it all for him?**

- (v1-3) We have seen our need for God to intervene in our lives to save us: In time past, before Christ, we were dead in sins and condemned to suffer God's wrath.
- (v4-7, esp. v7) But God, because He is kind, intervened in human history and in our lives personally, and He saved us.
- (v8-9) In this message we are going to see just how God wrought that change in us.

### **I. (v8a) Salvation is by God's Grace**

#### **A. Grace, Defined**

1. The first thing we need to realize about our salvation is that God did not have to save us.
  - a) “For”: The first word of our passage indicates that Paul is going to explain in further detail what he just said.
  - b) He is going to explain God's love and mercy (v4), and His grace and kindness (v7).
2. **Mercy** is not receiving what we deserve. God is merciful and forgives sinners (we could say it like this: mercy keeps us out of hell).
3. **Grace** is receiving the opposite of what we deserve. God's grace gives saved sinners all spiritual blessings and a home in heaven (we could say that grace includes mercy, and goes far beyond).

#### **B. By Grace We Are Saved**

1. The salvation we enjoy in Christ was purchased, offered, and made a reality in our individual lives... by God's grace.
2. Our salvation is not just salvation from God's wrath (which we have because of His mercy). Our salvation is all that, and much more.
  - a) (Eph 1.3) It includes all spiritual blessing.
  - b) (Php 3.20-21) It will include physical (bodily) blessing, too (after our resurrection).
  - c) (Rev 21.1-2, 9-10) It will include a home in heaven when we die and (more even than that!) a place in God's kingdom and plan in eternity (when all all will be good; Rev 21.3-4).
3. God's mercy rescued us from hell but the whole of our salvation (the whole “package deal”) is by grace because He gave us the complete opposite of what we deserve.

### **II. (v8b) Salvation is through Faith**

#### **A. Faith is “Our” Part in Salvation**

1. Salvation comes to sinful man “by grace” but it is personally acquired and applied “through faith.”
2. We could say it this way: God's part in salvation is grace and the sinner's part is faith (even though we're going to see that the faith that saves is also given freely by God—by God's grace).
3. The sinner must choose to exercise the faith God gives him, placing it in Jesus Christ alone.

**B. (Heb 11.1, 6) Faith is a sure, trusting, and confident belief in what you cannot see.**

1. Salvation is by grace through faith because we are all called on by God to place our sure, trusting, confident belief in Jesus Christ (whom we have never seen) and in His work of redemption on the cross (which we did not see).
2. This is just one more reason to be very skeptical about the “dreams and visions” movement that is so popular today. A dream or a vision is not faith, it is sight.
3. (John 20.30-31) God does not offer us visible signs or audible voices today; He gives us His Word (written, preached, taught) and then calls on us to believe it with confidence and trust.

**C. (Rom 10.9-17) Saving faith comes by hearing the message of the Gospel.**

1. This is God's plan for saving sinners during the Church Age: (v14) The gospel is preached and the sinner must believe without seeing.
2. (v17) Most important: God gives the lost sinner sufficient faith to be saved when that sinner hears the Gospel from another person.
3. However, the Bible says that God will not do one thing for the sinner: He will not choose for him.
  - a) God has done everything necessary for the salvation of any sinner, and He will do all that He has promised in salvation (after conversion).
  - b) But in one critical point, God waits on the sinner: **Choice**.
  - c) I know that this is not popular today among many of our “Reformed” brothers, but God will not obligate any sinner to go to heaven. He offers salvation freely to all, but forces none.
    - (1) (Josh 24.15) That is why each and every sinner can choose whom he will service: The Lord or sin.
    - (2) And this brings us to our last point of study for this message.

**III. (v8a-9) Salvation is God's Gift**

**A. (v8c) A gift freely offered must be voluntarily received**

1. God's free gift of salvation is offered to all sinners.
  - a) (1Tim 2.3-4) God would have all men to be saved (that is what He wants).
  - b) (2Pet 3.9) God would rather that none perish in their sins (that is His will).
  - c) (1Jn 2.2) Therefore, Christ died for all sinners and for all the sins of all men.
  - d) (Rom 3.11) The problem is that sinners do not seek after God. No one does, not one.
  - e) (John 6.44) Therefore, unless God intervenes in the life of the sinner in order to draw him to Christ, that sinner can never be saved.
  - f) (John 12.32) But God would have all men everywhere to come to repentance and salvation, therefore He draws all men to Christ.
  - g) (John 16.8-11) God does this first and foremost through the work of the Holy Spirit who reproves all men everywhere of sin, righteousness and judgment to come.
    - Note: This “preliminary” work of the Holy Spirit prepares the sinner for repentance.
  - h) (Rom 10.15-17) Then, when the sinner hears (or reads, etc.) the true gospel message, God gives him sufficient faith to be saved.
    - (1) The Spirit's conviction in the sinner's life prepares the ground for repentance.

- (2) The preaching of the gospel plants the seed of faith.
    - (a) (Gal 2.16) And this why salvation (justification) comes by the “faith of Jesus Christ,” and not the faith of the sinner.
    - (b) God gives the sinner sufficient faith to believe when that sinner hears (or reads, etc.) a biblical presentation of the biblical gospel.
  - (3) Up to this point, God has done it all!
    - (a) However, at this same point we have arrived at the critical juncture (the pivotal moment): What must the sinner do to be saved?
    - (b) God has just offered him the free gift of salvation and God has given him the ability (repentance and faith) to be saved. Now the sinner must choose to receive the gift.
  - i) (Acts 16.30-31) The sinner who is convicted of sin and who has heard the Gospel message must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - (1) He believes on the Lord: This speaks of repentance (a change of authority in the sinner's life: He turns from sin and self in order to submit to Jesus Christ as Lord).
    - (2) He believes on Jesus Christ: The sinner places the faith that God gave him (when he heard the gospel) in Jesus Christ—in His Person and His work on the cross—to save him.
  - j) (John 1.12-13) After the sinner's choice, God saves him: He forgives him, justifies him, regenerates him, etc. (no one is regenerated before repentance and belief).
2. A gift offered must be received, and that speaks of a voluntary choice on behalf of the sinner.
- a) A few sinners (the minority) are like the Philippian jailer who responded correctly to the Lord and received His gift of life and salvation by grace through faith.
  - b) (Acts 7.51) Sadly, the majority (who are mostly religious like the men in this verse) resist the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and reject God's gift of salvation in Christ.
  - c) However, whether the gift is received or rejected, it is still a gift and therefore cannot be purchased. And that brings us to Ephesians 2.9, that salvation is not by works...

**B. (v9) God offers salvation by grace through faith, not by works**

- 1. Make a list of your favorite works:
  - a) Baptism
  - b) Church Attendance
  - c) Praying the sinner's prayer (which is a work!)
  - d) Going to mass
  - e) The sacraments
  - f) Dressing the right way
  - g) Speaking in tongues
  - h) Tithing
  - i) Not going to movies or not watching TV
  - j) Being a “nice guy” and a “good neighbor”
- 2. (Isa 64.6) All our “righteousnesses” are as filthy rags before God.
  - a) They disgust Him when we offer them to God in exchange for salvation and a right standing before Him.
  - b) Salvation is not based on us, nor is it based on our works. It is based solely and completely on Jesus Christ, and on His work of atonement on the cross.

## **Conclusion: Ephesians 2.1-10**

### **(v1-9) God intervened in history and He has also intervened in our lives personally.**

1. (v1-3) If it were not for God, we would be lost (willingly!), dead in sins, and condemned to wrath.
2. (v7) But, thankfully (!) God is kind: He sent His Son to suffer and die in our place so that we might be freely given His place (of righteousness before the Father).
3. (v8-9) How can a sinner receive the free gift of salvation: By grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Our right standing before God is not by works—not by any work we could do.
  - God has done it all and God will have all the glory in the salvation of every sinner.
  - However, there is one thing He will not do for a lost sinner: God will not choose (He will not force anyone into heaven; He will do everything else, but He will not choose for the sinner).
  - God calls all men everywhere to repent of their sins and place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is the sinner's choice (choose this day whom you will serve: God in Jesus Christ, or sin and self).

### **(v10) Salvation results in a new beginning (new birth, new life, new hope)... but it's just the beginning!**

- God saved us and made us new in Jesus Christ for a purpose! He has some very specific works that He has called us to do both now and in eternity.
- We'll talk more about this in our next message.