

## **Saved By Grace**

Ephesians 2:8-10

Please stand and open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians 2:8-10 [READ/Pray]. I have entitled this message: Saved By Grace.

### Introduction:

This past week, as I was looking through an old box of papers I came across my Certificate of Baptism. It reads – This certifies that Victor Sholar was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1992, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church in Jefferson City, MO. It's been 25 years since the Lord saved me back in 1992. And since that time, as I have grown in the study of God's Word, my understanding of my salvation has changed during the years. I see my salvation differently, than the day I believe.

In fact, the week prior to being baptized I was so excited because I thought that water baptism was salvation. Only to learn later that the day I came forward, two weeks prior to being baptized and prayed to the Lord that on that day He actually saved me. But not too long after that, as I was reading the book of Hebrews I started to believe that a Christian could lose his salvation. Only to learn later that the warning passages in Hebrews were addressed to those who made outward professions of faith in Christ but weren't truly saved.

And then, at a home bible study, I resisted and tried to reason away that God is not sovereign when it comes to salvation. That God equally moves on everybody but within the nature of the person, some choose to become hardened and some soften.

And I had this Study Bible that used the analogy of the Sun shining on wax and clay – one softens and the other hardens. And therefore, it wasn't the Sun but how the elements responded to the Sun. And I can remember my friend Jesse, who was leading the Bible Study kept turning me away from using analogies and kept pointing me back to the Bible: Romans 9:18 – So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

And I knew I couldn't argue with Scripture but the pride in me wanted to resist because I did not like the thought of God being absolutely in charge of determining who gets saved and who doesn't. The thought made me feel helpless at the mercy of God.

And yet, every time I tried to reason away this truth, Jesse would quote the next verse:

Romans 9:20 – On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? [21] Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?

And at that point, I surrendered to the truth of the sovereignty of God in salvation, even though it was difficult to fully accept. But now, after 25 years I have grown to love, boast and cherish the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in salvation. Because I realized after all these years that my real problem had nothing to do with God's sovereignty but my unwillingness to accept that before God saved me, I was what the Bibles says, “dead in trespasses and sins”. And I struggled with this truth because I did not feel dead before God saved me. And then, it dawned on me, dead people don't feel anything. And I had to admit before salvation I felt nothing for God. I did not like worship music, the bible, praying or coming to church. My attitude was dead towards God.

Therefore church, once I accepted the biblical doctrine of total depravity, I not only accepted that God is sovereign in salvation but more specifically that salvation is based on sovereign grace.

And the more I recalled my testimony in light of this truth, that more my heart is grateful for God's grace in saving me. Now I can say wholeheartedly this morning, without reservations, after 25 years of being saved, that I am saved by grace. From first to last. I am saved by grace.

### Exposition:

And in the text that is before us this morning, we are given what theologians [or Bible scholars] call the gospel in a nutshell. This short paragraph of 3 verses is probably one of the most memorized passages in all of Scripture behind John 3:16 and Psalm 23. Some theologians say that if you want a basic summary of the gospel Paul preached in the book of Romans and Galatians, then just read Ephesians 2:8-10. For in this section, we are given 3 indisputable declarations that salvation is by grace alone, so that we may boast in God alone:

The 1<sup>st</sup> indisputable declaration that salvation is by grace alone is: Salvation cannot be achieved from within ourselves, it can only be a gift from God [v. 8]

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

“For by grace” – “For” [gar] at the beginning of verse 8 is meant to explain the reason why God did what He did for us in vv. 4-7 despite how sinful we were in vv. 1-3.

### Recap:

We were once spiritually dead: [2:1] “And you were dead in trespasses and sins” – “And you were” – literally “And

you being dead” – Death was the continual and constant state of our existence before Christ. Therefore “being dead in trespasses and sins” means our mentality, behavior and action, as it related to God existed in the sphere of constant and continual falling away and falling short of the purpose for which God created us and that is to glorify Him.

As a spiritual zombie, we had no pulse for God, no heart for God, no stomach for God, no lungs to pant after God, and no brain activity of pleasing thoughts towards God. We were spiritually flat-lined. We were dead souls walking around in living bodies. Bible scholars refer to this as total depravity.

Now Paul wants to prove that we were once dead by reminding us of what we used to walk after.

**[2] in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.**

There were two standards that we walked according to that proved that we were dead:

“according to the course of this world, and according to the prince of the power of the air” - “the course of this world” – literally “the age of this world” – this refers to the value system of the world. The standards of culture that we conformed to in order to fit in. Our sense of identity was tied to what the world defined as life. And this value system of the world is governed by the prince of the power of the air who imposed this system upon us before salvation. We loved the devil’s music, the devil’s entertainment, the devil’s fashion styles, the devil’s pleasures, the devil’s man-center philosophies and religions.

We had no appetite for God because the devil kept us full with sinful pleasures. So not only were we outwardly decaying but we were also inwardly rotting.

**[3] Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind,**

So not only were we once dead being outwardly decaying and inwardly rotting but we were also under the sentence of eternal death:

**[3d] and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

Think about it, while we were constantly being dead in a state of slipping away from God and missing the mark of pleasing Him, when we used to walk according to the standards of the value system of this world, according to the standards of the devil himself, who energized our hearts to lust after sin, to scheme, to imagine and to recall iniquities in the mind. And while all of that was happening God had pronounced the sentence of eternal hell upon us because we were guilty, yet He had not executed that pronouncement upon us as we woke up day after day looking forward to living our way. Day after day we planned, we plotted and we pursued sinful pleasures knowing we were wrong. And the question is: What stayed God's hand from carrying out the sentence of eternal wrath upon us?

**[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

[4] “But God” – But God stepped in; But God intervened; But God despite us; But God took the initiative – “being rich in mercy” – Here is the good news, you being dead but God being rich.

[5] “made us alive together with Christ” - In other words, one day as spiritual zombies, dead souls walking around in living bodies, God caused us to hear the message of salvation and His Holy Spirit moved upon our dead corpse and regenerated our nature by giving us a pulse for God, a heart for God, a stomach or appetite for God, lungs that panted after God and a mind that thinks God’s thoughts after Him.

[v. 5d] (by grace you have been saved), - “by grace” [by means of grace; unmerited, undeserved, unearned, unexpected favor];

[v. 6a] “and raised us up with Him,” - this is referring to our position with Christ when He ascended into heaven after His resurrection. In other words, we used to be under the rule of the prince of the power of the air. But now, there is Someone who ascended into the air on our behalf with all authority in heaven and earth in His hand.

[v. 6b] “and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” – In other words, the devil used to rule over us but now we have an Intercessor who ever lives to plead our concerns and needs before the Father. We have an Advocate [a Defense Attorney] who represents us when we fall short by appealing to the merits of His sacrifice on our behalf. And we have a Great High Priest who sympathizes with us in our struggles, who invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Why did God do it [v. 7] **so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

In other words, for all eternity God will show us what goes beyond what any created being deserves, especially sinners like us, the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ [union with Christ].

[8] “For by grace you have been saved” – Just in case, you and I might forget the means by which God made us alive with Christ, raised us up with Christ, seated us with Christ in the heavenlies, the apostle Paul reminds us “For by grace” – literally “For by the grace” – mentioned at the end of verse 5, “you have been saved”. We need to hear it repeated to us that we are saved by grace, lest we begin to think that all that God has done for us means we must be so special to Him. Because I have heard it reasoned by even pastors that if God sent His Son to die for us, then we must be worth something to God. That Christ’s death on our behalf should cause us not to think so little of ourselves, if God thought so much of us.

But the apostle Paul says, “Wait a minute now!!” It is the love of God that sent His Son to die on the cross for sinners but don’t forget that it is the grace of God that saves sinners. In other words, contrary to what most Christians say, we are not saved by God’s love but by His grace [Rom. 3:24; 4:16; 2 Tim. 1:9]. It is the love of God that supplied salvation to sinners, but it is the grace of God that applies salvation to sinners.

Just like there are businesses that supply jobs for those looking for work, but only those who apply for the job will be considered for the position. By comparison God supplies salvation to sinners as an expression of His love, but by contrast you can’t receive this salvation by applying for it yourself, only God can apply this salvation to you by grace. Therefore, it is the grace of God that causes us to experience the love of God in salvation.

See, you can never understand grace, without first understanding who God is and you can never understand grace apart from understanding how God sees you. Because it by understanding the nature of God that we are convinced that salvation must be by grace. First, we learn from the Scriptures that God by nature is self-sufficient, self-dependent and self-fulfilled within Himself. In other words, God doesn't need anything or anyone outside of Himself in order to complete Him or fulfill Him. The Lord needs nothing from us – He doesn't need our worship:

**Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 50:9-10; 12 – [9] I shall take no young bull out of your house, Nor male goats out of your folds. [10] For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills [12] If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

Even our value as created in God's image has no weight when He measured on God's scale of importance

**Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 40:15-17 – [15] Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; [17] All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.

This simply means that God doesn't need us, church? Now I can understand us being nothing to God, but how can we be considered less than nothing? But here's the point, if we are regarded as less than nothing before God, then what would cause God to want to save sinners like us?

The Lord sovereignly determined to save man, not out of necessity but for His own glory. There is nothing outside of God that governs, compels or forces Him to act on our behalf. When He acts is because He alone according to His own sovereign good pleasure wants to act. All expressions of His attributes are initiated and determined from within Himself never from outside of Himself.

In other words, God is not moved to show mercy, love or grace because of something He saw in you. Because you and I looked so the pitiful He couldn't help but save us.

See, we are moved to act in this way, our motivation for showing kindness to those hurting comes from outside of ourselves. We are moved by a person's demeanor, their painful history or their present predicament to show kindness. But this is not what draws love from out of God – God is totally unmoved from outside of Himself to show mercy or kindness towards sinners who are hurting, broken-hearted, down-casted or abused. He is never compelled by the demeanor, history or sad predicament of unworthy sinners to demonstrate love, mercy or kindness. These expressions of lovingkindness are never merit based but free, spontaneous and sovereign:

**Scrip. Ref:** Romans 9:15-16 – For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion [16] So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

We can cry, plead and promise but unless God decides to show mercy for His own glory, He will not answer:

**Scrip. Ref:** Heb. 12:15-17 – See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; [16] that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. [17] For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

God, for His own glory, has the right to withhold the gift of repentance from a godless man like Esau, who is broken over the consequences of his actions but could not repent of them. All of us, was like Esau and God had the right to withhold the gift of repentance from godless people like us.

But what caused God to show mercy towards us and not towards him? God just decided, according to His own sovereign pleasure [just to show off His glory] to show mercy towards us. The decision to demonstrate His glory by sovereignly choosing to save us is what the Bible calls “grace”. A God, who does not need us, who possesses no worth to Him, decided to pick us as recipients of His grace. And how that decision was made was not that He saw some potential in us or how we would be an asset in attracting others to the gospel or that we needed a boost in our self-esteem, but only because from within Himself He purposed that He would get the most glory in displaying His grace on us, than His wrath on us.

By nature the Lord is eternal – from everlasting to everlasting He has been satisfied within Himself. By nature the Lord is holy, separated from sinners. By nature the Lord is righteous, just to condemn us for being sinners. And what answer do you give when an eternal God, who from everlasting to everlasting has been satisfied within Himself without us, who doesn’t need us, who knows we can’t do anything that is considered worthy of Him, who hates our sins, who has the right to punish us for our sins, who is angry with the sinner daily decides out of His own free will to save us? What answer do you give? “For by grace you have been saved”!!!

God owes us nothing but hell, but by grace He forgave us of all our sins. And listen, God never forgives because He was moved from outside of Himself to show pity because we looked pitiful or else the Bible would say, “For your own sake I will forgive your transgressions” but the Bible clearly says – “For My own sake I will forgive your transgressions” Isa. 43:25.

Therefore church, when it comes to grace, we need to understand it as being the exact opposite of necessity. God doesn't need us. Grace means a favor that God was not obligated to bestow nor forced from outside of Himself to give, but is the exact opposite of what He had every right to do and that is send us to hell. So what's the reason for our salvation? Grace!!! What's grace? God just wanted to show off by saving hell-deserving sinners that He did not need.

**Quote:** It is quoted that as the hymn writer of Amazing Grace, John Newton was preaching one day he said, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: “That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior!”

“For by grace you have been saved” – “you have been saved” “you have” [eimi – present indicative active; 2nd person plural]; “been saved” [sozo – to be kept safe; to rescue from danger; perfect participle passive voice; nom. masc. plural]; perfect tense – a past act with ongoing present results – we have been kept safe since the day we believed, all the way up to this present time and forever from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, we are kept safe by preservation from falling away in sin on up till perfection; passive voice – you didn't save yourself, you couldn't save yourself. God alone did the saving.

“through faith” – the grace that was applied by God to save us came “through faith”. Faith is simply placing one's complete trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior for the forgiveness of sins and hope of eternal life.

“and that not of yourselves” – literally “and this is not from out of yourselves”. Now the word “that” or “this” is not referring to “faith” but to the whole preceding statement and thus can be understood in this way, “and that salvation is not from yourselves”. That salvation comprises everything necessary to be saved, even the faith to believe.

**Scrip. Ref:** Phil. 1:29 – For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, to believe in Him

Praise God that the source of my faith in Jesus did not originate from myself but from God. Otherwise, faith would be a product of the weakness of my humanness – frail, vacillating and temporary. Fallen human faith is incapable and unable of persevering in Christ for the rest of our lives:

**Scrip. Ref:** John 6:65-66 – And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.” [66] As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.

Matt. 13:21 – yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

For faith to have in source in you means that you have no firm root in yourself, but only temporary – this is not saving faith but false, temporary, non-saving faith.

John 2:23-25 – Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. [24] But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, [25] and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man.

What was in man? A capacity to only demonstrate non-saving, non-committed, temporary faith. If your faith in Christ has its source in you and not the Holy Spirit it is a frail, temporary, easily prone to fall away from the truth kind of faith, a faith that will eventually revert back to the world, a dead faith comes from a dead heart. A dead faith cannot preserve, it cannot do good works out of love for God, it cannot treasure Christ above all things, it cannot

suffer for Christ, it cannot turn from the world, it cannot trust in the sacrifice of Christ alone for its salvation.

Illustration:

One person described the faith that God gives in salvation this way: When a person chokes or drowns and stops breathing, there is nothing he can do. If he ever breathes again it will be because someone else starts him breathing. A person who is spiritually dead cannot even make a decision of faith unless God first breathes into him the breath of spiritual life. Faith is simply breathing the breath that God's grace supplies.

We need a supernatural bestowment of faith that will keep us believing even in our failures:

**Scrip. Ref:** Luke 22:32 – but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

All of that does not come from “out of yourselves”; “it is the gift of God” – or better “the gift from God”. All of salvation is a gift from God – God wanting to save you is a gift; God sending His Son to save you is a gift; Christ's death on the cross for us is a gift; Christ being raised on the third day as proof of our sins being forgiven is a gift; the Holy Spirit enabling us to repent and believe in Jesus is a gift; the Holy Spirit taking up residence within us is a gift; the Holy Spirit sealing us for the day of redemption is a gift.

**Quote:** R.C. Sproul – God Himself supplies the necessary condition to come to Jesus, that's why it is 'sola gratia' by grace alone, that we are saved.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> indisputable declaration that salvation is by grace alone is: Salvation cannot be earned by human works, so that the credit can only belong to God [v. 9]

[9] **not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

“not as a result of works” – literally “not out of works”.

God never promised in the Bible that human works [whether keeping the Mosaic law or creating your own standards of good works] could earn salvation.

**Scrip. Ref:** Isaiah 64:6 – all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment [a menstrual rag]

Salvation has always been by grace alone through faith alone in God alone in the both the OT and NT. The human works of sinners fall short in 3 ways: 1] God never promised that human works could earn salvation; 2] The motive behind human works is not to the glory of God but the glory of self. **Quote:** Martin Luther, the Great Reformer – “Works without faith is idolatry”; 3] Human works can never alleviate the guilt of sin. This is way those who depend on their good works to save them are ever convinced they have done enough, because their conscience keeps accusing them of their sinfulness. If a man was inherently good he wouldn’t need to rely on his good works to get him into heaven. If salvation was by human works it would cease to be by grace:

**Scrip. Ref:** Rom. 11:6 – But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Why is it based on grace alone? “so that” [purpose clause – in order that]; “no one may boast” – kau-cha-o-mai [ingressive [can’t even begin or start the action] aorist subjunctive; **middle voice**; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular – brag or take credit]

**Scrip. Ref:** 1 Cor. 1:26-29 – [26] For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

[27] but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, [28] and the base things of the world and despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, [nothing] that He might nullify that things that are, [that think they are something] [29] that no man [lit. flesh] should boast before God.

Why isn't the church filled with the rich and famous? So that none would boast that God choose them on the basis of their self-worth? Why isn't salvation based on human works, so that none in heaven would boast that God accepted them because He was impressed by their works? God only accepted us by grace.

Illustration:

According to the Chicago Tribune, in the summer of 1994, Marcio da Silva, a love-struck Brazilian artist, was distraught over the breakup of a four year relationship with his girlfriend. He tried to win back her love by a gesture of great devotion. He walked on his knees for 9 miles. With pieces of tires tied to his kneecaps, the 21 year old man shuffled along for 14 hours before he reached her home in Santos, Brazil. He was cheered on by motorists and passersby, but when he reached the end of his marathon of love thoroughly exhausted, the 19 year old woman of his dreams was not impressed. In fact, she had intentionally left her home to avoid seeing him.

God is like that 19 year old woman, He is not impressed by any human work you do to try and get back into a relationship with Him. Not by church attendance, not by water baptism, not by keeping the 10 commandments, not by observing the dietary law or feasts, not by partaking of the Lord's Table, not by serving in the church, not by giving of your tithes and offerings, nothing.

Unless God is both the beginning and the end; the starter and the finisher; the initiator and goal, nothing positive we do will be acceptable to Him.

**Quote:** Pascal – “Grace is indeed required to turn a man into a saint; and he who doubts this does not know what either a man or a saint is.”

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and last indisputable declaration that salvation is by grace alone is: Salvation cannot be void of good works, but only God can produce them for us [v. 10]

**[10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**

“For we are His workmanship” – “For” [gar] is meant to explain that we don’t do works in order to be saved but that salvation is a work that God did in us; “For we are His workmanship” – literally “For of His we are a work”. The word “workmanship” [poiema – means work or that which has been made; from this Greek word we get the English word “poem”; the New Living Translation translates the word “God’s masterpiece”. We are God’s art work, God’s masterpiece.

“created in Christ Jesus” – “created” [ktizo – aorist participle passive voice; nom. masc, plural; closely connected to the Hebrew word “bara” – out of nothing]. The work of regeneration was from out of nothing. There was nothing salvageable in us.

“for good works” – “for” [epi – unto]. This refers to the goal of God saving us – good works. **Quote:** John Calvin – Salvation is by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone.

“which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” – “prepared beforehand” [pro-e-toi-mazo – to make ready beforehand]; “that” [purpose clause]; “we should walk in them” [peri-pa-teo – aorist subjunctive active; 1<sup>st</sup> person plural] – the good works that we perform cannot truly be attributed to us because God preordained before the foundation of the world the good works we should perform after our salvation. God prepared the good works beforehand, providentially positions us to perform them, strengthens us to do them, and then rewards us in heaven for completing them. That’s why the church in heaven, represented by the 24 elders are seen casts their crowns before the throne of God because they realized we received those crowns by grace.

The workmanship of God is understood in 3 ways: it’s beauty [masterpiece]; it’s results [walk in them]; and it’s origin [created out of nothing];

Conclusion:

“we are His workmanship”: the ocean water, the creatures of the sea, the animals at the zoo, the beautiful flowers and plants, the cuteness of a new born baby; the cuteness of a puppy or kitten, glory of the moon, planets and stars on a clear dark night, but none of these of God’s ultimate and most beautiful workmanship – God’s ultimate and most beautiful workmanship is saving [making alive dead] sinners and transforming them into saints;

“created in Christ Jesus”: God started with nothing when He decided to save us – our hearts were dead, our will was in bondage to sin, our minds were darkened and our desires were enslaved to lusts] It is one of the great testimonies/boasts of God in Scripture – that we were nothing before He decided to use us –

**Scrip. Ref:** Joshua 24:3-15 – [3] I took; [4] I gave; I gave; [5] I sent; I brought you out; [6] I brought your fathers out of Egypt; [8] I brought you into the land; I destroyed [your enemies]; [10] I delivered you; [13] I gave you a land;

2 Sam. 12:7-8 – [7] It is I who anointed you king over Israel; it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul; [8] I also gave you your master’s house, your master’s wives, I gave you the house of Israel and Judah.

**Quote:** Before, the one who was without Christ was, to use St. Augustine’s phrasing – “not able not to sin”; Now he is “able not to sin”.

“that we should walk in them” – studying the Word, surrendering in prayer, serving others and suffering for His name. All by grace!!!

**Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 43:22-26 [22] Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob; But you have become weary of Me, O Israel. [23] You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings; Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings. Nor wearied you with incense. [24] You have brought Me no sweet cane with money, Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; Rather you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities. [25] I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. [26] Put Me in remembrance