

Sunday, August 4, 2024 am

WHAT SAVES US? Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). From time to time we have examined this text, as it is a favorite text of advocates of “faith only.” Even though the expression, “faith only” is not found in that text, yet it is advocated, that we are “saved by grace alone, through Christ alone, by faith alone.” And this expression is part of the protestant reformation “five solas” that challenged Roman Catholicism some four centuries ago. (The 5 *solas* (Latin for ‘only’) are – Sola scriptura (scripture alone), sola fide (faith alone), sola gratia (grace alone), sole Christo (Christ alone), & Soli Deo gloria (to the glory of God alone).

In examining this text, I have noted that the point Paul is making is that we are saved by grace (representing God’s part), through faith (man’s part). I believe that is consistent with the context and with the rest of scripture. But today, I want to approach this from a different perspective. We will see that the point is the same, but I want to notice several things that the New Testament says saves us (is instrumental in our salvation). We will break this up into 2 sections – God’s part (grace) and our part (faith).

I. God’s part in our salvation

- a. **Grace** – Ephesians 2:8 – let us begin with our text – “*By grace you have been saved through faith.*” As we have noted often, God’s grace (undeserved favor) is the foundation upon which salvation is based. IF there is no grace, there is no salvation. Titus 2:11 reminds us it is the grace of God that brings salvation and teaches us how to live. Romans 6:23 speaks of the gift of God being eternal life – that is His grace.
- b. **Mercy** - Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:4. Mercy as we have noted is a companion to His grace. Grace is when God gives us what we do not deserve, while mercy is God NOT giving us what we DO deserve.
- c. **Love** – John 3:16, it was God’s love that caused Him to send His Son – Romans 5:6-9
- d. **Hope** – Romans 8:24 – Paul notes that in hope they were saved. Titus 1:2 speaks of those who live “in hope of eternal life...” Without hope, we are not going to take the steps necessary to be saved AND stay saved.
- e. **Jesus** – Matthew 1:21 – Jesus was to “save His people from their sins.” Notice in that text, it does not say “save Israel from Rome”.
 - i. Romans 3:24 – we are **redeemed in Christ Jesus through the grace of God**. That Jesus is the conduit of salvation is understood by all who believe the Bible to be God’s word. It is about salvation. And most understand that Jesus saves us, but what was about Jesus saves us?
 - ii. **The blood of Jesus** – we are justified (made right) through His blood. Matthew 26:28, as Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper, the cup represented His blood which was “*shed for many for the remission of sins.*” To the Christian, His blood cleanses us when we repent & pray (1 John 1:7,9). Ephesians 1:7 speaks of being redeemed through His blood, receiving the forgiveness of our sins. Revelation 1:5 tells us that Jesus “loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood...” 1 Peter 1:19 speaks of being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, our Lamb.

- iii. **The cross** – 1 Corinthians 1:18 – to those being saved, the cross is the power of God.
NOTE: It is not the cross itself that saves, but what happened on that cross. Hence Paul would say, *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* (Galatians 6:14)
- iv. **The name of Jesus** – we often emphasize that the expression, “in the name of” implies authority (cf. Colossians 3:17). Consider John 20:30-31 – believing, we may have life in His name. Acts 4:10-12 – there is salvation in no other name.
- v. **Through His resurrection** – 1 Corinthians 15:17 – Paul notes that if Jesus was not raised, our faith is vain and we are still in our sins (and thus lost). 1 Peter 3:21 – our faith has meaning, “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”
- vi. **By His life** – Romans 5:10 notes that we are saved by His life, being reconciled to God. The reason Jesus can save us is because He lived a perfect and sinless life thereby being the sacrifice God would ultimately accept for the forgiveness of sins – 2 Corinthians 5:21 – He knew no sin and became the offering we need.
- f. **The truth** – John 8:32 – it will make you free; 2 Thessalonians 2:10 – it is through truth that we are saved (the text addresses those who refuse to accept the truth). Truth by definition is that which is verified as factual. We have talked in times past about objective truth which means that which is always true in all circumstances (as opposed to subjective truth – which is about one PERCEPTION of what is true). It is objective truth that saves as it leads you to undeniable answers you need to address.
- g. **The gospel** – Romans 1:16-17 – the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. James 1:21 tells us that the implanted word is able to save our souls. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 – by the gospel we are saved. Is there a difference between truth and the gospel? That is a yes and no question. Yes: Truth is broader than the gospel (there are many truths not related to the gospel – E.g., 2+2=4). The gospel IS the truth that leads to our eternal salvation.
- h. **Preachers proclaiming the truth of the gospel** – Mark 16:15-16, 1 Corinthians 1:21 – the message preached saves. Romans 10:13-15 explains how though the message preached by preachers salvation comes. Preachers are a part of God’s plan. People will not know what they need if someone does not tell them. So there is a real sense in which a preacher is instrumental in our salvation.
- i. **In this section we have noticed 13 things all related to God’s part where salvation is concerned.** Most would agree that EVERYONE of these qualities are a manifestation of the grace of God. Thus, when we speak of being saved by grace, we understand how each of these is a product of that grace.

II. **Man’s part in his salvation**

- a. **Hearing the gospel** – Romans 10:14-17, cf. Acts 11:14 – Cornelius. Note that the only way man knows what to do is if someone tells them.
- b. **Belief** (faith) – John 3:16 – whoever believes in Him; John 8:24 – unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins; Act 16:31 – the jailer was told to believe on the Lord and he would be saved. NOTE: I will develop what belief is more in a few moments, but for this point, let us emphasize that one must believe in Jesus, the resurrection and numerous other things to be saved.
- c. **Repentance** – Acts 2:38, 3:19 – repent and be converted (NASB – return, ESV – turn back). Acts 17:30-31 – now God commands all men everywhere to repent (to prepare for judgment). Luke 13:3 & 5 – Jesus warned, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. The idea of repentance

is a change of mind (the Greek word literally means to perceive afterward) that leads to change in action. Most will agree that to be saved you need to surrender your life to Jesus (meaning you belong to Him and are willing to give up pursuing the path of worldliness).

- d. **Confession** – Romans 10:9-10, Acts 8:36-37 – to be saved you must acknowledge who Jesus is – He is your Savior and Lord (He is going to rule in your life). Matthew 10:32-33 – Jesus declared that this is expected if we desire that He confess us (stand with us) before God in heaven. NOTE: This text is not a one-time act, but an ongoing declaration in both word and conduct.
- e. **Baptism** – Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21, etc. It is the act of baptism that puts one into Christ – Galatians 3:27. It is in the act of baptism that we come in contact with the blood of Jesus – romans 6:3-5, Revelation 1:5, etc.
- f. **Works** – James 2:24 – by works is a man justified (made right - vindicated). John 6:28-29 – Jesus even described believing Him as “the work of God”, answering the question, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”
- g. **Obedience** – Hebrews 5:8-9 – Jesus became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Matthew 7:21-23 – it is not enough to say, ‘Lord, Lord’, but we must DO His will. NOTE: In these texts and others, this is not about earning our salvation (meritorious works), but rather it is about doing what we are told by God to do.
- h. **Endurance** – Matthew 10:22, 24:13 – he who endures to the end will be saved. Revelation 2:10 speaks of being faithful until death (to the point of dying, or until you die) and then receiving the crown of life.
- i. **Ourselves** – Acts 2:40, as Peter concludes his sermon on Pentecost having told them what they needed to do, he continued to exhort them and said, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” The ESV & KJV both say, “Save yourselves from this crooked (untoward – KJV) generation.” The point of this is NOT that we can devise our own plans and do whatever we want, but it is about RESPONDING to what God has said to do, and when we do, He will save us.
- j. **Man’s part described as faith (belief)** – we have noted 9 things that we do that are involved in our salvation. In Ephesians 2:8-9, again we are told that we are saved by grace through faith. As I have continually emphasized in lessons, at times the term “believe” (or “faith”) has reference to the specific action of believing, but at other times it is an inclusive term for everything one does BECAUSE they believe (have faith). Contextually, Eph. 2:8 is only plausible as the later term. I say that because of the various things we are told TO DO that lead to our salvation. In fact, James 2:24 is the only NT text dealing with matters of salvation that uses the term “faith only” and it says, “*You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only.***” This is within a context that says faith without works (action) is dead, just like works without faith is meaningless or dead. Acts 16:31 is explained as you read the context (31-33).

When we concluded the first section, we noted that the “grace” of Ephesians 2:8 summarizes ALL that God has done, and most will agree with that. In the second section, we see man’s part summarized by the word, “faith”. If not, why not?

Thus we have noted 22 things involved in our salvation. Looking at them together, I ask, which one can we leave out? Do any of them contradict the others? Which of these qualities is accompanied by the word “alone” or “only”? The fact is, everyone of these elements is part of our salvation. God’s part (summarized by the term grace) is done, the question that remains is: Will you do your part? Think about it!