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Sermon Notes

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Saved by Grace through Faith

Ephesians 2:8-10

We come this morning to three of the most glorious and clearest verses on the gospel in all the Bible

In some ways, these three verses sum up Paul's theology—all the depths of what he taught in Romans and Galatians—better than any other brief statement

Ephesians 2:8-10 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Charles Spurgeon, the great 19th century preacher said that all his theology on human salvation was contained within the circle of these verses. He said he was raised on this doctrine—salvation by grace through faith apart from works—and that it was a matter of long-standing family heritage with him.

Spurgeon related a story in which he was unfortunately late to a preaching commitment because the train he was riding on had been delayed... when he arrived at the church, he found that the service had been going on for some time, as it should have. They didn't wait for him! The sermon had already begun, and the preacher was none other than his GRANDFATHER!! When his grandfather saw him enter, he said:

"Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel; can you, Charles?"

Spurgeon responded, **"You can preach better than I can, too!"** But his grandfather wouldn't agree to that. So Spurgeon went up to the pulpit and took over the preaching duties... and he grandfather was preaching this very text... "For by grace are you saved through faith..."

Spurgeon began explaining how faith is the CONDUIT of God's grace, and moved on to how we cannot save ourselves—NOT BY WORKS!!—and as he was expounding total human weakness and moral inability, he felt his coat-tail being pulled from behind... it was his grandfather, who then stood up and took his turn again for about five minutes on HUMAN DEPRAVITY... then he gave it back to his grandson... but stayed right nearby;

When Spurgeon then took over and spoke more of God's amazing grace in saving us, his grandfather called out, "YES, YES, CHARLES!!! TELL THEM AGAIN!!!"

After Spurgeon preached a little more on grace, he cried out

"Tell them again, Charles!"

"And again."

"And again!"

For decades after his godly grandfather died, Spurgeon continued to preach the same gospel of God's saving grace by faith apart from works... he was faithful to tell it again and again

So it is for me right now, dear friends... I do not suppose I will tell you much that you have not heard before this morning... I just want to stand in a long, glorious line of preachers of the gospel of God's grace and tell you again

Even Paul "tells us again"; Look at his glorious interruption in verse 5...

Ephesians 2:4-6 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

Paul felt the need to GO BACK AND TELL THEM AGAIN!!!

You can never hear too frequently this amazing gospel of God's free grace to sinners

I. How Can We Be Saved?

A. "Saved? From What??"

1. "salvation" implies severe danger

Pen falls from the desk, someone picks it up and hands it to us; we wouldn't gush, "Thank you so much! You've saved me!!! I'll never forget this moment of salvation..." the person would be immediately weirded out

But if you were swimming in the ocean, and you were suddenly seized by a riptide and were getting sucked under and started to sputter and water started filling your mouth, and you could feel yourself getting weaker and drowning... and you feebly cry out "Help!" and it seems no one has heard or noticed... and you go unconscious... and the next thing you know is you're lying on your back on the beach and you're coughing water out of your lungs and someone has been pushing on your chest, doing CPR on you... and you are ALIVE! Then it is reasonable to look at the person with almost indescribable emotion and say... **"You've saved my life! How can I ever thank you enough??"**

"By grace are you saved..."

2. Many people in this world do not feel a need for salvation

- a. They are totally satisfied with their lives, sense no impending danger, fear nothing about the future and are complacent about their spiritual condition
- b. At the essence of this attitude is either a complete denial of sin or of God or of Judgment Day
- c. Maybe they are atheists... or just materialists who only think about RIGHT NOW and **"Let us eat, drink, and be merry... for tomorrow is a distant mirage that may never come"**

3. But this chapter answers admirably the first question that comes in this sermon... FROM WHAT DO WE NEED SALVATION?

Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

SAVED FROM OUR SINS, OUR LUSTS, FROM SATAN'S KINGDOM, and FROM THE FUTURE WRATH OF GOD!!

Revelation 20:12-15 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

SAVED FROM THAT!!!!

B. So... How Can we Be Saved... from Sin now and judgment later?

C. The world's answer: WORKS!!

- 1. Being a good person... making sure good works outweigh bad**
2. An exchange... paying for sin by doing more good works than you were doing before
 - a. Every religion in the world other than Christianity is ultimately a religion of works
 - b. Islam follows the five pillars of Islam to earn favor in the sight of Allah... all of those pillars are religious works
 - c. Buddhism seeks enlightenment, freedom from karma by ascetic practices and good deeds

- d. Cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons try to earn their salvation by evangelism and missions and morality
 - e. Many Roman Catholics thru history have lived out a religion of works... a combination of Christ's death on the cross PLUS religious activities...the laws of the church... the sacramental system of baptism, the mass, confessions, confirmation, last rites
3. OTHER PEOPLE teach that perhaps doing one action so pure and admirable that it pays for all the rest... the "Spiritual Quest"
- a. Like the knights of the Round Table seeking the Holy Grail, the cup from which Jesus Christ drank at the Last Supper
 - b. Or promises made by popes and the kings of Christendom to Crusader Knights who went on Crusade to deliver Jerusalem from the Muslims
 - c. Or like the ladder of spiritual attainment made by desert-dwelling monks to earn salvation by extreme fasting and prayer and the wearing of the hair shirt
 - d. Or like this encounter from the movie "Gandhi"

Gandhi, a Hindu by faith, is near death from starvation. He is fasting as a protest against the religious hatred between Muslims and Hindus that is destroying India. He vows to never eat again until peace is restored without violence. He is then visited by a distraught Hindu man who throws him bread and demands of Gandhi that he eat. **"Here, eat" says the man. "I am going to Hell for smashing in the head of a Muslim boy but I do not want your death on my soul as well."**

"Why did you do it?" asks Gandhi.

The man answered: "Because the Muslims killed our son."

Gandhi sees the man's unbearable guilt and remorse over killing the Muslim child and so gently tells him **"There is a way out of Hell.** Find a child whose mother and father have been killed- a little boy like yours- and raise him as your own...you

must make sure that he is a Muslim boy... and that you raise him as a MUSLIM!!”

Many are the stories of people trying to pay for their sins by good works...that is the answer all over the world!

II. How We Are Saved

A. TEXT SAYS You ARE Saved... or more accurately: YOU HAVE BEEN saved

1. This is an amazing assertion
2. Paul is writing to the Ephesian saints... believers... from a Gentile background... they were outsiders, lost, without hope and without God in the world; dead in their transgressions and sins... following BLACK MAGIC and the OCCULT; corrupting themselves in sexual immorality and gluttony in their idolatrous worship at the immense and world famous Temple of Artemis of the Ephesians...
3. They were on the highway to hell
4. But now, he asserts that they HAVE BEEN SAVED! It is in some fashion a DONE DEAL
5. Paul is not talking here about the full plan of salvation: justification, sanctification, glorification... more of a focus on justification and the things that happened INSTANTANOUSLY at the moment of conversion
 - a. Saved from death to life
 - b. Saved from wrath to peace

John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

A once for all act of God in saving us!!

He tells them what they already know: YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED! It is finished! You are most certainly not going to hell, and you are most certainly going to heaven!

Ok... but HOW did that happen?

B. Paul Mixes Positive and Negative... How we ARE Saved and How we are NOT Saved

1. The positive assertions
2. The negative denials
3. Both are essential to full understanding of this gospel of our salvation

A quick summary of the positive assertions of how we are saved from sin, from Satan, from death, and from hell:

By God... by Christ... by grace... through faith... as a gift of God... by the workmanship of God... by the creation of God

NOT: "of yourselves" ... not "by works" ... not resulting in your BOASTING in yourself

C. By God

1. God the Father is the initiator in your salvation...
2. It is by the power and initiative of the God of the universe that we have been saved
3. This is his work from beginning to end; he is responsible and will get all the glory
4. This is especially clear as we've seen in verse. 4
 - a. YOU WERE DEAD in SIN...
 - b. Verse 4 says it all: BUT GOD, BEING RICH IN MERCY, BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE MADE US ALIVE!!!"

- c. BUT GOD!! It was God the Father who stepped in, as we said a few weeks ago
- d. You owe your salvation to the initiative of God, Almighty God, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe

D. By Christ

1. God the Father did this saving work IN CHRIST

Ephesians 2:5-7 God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

2. There is NO SALVATION for any sinner apart from the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and at the empty tomb... no salvation apart from Christ the mediator, at the right hand of God; no salvation apart from Christ sending his Spirit to transform you

E. By Grace

1. The clear assertion of BOTH verse 5 and verse 8

“By grace are you saved...”

2. Simple definition: **Grace is UNMERITED FAVOR...** so, it’s favor from God that we DON’T DESERVE... haven’t earned...
3. But given how RICH are the blessings and how DEEP was our enmity and warfare and sin against a holy God, “unmerited favor” is but a pale reflection of this saving grace of God
4. “Unmerited favor” = giving a \$20 bill to a total stranger at a mall
5. But we have been given “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms”—eternity in heaven, all our sins forgiven, the gift of adoption, the atoning work of Christ... infinite blessings... when we are STILL SINNERS... hateful, rebellious, godless, defiant, idolatrous, thankless, deeply defiled and seething with murderous resentment

6. BY GRACE ARE YOU SAVED!!!

7. Paul never got tired of saying this and neither should any of us:

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am

8. I didn't deserve God's love and mercy and forgiveness and adoption and the rewards of resurrection and eternal life in heaven; I DESERVED HELL

9. By grace are you saved

F. Through Faith

1. Let's be very clear about this... we are not saved BY FAITH but THROUGH FAITH...

2. Faith has no merit whatsoever... faith doesn't earn us anything

3. Faith is the eyesight of the soul: like healthy eyes that are opened receive whatever available light there is, so also faith receives whatever God's grace gives

4. What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1 "Assurance of things hoped for; conviction of things not seen."

a. The faculty of the soul by which we SEE INVISIBLE SPIRITUAL REALITIES and know that they are real

b. We KNOW that God is holy; we KNOW that Christ is the Son of God; we KNOW that Christ died for sins; we KNOW that he rose from the dead

c. We know that WE are sinners; we know that we deserve condemnation

d. MORE than that: we feast on these things for ourselves: we know that we ARE FORGIVEN, adopted, beloved, going to heaven when we die

5. Faith is the conduit—**PIPELINE**—by which these beautiful things flood into our minds and hearts... faith is that ability of the soul to

TAKE HOLD OF these things for yourself, to appropriate them to yourself

6. Faith is NOT A WORK... it has NO MERIT at all

G. As a Gift of God

1. Specifically, "it is a GIFT OF GOD"

2. Commentators are divided on what Paul is calling a gift of God... is it specifically faith, or is it the whole work of salvation?

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works

3. The Greek grammar doesn't help us at all... it could go either way

4. In one sense, it doesn't matter... frankly, when we say that ALL SALVATION is by grace through faith, we've already said ALL SALVATION is a gift of unmerited favor

5. But I believe it is specifically helpful to link this to faith... faith is not OF YOURSELF, it is A GIFT OF GOD

a. Just like EYESIGHT is a gift of God... and the man born blind had his sight restored as a MIRACLE by Christ

b. Faith comes by the gospel of Christ

Romans 10:17 faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

6. Also, since God gives faith to begin with, God also sustains faith all the way through

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

H. By the Workmanship of God

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship

1. This is a direct contrast from salvation by works
2. Our salvation IS by works... but not by OUR works
3. God works on us, shaping our souls, crafting us, making us ready for salvation

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him

God does a powerful work of grace on the soul of every person who comes to Christ

Picture the most exquisite craftsman you've ever seen:

- A crystal artisan, who skillfully makes delicate crystal goblets with perfect skill
- A potter who shapes a vase on the wheel
- A painter who knows how to mix the perfect pigment, and how to dab the brush strokes just right to create a masterpiece
- A sculptor, who taps the chisel with the hammer to turn a piece of marble into a representation of a human arm, with marble tendons, marble veins, marble muscles, in a perfect position so it looks alive
- GOD IS A CRAFTSMAN OF THE HUMAN SOUL... fitting it for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

I. By the Creation of God

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works

1. The direct work of God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in saving a human soul is awesome
2. God makes us a NEW CREATION by His sovereign power

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

So... how are we saved? By the grace of God, through the direct activity of God, through simple faith in Christ

III. How We Are Not Saved

A. Not “of yourself”

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

1. Just as you didn't create yourself when you were born, so you didn't create yourself when you were born again
2. Your salvation did not ORIGINATE with you
3. You are not the Alpha or the Omega of your own salvation
4. Specifically when it comes to faith, you were BLIND to spiritual things... you didn't suddenly say to your blind soul, “SEE!!” “HAVE SIGHT!”
5. Your faith did not originate with you, it did not respond to some act of the will on your part
6. Now... when it comes to a testimony, someone might tell a story of how they were lost, and had heard of a preacher of the gospel, and they chose to get up along with others and go to where this man was preaching

October 23, 1740, Nathan Cole, a farmer in Connecticut, heard that George Whitefield was preaching twelve miles away:

I was in my field at Work. I dropped my tool that I had in my hand and ran home and ran through my house and told my wife to get ready quick to go and hear Mr. Whitefield preach at Middletown, and then I ran to my pasture for my horse with all my might fearing that I should be too late to hear him. I brought my horse home and soon mounted and took my wife up and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear,

and when my horse began to be out of breath, I would get down and put my wife on the Saddle and bid her ride as fast as she could and not Stop or Slack for me unless I told her to, and so I would run until I was much out of breath, and then mount my horse again, and so I did several times to help my horse not be exhausted; we improved every moment to get along as if we were fleeing for our lives, all the while fearing we should be too late to hear the Sermon, for we had twelve miles to ride double in little more than an hour...

When we arrived, we were just in time for the sermon... when I listened to Whitefield preach, I felt my foundation of self-righteousness was broken up and I received a "heart-wound" and saw my need for immediate salvation in Christ."

OK... where did that urgency come from? It was not FROM HIMSELF, it was a gift of God!!

B. Not by Works

1. At the beginning of the sermon, I unfolded how many works-religions there are in the world
2. It is the most common religion in the world... the most common way that guilty sinners think to be free from their guilt
3. The economy of that is simple... I do a bad thing, I now need to do a good thing to pay for it
4. But this verse makes it plain that, if you could be saved by your own efforts, your own works, you would have reason for BOASTING
5. Works is always the reason why sinners feel confident, ready to boast

Luke 18:11-12 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

The Pharisees were tremendously hard workers... not at all mere talkers:

They were meticulous observers of the Laws of Moses; they measured out their spices and gave a tenth of them to God; they were zealous in making converts to their intense religion, travelling over land and sea to win a single convert; but they HATED the gospel of Christ, of their own depravity and the need for repentance and forgiveness, and the gift of righteousness through Christ

Romans 3:10-12 "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Lloyd-Jones: "The gospel makes paupers of us all; it strips us naked. There is no difference. That is why it is much harder, humanly speaking, to convert a good person than a bad one."

It's hard to learn not only that your good works aren't enough to pay for your bad... or that your good works can never be used to pay for your sins... but that you HAVE NO GOOD WORKS AT ALL before you come to faith in Christ

Romans 14:23 ... everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags

C. False Understanding of the Christian Life

The most common false understanding of Christianity: it's about our good living, our good deeds, our religious observances, our attendance at services, our religious achievements

Some have even tried to harmonize bible verses like James 2 that says without works, faith is dead

But (as we'll see next week), we are not saved BY good works, but we are saved INTO good works, which God has ordained ahead of

time... but those good works do not pay for a single sin... they never have and never will... they come AFTER justification by faith

The Judaizers completely messed up the gospel

1. They mixed in works of the Law with justification, making it no gospel at all
2. Our works can never be used to pay for our sins
3. Why? Because there is not a single good work we could ever do that isn't a matter of simple obedience to what God has commanded... there is no EXTRA CREDIT... doing MORE than God wants at any given moment

IV. Why We Are Saved

A. To Boast in God and Christ, Not in Ourselves

Romans 4:2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God.

Ephesians 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

1 Corinthians 1:31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

To BOAST in the Lord for our salvation is to give him all the praise and glory and honor for what He's done

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."

Revelation 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

B. To Do a Lifetime of Good Works

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Next week!! (God willing)

V. Applications

A. Come to Christ!

1. This is the clearest gospel passage you can ever find in the Bible
2. Here you are told how a sinner is made right with a holy God
3. Here you are told what you must do... having heard the grace of God in Christ, you are to believe in him... NOT BY WORKS but by faith
4. Ponder the word "saved"... understand there is a terrible Judgment Day coming in which the wrath of God for sins will be fully punished eternally in hell
5. FLEE THE WRATH TO COME!!
6. Do not cling to your works... do not trust in them... good works can never pay for sins
7. See yourself truly in light of the Law of God as a sinner... someone who has violated God's perfect standards... you have not loved God with all your heart; you have not loved your neighbor as yourself
8. Apart from Christ the Savior you will most certainly be lost
9. All over the world, people are trusting in their own good works... do not fall into that trap
10. Receive the grace of God in Christ as a free gift!

Christians:

B. Be Instructed Again on the Gospel of God's Grace

1. Accept Paul's teaching here... he was teaching the Ephesian Christians how they were saved; now today, by the Holy Spirit, he is teaching you how you were saved
2. This should produce some deep attitudes in you
 - a. THANKFULNESS: you should just yearn to fall on your face before God and pour out thanksgiving to God for saving you
 - b. HUMILITY: this doctrine of salvation by sovereign grace is deeply humbling... before we were Christians, as we presented our wares to God, our works, our achievements, it is deeply humbling to realize all of them are defiled apart from Christ... to know that we were saved not BECAUSE of our works but IN SPITE OF our works is deeply humbling; the fact that even our faith is not "of ourselves" is deeply humbling; the fact that we can't keep ourselves believing in Christ for a single instant, but MUST HAVE him interceding for us is deeply humbling
 - c. WORSHIP: this is the boasting in the Lord all of you should do... you should sing praise songs to him; celebrate daily this gift of grace
 - d. SECURITY: we didn't make ourselves become Christians to begin with, and we can't keep ourselves as Christians... God gave us our faith, Jesus is at the right hand of God praying that your faith won't fail... and it WON'T!!

C. This Should Make Us Forgiving to Others

1. Since we are saved by unmerited favor, by God's eagerness to forgive our sins and cover our transgressions, shouldn't we be eager to forgive those who sin against us
2. Like the parable of the unmerciful servant:

Matthew 18:32-35 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

D. Evangelism/Missions

1. This passage instructs us on God's powerful working in evangelism... the conversion of a single soul is an act of supernatural power by the same God who created the universe... there is nothing an evangelist or missionary can do to create a Christian... our job is to proclaim the gospel clearly in the power of the Holy Spirit
2. This should give us great confidence in evangelism... God can transform any person any time
3. So we can pray for the most hardened sinners we know and do so with boldness knowing that the sovereign grace of God can convert anyone