

Ephesians 2-8-10 Salvation 101

Prayer for illumination: please join me in prayer...

Introduction:

1.8 billion Muslims believe that they will be saved if they rigorously obey the five pillars of Islam, which involves praying five times a day, giving to charity, fasting during Ramadan, making a pilgrimage to Mecca, making a Muslim profession of faith.

1.2 billion Hindus believe that they will be saved when their soul is released from the cycle of reincarnation, becoming one with the Brahman. How is this achieved? By working really hard to earn enough good karma.

506 million Buddhists believe that they will be saved (which is called nirvana or enlightenment) when they understand the four noble truths and carefully follows the eight-fold path.

17 million Jews believe that they will be saved when they rigorously adhere to the laws of the OT.

What do all these religions have in common??? Hard work!!! You can only experience their version of salvation if you work really hard!!! If you don't work really hard you are in deep trouble.

Christianity is unlike any other world religion in this regard. The Bible teaches that one is not saved through their works, rather one is saved by grace through the hard work of another.

This brings us to one of the most beloved passages in the whole Bible.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

This passage is a stupendous summary of the Christian faith. In one sense, it is Christianity 101, for these verses explain the heart and soul of the Christian message. What do they specifically teach?

We are saved by grace, through faith, for good works!

We are going to spend our time this morning looking at each phrase of this sentence...

First, we are saved by grace

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

What is grace?

Many people define grace as God's unmerited favor, or God's riches at Christ's expense. These definitions are somewhat helpful, but they are not the whole truth. What do I mean? These definitions don't do justice to the context of Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:1-10 remind us that God gives his favor freely, not to righteous people, but to law breakers who deserved his judgment. We must never forget who we were, when God lavished us freely with blessings.

A better definition of Grace is God's favor freely given to those who deserve judgment.

The word "freely" is the key word. God freely gives blessings to his enemies.

Illustration: imagine for a moment that I had a lake cabin at Priest lake... recently one of my sermons offended you.... so you drove up to Priest lake, found my cabin, and burned it to the ground...

What is grace?

What does grace do? It saves!

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Did you notice the tense of salvation in verse 8? Paul says that we have been saved. This is something that has already happened. When Jesus died on the cross in your place and cried out "it is finished" you were saved.

Sometimes Paul speaks of salvation in the past, sometimes in the present, and sometimes in the future.

We have been saved. (Eph. 2:8).

We are being saved through the process of sanctification. (1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15)

We will be saved on the day of final judgment. (Rom. 5:9-10).

Salvation is an already not yet reality. We have been saved and we will be saved.

But saved from what?

God has saved us from all the things mentioned in Ephesians 2:1-3.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV) — 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

God has saved us from enslavement to the world, the flesh, and the devil. More importantly Jesus has spared us from God's wrath.

All of this comes to you, Christian, freely...

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved...

Application:

Salvation is all of grace...

Salvation is something that God freely give us.

Salvation can't be earned, not matter how hard one works.

This distinguishes Christianity from every other world religion. It is a gift, gifts by definition can't be earned. This explains why we don't pay our friends when they give us b-day gifts.

Salvation is by grace, but how do we receive it? This brings us to the next phrase....

First, we are saved by grace

Second, we are saved through faith

This raises several important questions....

What is faith?

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Our culture has many misconceptions about faith.

Faith is a feeling...

Faith is optimism...

Faith is believing without evidence...

Faith is mere intellectual assent to a body of facts.

None of these perspectives captures biblical faith.

True faith involves knowledge, agreement, and most importantly trust.

Illustration:

Repelling at church camp...

They explained the facts to us...

I watched several people go before me....

I believed that I would be safe...

But this still was not saving faith...

Did I really trust the rope, the harness, and the person belaying me 200 feet below me??? would I really walk backwards over the ledge?

This was not a blind leap of faith...

This was not faith without evidence...

This was personal trust in the evidence...

This is the only faith that saves....

Application:

Is this the type of faith that you possess? When was the last time you stepped out in faith trusting God with your life?

What is faith?

How does faith save? Faith is the instrumental cause of salvation!

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Notice that Paul does not say that we are saved by faith. Oh no, we are not saved by faith, we are saved through faith. Faith does not save, Jesus saves, faith is merely the instrument that God uses to bring the benefits of Jesus Christ to us.

Illustration:

The medicine and the spoon

When you see a great sculpture, you don't say, "Wow, what a chisel!!!" When you see a great painting you don't say, "wow what an amazing paint brush!" When you see a beautiful house you don't say, "wow, what a hammer!"

Application:

Faith is important, we must have saving faith, but we are not saved by faith. We are saved through faith...

Why does this matter?

We agree that we are not saved by our works, but then many of us think that we are saved by the strength of our faith, which becomes a work.

If we are saved by faith, we could boast in our faith.

We don't offer God our faith and then wait for him to combine our faith with his grace to save us... we are saved solely through faith, which is his gift to us.

What is faith?

How does faith save?

Where does faith come from? God!

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

In order to understand this verse, I need to talk grammar for a moment...

"Greek pronouns agree in gender with the nouns to which they refer; however, the pronoun 'this' in 'this not from yourselves' is neuter, while the nouns 'faith' and 'grace' are both feminine in gender. The best explanation for the neuter gender of 'this' is that 'this' refers not to just one preceding noun (faith or grace), but to the whole concept of salvation (including both the faith and the gift of the grace of God upon which salvation is predicated)." (Chapell, 87)

The point is simply this, grace and faith are gifts from God, which necessarily implies that faith is a gift from God.

Application:

But doesn't this make sense in light of Ephesians 2:1-3? They we learned that we were dead in our transgressions and sins. A dead person can't believe, since they are dead. God must regenerate our hearts and give us the gift of faith, which we must exercise.

We see the same thing in Phil. 1:29 and Acts 18:27.

If you believe the gospel, it is because God gave you the gift of faith!!!

*What is faith?
How does faith save?
Where does faith come from?*

How does faith relate to works? They are opposites!

Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Paul could have easily stopped at the end of verse 8... “And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.... But he did not stop there. He wrote, “not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Why did he keep writing? Because he knows that we are tempted to combine faith and works, which leads to boasting.

Paul wants us to remember that we are not saved through faith plus...

Going to church...
Plus reading our Bibles...
Plus giving our money away...
Plus prayer...
Plus avoiding bad movies, language, and bad habits...

We are saved through faith, plus nothing!!!

Most of us know this, but deep down inside we resist it. We think I know I'm saved through faith, but doing some good things is not going to hurt my chances of getting into heaven, right? I just want a little insurance....

When we smuggle in works, even a little bit of works, it can be disastrous.

Illustration:

Australia has recently experienced some of their worst forest fires on record. Many people have died, thousands of homes have been destroyed, and millions of acres have burned.

The severity of these fires is the result of extreme heat, prolonged drought, and strong winds.

But what was the cause of these fires?

Often massive forest fires are caused by one spark. One spark from a campfire, one spark from a chain being pulled by a truck, one spark from a cigarette but. One spark is often all that it takes to destroy millions of acres.

Those who think that they are saved mostly by faith, with a little bit of works, are in deep trouble. They are messing with fire and they will get burned.

Ultimately, if you think you works, even a few small works, have anything to do with your salvation, ultimately you have something to boast in.

Functionally you are saying, that what Jesus did in his life, death, and resurrection was not enough to get the job done. You need to help him...

Application:

Why is this so hard for us to remember?

Because we have to work for everything else in life...

When we work hard, we get good grades.

When we work hard, we make more money.

When we work hard, we get better at sports.

When we work hard, we can lose the weight.

When we work hard, we might get that promotion...

Naturally, we think when we work hard, God will save us!!!

Ephesians 2:8-9 destroys this mentality.

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone, plus nothing...

If we are saved by grace through faith, why do anything??? Why not just sit back or keep on sinning... God forgives right? This brings us to the last phrase...

We are saved by grace

We are saved through faith

Third, we are saved for works

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) — 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Let's look at this verse phrase by phrase...

"For we are his workmanship,"

The Greek word for workmanship is the word *poiema*. Some want to translate this as poem. We are God's poem... but this is not broad enough. The same word was used to describe all kinds of art. Therefore, it is best to translate this as God's work of art or God's masterpiece.

This is amazing! In one sense of all creation radiates the glory of God (mountains, oceans, lakes, beaches, trees, and sunsets), but only Christians are called God's work of art or God's masterpiece.

When people look at the famous statue of David in Florence, they don't say, "Wow David was amazing, they say, wow, Michelangelo was an amazing artist." In a similar sense...

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,"

The Christian is the subject of two creations, created at birth and then recreated by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, this is what makes the Christian a masterpiece.

What is the point? We were recreated by Jesus Christ for a very specific purpose. We were recreated for good works. God saved us for good works. Why? All that God does he does for his glory. He saved us to display his glory to a lost and dying world through our good works.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) — 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

These last two phrases are amazing. Before we were born, in the decrees of God, God chose to save us (Ephesians 1:3-6) and then God prepared good works for us to walk in.

This means that in eternity past, God specifically prepared good works for you to walk in this week.

What might those be?

An act of generosity?

A kind word?

An act of service?

An act of mercy?

A prayer for a friend?

Excellence on a report for the office?

Forgiving a friend?

Making a siblings bed?

Etc???

Our culture needs to see good works... the good

Illustration:

Luther's voluminous output??? How do we explain why he worked so hard???

In the last 23 years of his life; Luther married, fathered six children, intervened in a massive peasant's war, translated the OT, preached a couple of thousand sermons, created a whole new approach to Christian worship, wrote catechisms, settled political squabbles, wrote scores of influential treatises, counseled hundreds of pastors, trained hundreds of pastors, taught at the university, and oversaw a fledgling denomination. Plus, he composed hundreds of hymns, we still sing today. And this just scratches the surface...

Worship services and texts for one week

- a. Sunday, 5am – Pauline epistles.
- b. Sunday, 9am- The gospels
- c. Sunday afternoon- the Catechism
- d. Monday and Tuesday- the Catechism
- e. Wednesday- the gospel of Mathew
- f. Thursday and Friday- the epistles
- g. Saturday- the gospel of John

Why did Luther work so hard??? Not because he was trying to earn salvation. He worked hard because he knew that God loved him. He knew that he was saved by grace through faith alone. As a result, he loved God and he demonstrated his love for God through his works.

Application:

“No one more wholeheartedly than Paul repudiated good works as a ground of salvation; no one more strongly insisted on good works as a fruit of salvation.” (FF Bruce)

Good works are never the grounds of our salvation, Good works are merely the evidence that our faith is real/saving faith.

Conclusion:

We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, for good works....

“Imagine that an airplane flies over the South Atlantic and crashes a thousand miles from any coast. In the plane there are three individuals: a great Olympic swimmer, an average swimmer, and someone who cannot swim at all. The Olympic star calls out, “Follow me — I’ll get you out of this!” and takes off with an impressive crawl, heading for the tip of South America a thousand miles away. The other two jump after him. In about thirty seconds the non-swimmer goes down to Davy Jones’ Locker. It takes about thirty minutes for the average swimmer to be deep-sixed. But the champion swimmer churns away for twenty-five hours, covering an impressive fifty miles. Terrific! Only 475 more hours to go! He’ll be there in nineteen days if he doesn’t slow down.

The truth is, despite our popular folk religion, our paddling will never do, no matter how “good” we are. The distance is too far, and we are too flawed. We can try, but all our works will be no more beneficial than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. The Bible says, “not by works,” and that is the truth.” (K. Hughes)

We can’t save ourselves...

No matter how many good things we do, we can never do enough.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV) — 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Lets pray...