

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Sin and salvation occupy prominent places on the pages of God's Word. The Old Testament contains the story of sin as it began in Eden and spread throughout the earth. The New Testament contains the story of the coming of the Saviour to bring salvation to sinners.

Religious teachers advance different ideas as to how people are saved. Three of them are proclaimed widely today. Some preach salvation by works alone, making man his own saviour and declaring that Christ's death on the cross was a useless sacrifice. Others teach salvation is by grace and works, making salvation dependent on the grace of God plus man's own efforts, thus giving man some credit for his salvation and rendering it impossible without his own works. Still others teach what the scriptures say, namely, that salvation is by grace and apart from any human merit or effort, making salvation dependent upon the Saviour rather than upon the sinner. Our text makes it perfectly clear that salvation is by grace without any mixture of human merit or works on the part of the one being saved.

God's Word declares that man is a sinner. He is a sinner by birth. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Man is a sinner by nature. In describing the condition of men before Christ saved them Paul said that they "were by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). Man is a sinner by choice and practise. The Bible says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20).

Inasmuch as all have been born in sin and have practised sin, all need salvation. Salvation has three phases -- that which delivers us from sin and its' consequences; that which restores us to the favor of God and communion with Him; and that which preserves us amidst all the dangers and temptations of our present state until we reach our heavenly home. Salvation means deliverance from the guilt, the penalty, the power, the love, the dominion, and eventually the presence of sin. This is the greatest need that human beings have.

Inherent in man is the idea that he must do something in order to be saved. He attempts to achieve salvation through his own merit and works, in spite of the fact that God's Word repeatedly states that it is an utter impossibility. Man can never do anything to merit or deserve salvation. He is wholly unable to save himself because he is depraved. Sin has affected his entire life -- warping his intelligence, tainting his affections, and perverting his will. Separated from God by his sinful nature and conduct, he is blinded to his condition, his need of God, and the destiny of his soul. Moreover, he is without power to break the shackles of Satan which bind him.

I. The Provision of Salvation.

Salvation did not originate in man, but in the great love and matchless grace of God. Salvation is by the grace of God, which is the theme of the Bible, is utterly foreign to every thought-aptitude of human nature. That God should provide a way

of salvation for sinful man, completely apart from any merit or effort of man, is not in the thought channels of the natural man.

Some one has said that it took him fifty years to learn three things: First, that he could not save himself; second, that Christ did not wish him to save himself; and, third, that Christ had already provided for his salvation if he would only believe it.

God not only planned our salvation in eternity, but He provided it in time. "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:5). Christ was God's supreme love-gift to sinners. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

As an expression of His love for every one of us God sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem and save. Christ came and died on Calvary's cross as a propitiation for our sins. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for our sins" (Romans 5:8). Christ did not die for His own sins, for He did not have any. "For he hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21). "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead in sins, should live unto righteousness" (I Peter 2:24). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10).

"The love that Jesus had for me,
To suffer on the cruel tree,
That I a ransomed soul might be,
Is more than tongue can tell.

The bitter sorrow that He bore,
And, oh! the crown of thorns He wore,
That I might live forevermore,
Is more than tongue can tell."

II. The Plan of Salvation.

1. It is by grace.

Of all the great words in the Christian vocabulary, grace is perhaps the least understood. We have heard grace defined as the unmerited favor of God, but it is much more than that. Standing for the righteousness, holiness, justice, mercy, love, and power of God, or for all that God is, grace represents God's abiding love and abounding power flowing full and free to undeserving sinners who are in need of His great salvation. Grace is God loving man with a love that does not have any limitations, giving His Son to die on the cross to make an atonement for man's sins, and lifting man out of his sinfulness and hopelessness, and giving him eternal life and that glorious liberty which belongs to those who become the children of God.

However, not until we get to heaven shall we ever fully appreciate all that grace has done for us. Until then we can praise God for His marvelous grace.

"Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe;
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?

Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin."

Christianity is a religion of grace. The grace principle distinguishes it from all other religions systems in the world. Other religions make demands: Christianity offers a gift. Other religions insist on doing: Christianity speaks of receiving. Other religions outline the works that man must do: Christianity reveals a work which God has done. Basically, there are just two religions:

One of works; the other of faith.
One is human; the other is divine.
One comes out of the muddy stream of humanity; the other comes down out of the heart of God.
One says man must do: the other says God has done.
One calls on man to do his best; the other proclaims God has done His best.
One is the religion of the natural man; the other is the salvation of God.
One sings: "Something in my hands I bring"; the other sings: "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

According to the scriptures, there is no salvation apart from God's grace. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace" (II Timothy 1:9). "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). Salvation cannot be purchased by any acts of service because it is "not of works".

1. It is through faith.

On the cross Christ did that which we desperately needed to have done for us, which we could never have done for ourselves, and which will never need to be done again. On the ground of that perfectly wrought atonement, through the substitutionary death of Christ, God now offers salvation to all who place their faith in Christ as Saviour.

This great salvation which has been provided by the grace of God is offered to men as a gift upon their acceptance of Christ as Saviour. It becomes ours when we believe on Christ. Our obtaining salvation does not depend upon our unworthiness or our

worthiness, but upon our absolute trust in Christ.

Faith is simply the instrument or hand that takes the gift which God presents us. It is the connection or channel through which the divine supply travels to the human need. Men receive salvation directly and immediately upon their exercise of faith in Christ. John 1:12 says: "As many as recieved him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." In this experience of salvation God's part is "by grace" and man's part is "through faith." Some say that salvation is by grace, through faith, plus baptism, or plus joining the church, or plus something else. God's Word teaches that salvation is by grace through faith plus nothing. The Bible says: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

"Naught have I gotten but what I received;
Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed;
Boasting exaluded, pride I abase;
I'm only a sinner saved by grace."

Many people are trying to earn salvation by their works, even though God says that it cannot be done. No one will ever be able to present his efforts to the Lord and receive eternal life in exchange. Salvation is "not of yourselves". You will never find a person who believes in salvation by works who will tell you that he is saved. He never knows whether or not he has done enough works, but he is hoping to do enough before he dies. On the other hand, you will meet many people whom the Lord has saved, by grace through faith, who are happy to tell you that they know that Christ has saved them. They are grateful to Him for having done so, and, out of love for and appreciation to Him, they are working faithfully for Him.

You, like all others, must receive salvation as a gift from the Lord or live and die without it. Eternal life can never be yours except as a gift. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

III. The Purpose Of Salvation.

Salvation is not the work of self, the work of other men, or the work of a church, but it is the work of God. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

God has done something for us, and in us, in order that He may do something through us. God has not created us in Christ Jesus in order that we may talk about our good works, but in order that we may "walk in them." Men are saved in order that they may do good works. They are to perform good works because they have been saved. Good works are not the very end and purpose of our salvation. They are not the root or the cause of our salvation, but they are the fruit and result of it. Just as we plant trees in order that they may produce fruit, so our Lord expects all of us whom He saves to perform good works for Him. Good works are the dividends or fruits which God gets from the salvation which He has given us. Are you, as a child of God, habitually working at your God-ordained business as you should? If not, won't you get busy at it immediately?