

By Grace you are saved

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[0 : 00] With the Lord's help we pray, let us again turn and consider the words we have in this portion of Scripture which we have read. The letter of Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 2.

We may again read verses 8 to 10. Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 8.

To 10. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own duty. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

One or two thoughts as the Lord enables us on these words. Now the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Church of Christ in Ephesus, a large and significant city in Asia Minor, in present-day Turkey.

[1 : 26] Ephesus, in the minds of many people of that time, was mostly famous for being the location of the temple of Diana, or Artemis.

Diana of the Ephesians. That temple said to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was truly magnificent as a building.

But the activities within were not in any way magnificent. It was total idolatry and carnality to the extreme.

Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul, in God's good time, came to Ephesus, and he preached the Gospel there.

We have an account in Acts chapter 18 of some of the wonderful things that happened in Ephesus during Paul's ministry there.

[2 : 40] For example, I read a couple of verses from Acts 18, verses 19 and 20. It says, They came to Ephesus, they left them there, but he himself went on to the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

And then he goes on to talk about the effect that his reasoning and his preaching had upon the people. And it says that those who had been involved in aspects of black magic and probably witchcraft, they burned all their books in a large heap, showing that they refuted that kind of lifestyle which they had practiced up until then.

And the Gospel was so powerfully influential in their life that they were changed from darkness and the life of darkness into following the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many were converted during these particular times when Paul was preaching there. Now, ten years have elapsed.

And the time of the writing of this letter to the Ephesians is ten years after the Gospel first came.

And Paul, by this time, is in prison in Rome.

[4 : 10] But his heart and his thoughts are upon the Church of Christ in Ephesus. And he addresses them warmly at the beginning of this particular letter.

And he calls them saints who are in Ephesus. And the faithful in Christ Jesus. He knows what the word saints really means.

A person who is a saint. It's a person who has been consecrated to God in mind and heart and life. A person who has consecrated himself or herself to the service of the Lord through the work of the Holy Spirit within them.

They are saints. The Holy Spirit dwells within them. And they are being progressively sanctified. And will at last be glorified. So he calls them saints.

He also calls them the faithful in Christ Jesus. What a wonderful title he gives them. Faithful meaning those who are believers in Christ.

[5 : 20] Those who are trusting their whole salvation to Christ alone. Those who have cast themselves upon him as their only hope for time in the face of eternity.

They are believers. They are believers or the faithful in Christ Jesus. And he prays that the grace and peace of God, Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with them.

Now in chapter 2, he gives an example of the way God's grace has dealt with these people.

And he dwells particularly on the regeneration of those in Ephesus who are saints and faithful. You see, it's as if he is saying to them, even at verse 11 of chapter 2, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the church called the unsurcumcision.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. It's as if he is encouraging them who are now saints and believers to remember where they've come from.

[6 : 39] Remember what you were like before the grace of God came. Something like you have in Isaiah 51 when the Lord says, Listen to me, those who love righteousness.

Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Remember your small beginnings. Remember that you were nothing before Christ came by his mighty saving power.

Remember what you were. And if you remember where you were, you will remember the one who has brought you from where you were to where you are.

And you'll rejoice with thankfulness and with greater dedication to him in your life from day to day.

Well, I'd like to say a few words under three headings, covering particularly verses 8 to 10 in chapter 2.

First of all, I'd like to say a few words on this wonderful blessing that they now enjoy. It says, By grace you have been saved.

[7 : 52] What an amazing word that is. Salvation has come to them. That's an amazing blessing that they are presently enjoying. Secondly, having spoken for a minute or two about the salvation, how did this salvation come to them?

How did they come to be in this wonderfully blessed situation that they are saved people? How did that come? Well, it says here, By grace you have been saved through faith, and not of your own doing.

It's the gift of God, not of works, that anyone should boast. We have his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

He puts the whole focus upon the Lord himself, as the one who has brought this marvellous situation about. In their experience, they are saved, but God alone has done it.

And I'd like to say a few words on that heading. And thirdly and finally, what have they been saved for? You see, towards the end of that section, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[9 : 23] He is highlighting the responsibility that goes along with the privilege.

The responsibility is that they walk in God's ways and do the works of God. Those who have had the privilege of blessing, the blessings of eternal life.

And I'd like to say a few words on that towards the end. Firstly then, this wonderful blessing that they now are in possession of.

He says, By grace you have been saved. Now the word saved, it means to deliver, to protect, to heal, to make whole, to be safe.

And when he talks here about being made safe or saved, what are they saved from? Every time you think of somebody being saved, ordinarily, you know, day-to-day experiences, you think, well, that person has been saved from drowning, or from death in an accident, or something of that nature.

[10 : 43] Now, in the spiritual sphere, which is what the apostle here is talking about, he's talking about a spiritual salvation, a spiritual saving.

What have they been saved from? Well, there are three things in the context. If you look at the beginning of chapter 2, you were dead, you were dead in trespasses, and in sins.

They were saved from spiritual death. They were dead in trespasses, and in sins. That was the way they were, and they couldn't lift one finger to change that status of spiritual death in which they found themselves.

And if they went all the way through their life in that state of spiritual death, they would have ended in a lost eternity.

But the apostle says, you were saved from spiritual death. Secondly, you were saved from slavery.

[12 : 03] See what it says in chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, in which he says, 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, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying earth the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature the children of God even together.

They were slaves to carnality, slaves to workliness, slaves to a sinful lifestyle. It's as if the world had them by the nose and through them.

This way and that way that the flesh directed their affections and their desires and their lifestyle in such a way that they lived for the flesh and not for God and they were enslaved to sin and they needed to be saved from that awful tyranny as we all need to be saved from it.

They were saved from it. And the third thing that they were saved from, as far as I can see, chapter 2, verse 3 is, they were saved from wrath.

They were children of wrath like the rest of mankind. Whose wrath? The wrath of God. The wrath of God dwells or rests upon those who are unbelievers, who are the slaves of sin and worldliness, who are dead in trespasses and sin, who are unresponsive to the gospel, who don't believe, nor receive Christ as their Saviour.

[13 : 49] The wrath of God dwells upon them. There is no darker picture possible in this world than to be in that condition in which these people had been before grace came.

No one of them had power to alleviate the situation, to break out of that awful, dead darkness. And that is what they would have been consigned to eternally had the Lord not intervened in their life.

That's exactly a picture of myself and yourself. That is the way we are by nature. We are dead in trespasses and in sins.

We have been born carrying carrying the guilt of Adam's first sin. Even at the point of our conception, the guilt of Adam's first sin attaches to us so that when we come into the world, we need to be cleansed from the guilt of Adam's first sin, original sin, and from then on every actual sin that we commit, whether in thought, word, or action.

And the sins increase as the years go on. But he is going to highlight to them the way the Lord in his marvellous grace has intervened in their life.

[15 : 33] You see, the people in Ephesus, they were far away from the centre of things, so far as the scripture had been concerned. They didn't have any association with the covenants of promise like the Jews had.

They didn't have any access to the scriptures of the Old Testament like the Jews had down through the centuries. They were really rooted deeply in idolatry of various kinds.

But the gospel came to Ephesus even in the proximity of the temple of Diana before whom so many bowed the knee, but the power of the gospel identified itself in the heart of the elect in Ephesus and they were saved from the power of sin, saved from the wrath to come.

But secondly, how did this wonderful blessing come? Well, we see that in verse 9 he says, this salvation has come to you not by works, not by your own works.

You see, the Jews particularly were famous for trying to work their own way into the favour of God, trying to keep various commandments and adding to the Ten Commandments many, many other laws that they so faithfully tried to keep in order to get the favour of God and at last they received into heaven.

[17 : 12] But you see what the apostle says right into Galatians chapter 2, by the works of the law no one will be justified, no one can break out of this prison house of sin by his own efforts.

There has to come one from without and come in to order the blessing upon us. And that's what we have here. Not by our own works, lest any man should boast.

It's amazing the way you remember the account we have in the Gospel of Luke of the Pharisee and the publican going up to the temple to pray. And the Pharisee, confident in his own righteousness, starts to boast in the presence of the publican and before God that he is thankful he is not like the other men are.

He does this and he does that and he does the other thing. And he looks contemptuously at the little man over there shaking in his boots. That publican, oh but the publican, he had the mind of God and the ear of God.

And he said, God be merciful to me, the sinner. And Jesus said, he went down to his house justified rather than the other. He wasn't justified on the basis of his works.

[18 : 34] He was justified because he received the grace of God in his heart. You see, it is not by works it says, but by grace.

Isn't it amazing the word grace so often appears on the pages of Scripture. grace. What does the word grace mean?

Well, I suppose we all have some idea of what it means. It means the gratuitous favor of God. It means the loving kindness of God bestowed upon those who are completely undeserving and unworthy.

we are undeserving of the least of God's mercies. But he, in his grace and in his love, has come into the heart and life of his people in such a way that he has changed their very nature, changed their circumstances, and he has changed the status that they have in the presence of God.

They were once enemies, but now they are friends. Isn't it amazing? When you read in Romans chapter 5, verses 6 to 10, you find an account there of what we were like, but what God has done.

[20 : 07] It says in verse 6, while we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. We had no strength to serve him, no strength to worship him, no real inclination to seek him, while we were unconverted.

We had no strength at all to desire him, but then when we were without strength he died for those who were ungodly.

While we were sinners, Christ died for us. And then it says while we were enemies, God reconciled us by the death of his son.

What an amazing act of God that is, to show grace to those who are undecided, to show mercy to those who have repeatedly refused to bow the knee, to bend the knee and to bow before God. He nevertheless, in his own time and in his own way, he comes into their experience, like he did with these Ephesians, and he reminds them, by grace you have been saved, and then it is through faith.

[21 : 33] Through faith, you see, God in his nation, had come into the experience of these people, and he had planted the grace of faith in their heart.

It wasn't a faith that they drummed up themselves, or somehow or other mustered in their own strength. No, it was something completely new.

It was heaven sent. it was part of God's gracious and marvelous dealing with them, in that he placed grace in their hearts.

And that grace of faith immediately started responding to God. It saw what the need of the soul was, and it saw the suitability of Christ as the saviour of sin.

And I think that's a pattern that's followed all the way through in the experience of the people of God. It is the Lord who gives us to realise our need of himself, our lostness, our sinful nature, and our need to be forgiven and cleansed.

[22 : 59] God's love and he turns our eyes of faith unto himself, and we behold in him the answer to all our need.

Like the woman who had the issue of blood, and you remember she had tried to get a cure from every doctor she knew over all of these years, but she wasn't bettered, she rather grew worse, and she heard of Christ, and she said in her heart, if I but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole.

It wasn't sort of a last ditch attempt to get a cure, it was the work of the Holy Spirit within her that focused her on Christ, the heavenly physician who was able to heal her, and once she made contact with her hand of faith, the problem was solved, and she was cleansed, and healed from her pain.

And then he goes on to say, by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, and then he goes on to say, you or we are his, workmanship.

It's another amazing statement. And his workmanship, the word his is emphatic, it's very, very strongly used in that particular sentence.

[24 : 44] His workmanship, it's as if you had nothing to do with this at all, the praise goes to him, his is the glory for all that he has done in my life, and in the work of my salvation.

We are his workmanship, we are his product. Somebody said we are his masterpiece. Somebody once had a painting commissioned of a famous lecturer in a university and the man himself is reputed to have said, well, people will not ask who is that man who's painted in this painting, but they rather ask who was the painter who painted this picture.

It's as if the focus in this verse is not on us but on him. He is the one who is the master workman. He is the one who does the work in our heart and in our life.

We are his workmanship. Created, it says, in Christ Jesus.

The word created in scripture at the very beginning in Genesis is an amazing word. It means creation out of nothing.

[26 : 25] Creation out of nothing. And that's what God did at the beginning. When he created the world, by the word of his power, he created all things out of nothing.

And that is also true spiritually. You see, when a person is converted, it is not just a kind of an improvement of the person's lifestyle, built on the old lifestyle, as it were.

It's nothing like that. It's actually a new creation. creation. I will take away their stony heart, he says, and I will give them a heart of flesh, upon which my own commands and laws are written.

He will take away the old heart. He will take away what has been dominating my life up until now. and he will replace it with something completely new.

A new beginning, a new creation, new desires, new affections, new longings, new hopes, a new direction in my life.

[27 : 44] New priorities, seeking the things of God rather than the things of the world, glory, seeking to glorify him and not seeking my own glory, seeking to live in a way that magnifies him, desiring to be fed with the word of God, desiring to know Christ more and more.

These are new appetites, these are spiritual appetites created at the point of new conversion when the new birth took place. and they become apparent as time goes on in the experience of people.

And this new creation is in Christ, in Christ himself. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus.

People who are effectually called are united to Christ, in that effectual calling. When God intervenes in his gracious saving power, there is a unity into Christ.

And the blessings of the covenant of grace then belong to us. Christ is the source of our new life.

[29 : 18] He is at the very heart of this new creation, this new appetite, this new lifestyle that we now live.

we live according to the leading and guiding of his Holy Spirit within us. So this is, in a few words, what he has described.

The whole experience of their being changed from being dead in festivities and sins, from being the slaves of sin, from being under the wrath of God.

Because of the grace of God and the kindness of God directed towards them individually, they have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

When you look back over your life, maybe it's not clear to you when exactly this happened. There are some people, I believe, who are able to say, well, it was on that particular day and that particular hour, on that particular year, I remember where I was when I was converted.

[30 : 39] Well, maybe they're able to do that. But I think for the most part people just don't know when this happened in their life. But as time goes on, these heavenly influences show themselves in their life, show themselves in their desire to pray, in their desire to know forgiveness, in their desire to feed upon the word of God and the Christ of the world, in their desire to live a holy life.

in their desire to associate with the family of God, just like Ruth said concerning Naomi, in treatment not to leave you, or to turn from following after you.

Your people are my people. Your God is my God. Where you abide, I will abide. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried.

you see the association with the people of God. And this is what's happened here when you read further on in this chapter. He's talking about the Jews and the Gentiles in verse 16, for example, that he might reconcile us both, that is, Jews and Gentiles, to God in one body through the cross. and he's talking about those who are far off, that is, the Gentiles, and those who are near, that is, the Jewish community, and they were both brought together through this marvellous work of the Holy Spirit in their individual lives.

[32 : 18] And that's still happening today. Young people associate with old people, with whom they would never associate if Christ wasn't in their life. And we see that this is what happened in the experience of the Ephesians.

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. That's the second thing. The third thing was this. What's the design behind all of that regarding our daily lives?

What responsibility follows this wonderful privilege for these people? They have been taken from our pit and from the mighty clay.

The Lord has set their feet upon the rock, establishing their way. What now are they going to do? Are they going to live just the way they wanted to live themselves?

Well, the Lord says here, we have been created in Christ Jesus for this purpose, verse 10, for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

[33 : 40] You know, good works are not the ground or the means of our salvation. It is not on the basis of our good works that we are saved, but good works are the consequences and the evidences of God's saving work in our lives.

And if we don't have good works, we ought to question whether God has actually come into our life in a saving way. You see, it says here that God has prepared works for us to do, that we should walk in it.

What works are these? Well, I believe it's works which he has commanded in his word. For example, in the prophecy of Micah, it says, he has showed you, oh man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

These are works that he has prepared or appointed for us to do. This is the real line, as it were, upon which our new life has to run.

We mustn't go off into sightings of the world. and to flesh, but live according to what the Lord requires of us. See, also in Romans, chapter 12, it's a famous section where he brings the practical aspects of his teaching to bear on those who are in Rome.

[35 : 42] And Romans, chapter 12, it says, I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, and what is good and acceptable and perfect.

don't be conformed to this world. This world won't encourage you in any good God-glorifying works. The new life must be a life unto holiness and good works.

God-glorifying God-glorifying God-glorifying God-glorifying God-glorifying God-glorifying God-glorifying God-glorifying good works that we may focus on for a moment.

First of all, what about repentance as a word? When Jesus started his teaching ministry, he used that word at the beginning of his sermon, repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.

[37 : 09] Repentance. It is so important. What does it mean? Repentance. Unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of a sin, an acknowledgement of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and the hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience.

You see, you cannot live a godly life apart from ongoing repentance.

Repentance for every day, repentance for all the circumstances of the day, turning away from every sin with grief and hatred.

That is a work that God has given us and commanded us to repent. The next work I believe is equally important, that is the work of faith.

Repent faith and believe the gospel. John the Baptist said, repent and believe the work of faith. What is the prime work of faith?

[38 : 37] The prime work of faith is receiving and resting upon Jesus Christ alone, as he is freely offered in the gospel. That is the prime work of faith.

receiving his promises with thankfulness and looking upon the threatenings of the word of God and trembling at the threatenings.

That is an aspect of the work of faith also. Not just believing in the promises, but trembling in face of the threatenings of the word of God. Knowing them to be true and asking the Lord to deliver you from them.

also, what about obedience? It's another work. When he calls us to obedience, he calls us to a particular course of action.

To go or to do. You see, when I say I was preaching, not many people listened.

[39 : 47] to what he was saying. In Isaiah chapter 6, you find when the Lord is calling him to go out with the gospel. And he says to preach to them because their ears are to be heavy and they're not going to listen.

Their hearts are not going to receive. Preach until the cities are empty with no inhabitants and so on. The people weren't listening. sin. And because of that, they were sent into the captivity. The Lord calls us to obedience, to obey his word, his commandment, to listen to what he says and ask for grace in order to comply with what the Lord is saying.

if the Lord has come into your heart and life savingly, he places a responsibility on you also. He says in relation to the Lord's supper, this do is remembrance of me. And that's a step of obedience, as well as being a step of faith, as well as being a step of love.

[41 : 07] You love the Lord, you want to be obedient to him, and you want to exercise faith upon him. He asks us to walk in these good works.

Satan will try and draw us away to other avenues whereby we are not going to be faithful. And he'll encourage us in every wily way to turn out of the path of obedience and the path of faith and the ways of repentance.

Ask for grace to keep walking the straight and narrow way. The epicitory of Egypt, written about 64 AD, is a mention of the church of Ephesus again in the book of Revelation.

And the mention that I'm going to highlight is from Revelation chapter 2, and at verse 4, Ephesus. And the Lord, who knows everything and who sees everything, mentions the church of Ephesus. And he says from verse 3, chapter 2, verse 3, I know you are enduring patiently, good, and bearing up for my name's sake.

[42 : 39] You have not grown weary, but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. She had abandoned the love she had had at first.

Whatever that meant for her, it certainly means that she wasn't as fervent in following the Lord and working for the Lord as she had been before.

Despite the fact that she was countering some of the very bad influences that came up round about her there in Ephesus, nevertheless he had this against her, that she had abandoned the love that she had at first.

And because of that he says, remember therefore, from where you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

It's a challenge, isn't it, for every single one of us. Are we as full of love to the Lord Jesus to man as we were when first we knew him?

[44 : 03] Well, maybe when first you knew the Lord, love was very much in your affection. love was but now maybe love has settled deeper into your thinking and into your general attitude.

And I'm sure an old couple who have been married for many, many years. They understand each other better and they love each other, maybe if not, more than certainly just as much as they did at the beginning.

But it takes a different shape. The love seems to have filtered through into their thinking and into their gender outlook and lifestyle, not just in their affections for each other.

The point I have is that we need to ask the Lord to keep us in love with himself, to keep us obedient to himself, to keep us faithful to himself, and to keep us constantly turning away from every known sin in our life, repenting of it day by day.

Because the Lord said, we are created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[45 : 45] It's as if he has laid before us the root of good works and remember always repent, always exercise faith, always be obedient, and always seek to love with all in heart.

Lest your love becomes cold and the Lord do what he threatened to do to the Ephesian church in where we remove its candlestick from its state.

What a tragedy that it be for any community. Well, then, these three points, the state in which they were originally dead in trespasses and sin, but then the way the Lord came into their lives with grace and with salvation, making them new creations in Christ Jesus.

But thirdly, those who are new creatures in Christ need to live a new life based on good works which God prepared before that we should walk in them.

May God bless these thoughts to us. let us pray. Help us, O Lord, we ask to confess our sin and to seek to know more and more of thy love and thy forgiveness.

[47 : 27] And we pray for thy blessing to be upon each one of us here this evening and as we part, we pray that those not part from us. That those to come in the days ahead and anoint thy servants

who are to preach the gospel in the congregation and in thy kind providence as they sit at the Lord's table, we pray that each one there would be keenly aware of thine own near and gracious presence.

Strengthen thy cause among us, we pray, and forgive every sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. We'll conclude by singing from Psalm 116.

116 from verse 9 to the 8. I in the land of those that live will walk the Lord before I did believe therefore I speak I was afflicted soul.

I said when I was in my haste that all men liars be, what shall I render to the Lord for all his gifts to me? I'll of salvation take the cup, in God's name will I call, I'll pay my vows now to the Lord, before his people all.

will sing to the end of the psalm from verse 9 to verse 19, I in the land of those that live. will walk the Lord before I in the land of those that live.

[49 : 25] will walk the Lord before I did believe therefore I speak I was the afflicted soul.

I said when I was in my haste that all men liars be, what shall I render to the Lord for all his gifts to me?

I hope salvation take the cup, on God's name will I call, I pay thy answer to the Lord before his people all.

Here in what sight is his sick stand thy servant Lord am I thy servant sure thy hand lived son my father did untie thy God brings thy to thee will give and God God's name will call I'll pay my hands now to the Lord before his people all within the courts of

God's own house within the midst of thee O city of Jerusalem praise to the Lord in thee now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore Amen