

## **The Salvation of Sinners is Wholly by Grace** **by Ron Harvey**

Text: Ephesians 2:8, 9

(8) *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God:*

(9) *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

The salvation of sinners is wholly by grace. This is the simplest way that I know to state the nature of salvation. It is God's grace and his grace alone that saves sinners. Salvation is not by works. It is not by grace and works. It is by grace alone.

One day we will be in heaven. And we will have all eternity to contemplate why it is that we are there. And then, in that most blessed place and in that eternal moment of reflection, I suspect it will be very evident that we are there by the sheer mercy and grace of our God. We will contemplate the very righteousness of Christ that is the ground of our acceptance and we will not be prone to add one of our filthy rags to that eternal equation of salvation.

Finally removed and set apart from our woeful human nature and with our understandings fully enlightened, we will understand that we were saved by the grace of God. And we will cast our crowns at his feet and all glory shall go to Him.

The gospel message is that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Now that is a simple message, but it is a critically important message. And whoever it is in this world that adds anything to that simple message, Paul says, "Let him be accursed."

Look in Galatians 1:6-9

(6) *I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

(7) *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

(8) *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

(9) *As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye received, let him be accursed.*

Now I don't feel compelled to argue the point that salvation is utterly by grace because,

I. Salvation by grace is the clear statement of the Scriptures.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith. (Eph. 2:8)*

And,

*Even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) (Eph.2:5)*

And,

*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24)*

And,

*Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (II Tim.1:9)*

Now we could stop right there and that would be enough to convince us that salvation is by grace because if the Holy Scriptures say it so plainly and so often, then the matter is settled. Men may deny it. Men may debate it. Men may charge God with unfairness.

But, in the end, in spite of man's resistance,

Salvation is by the grace of God.

So, salvation is clear because it is stated plainly in Scripture.

II. Salvation by grace is clear from the fact that man is unable to save himself.

**Example: When I was about 9 years old my parents moved to California. And we drove 2,000 miles across the country. And we arrived at night. And we were so excited to see the ocean that the whole family parked and walked down to the water. Now at that time there was me, my brother and my toddler sister, Cathy. And we took our shoes off and waded in the surf. All but Dad, he kept his shoes on and watched from the beach. And all of a sudden, a wave crashed up on us and knocked us down and my brother and I were able to scramble to our feet. But, Cathy was knocked down and the undertow took her out and other waves were crashing over her. And this child was 2 years old. And she had no way to save herself. She could barely stand up on dry ground. And Dad then wished he had taken his shoes off. He dashed into the ocean and grabbed her and she was saved.**

Now the point of the story is that Cathy could not save herself. And that is a good illustration of our condition as sinners. Only our condition is more hopeless than that.

You see the Bible teaches that we are helpless to save ourselves.

I don't have to convince you. You already know that there is a principle of corruption in you. It is that old nature. And that corruption extends to every part of you – to your mind and to your soul and to your conscience. And that dark principle of sin has permeated through and through until the whole is defiled.

**Example: Adam's sin, that one, dark, miserable sin can be likened to a drop of ink in a glass of water. And that one sin spreads out and discolors the whole glass.**

And so we have been corrupted. And every part of us has been corrupted. And we call that total depravity. Sin didn't corrupt our bodies and leave our minds and hearts pure. No, sin permeated and spread to our entire being so that our understanding, our affections, our consciences are all ruined.

The Bible puts it this way in Romans 3:10-12:

*There is none that understandeth.  
There is none that seeketh after God.  
There is none that doeth good.*

III. Salvation by grace is clear from the fact that man's spiritual condition is described as dead.

Paul said,

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph.2:1)*

Does this verse not absolutely scream out, "Salvation by Grace?"

You were dead and God made you alive. That is grace.

You weren't almost dead. You were dead. And God made you alive.

You hadn't merely fallen down in the ocean. You had drowned in the ocean of sin and corruption.

And isn't this what Paul says in Eph.2:5?

*Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)*

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me

Now I want you to see that,

IV. The purity of salvation by grace is not diminished by man's responsibility to believe.

Our text says,

*For by grace are ye saved through faith.*

And the Arminian says, "Aha. You see there is still some hope in man. Yes, man is in a desperate condition, but one thing he may still do. He may still believe. Thank God, man is not yet dead, he has this one shred of ability left." He may come to Christ and believe.

Just as Satan told Eve, "Thou shalt not surely die," the Arminian says, "Thou art not surely dead."

And yet, Paul said, "*Ye were dead in trespasses and sins.*"

And look what Jesus said about the sinner's ability to come:

*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* (John 6:44)

Talking to unbelieving Pharisees he said,

*Ye cannot hear my Word.* (John 8:43)

But the Arminian dares to contradict Jesus and says, "We can hear and we can believe."

But Jesus said to unbelievers,

*Ye cannot hear my Word.*

Now one thing is for sure. If you cannot hear it, you cannot believe it because faith cometh by what? Hearing.

But our text says,

*For by grace are ye saved through faith.*

Ah. But read further.

*And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*

One thing is for sure. Paul must have anticipated that someone would still not get it. He has said over and over, "Salvation is by grace." And he anticipates that someone will still say, "Yes, but part of the credit goes to ourselves."

And Paul says,

*And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*

Oh how man would like to take credit for his faith. But faith is clearly a gift.

Listen to Hebrews 12:2

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*

Yes even our faith is a gift, a pure and simple gift. And because it is a gift, we are saved by grace.

V. Salvation by grace is clear from the fact that salvation is not of works.

*Not of works lest any man should boast. (v.9)*

Now there are only two possible ways of salvation. Either salvation can be by grace or it can be by works. And there can be no mixture of the two. As we have discussed before, the concepts of grace and works are mutually exclusive. They cannot coexist.

If you are saved by grace, then it is not by works. If you are saved by works, then it is not by grace.

**Example: A square cannot be a circle. And, a circle cannot be a square.**

And if God says, "I save you by grace," then it cannot be based on works.

Note: If works were a contributor to salvation, then the natural result would be boasting by man. If God said, "I will save you mostly by my work, but all of this is conditioned on you doing one thing, you must go to church every Sunday." Why we would go to church every Sunday and in the end we would boast, "Look what I did."

But Paul says, "Not of works lest any man should boast."

And since God wants all the credit, he does all the work.

You see, we are saved by grace. This means God does all the work and we are the mere recipients of his work of salvation. Were it not for God's work, we would be just as lost as others. Were it not for the pure grace of God, we would still be dead in trespasses and sins.

VI. Salvation by grace is clear from the fact whatever good we perform it is because we are his workmanship. (v.10)

He is the potter and we are the clay.

Do you believe?

Then he has ordained it and created it in you.

Do you seek after a holy walk?

Then he has ordained it and created it in you.

Do you pant after the Word of God as a deer panteth after the waterbrook? Then . . .

VIII. Salvation by grace is clear from the fact that God has saved you and me.

Maybe I should not speak of you, because you know your heart. But I can speak of me. And I can testify that, were it not for the unmitigated grace of God I would be not be saved. There was nothing in me except what was transferred to me by Adam's sin. And I was dead in trespasses and sins.

And somewhere along the line, for no reason in me, God made me alive and he did it by his sovereign good pleasure and by his grace.

And if you sit here in this congregation knowing Jesus and having your spiritual senses alive in Him, then you know that you were saved by grace.

Application.

1. This should increase our love for God. We love him because he first loved us. And the more we recognize that he loved us when there was nothing lovely in us, the more we will love him. I would say, think on these things. Think on them and see if your heart doesn't leap for joy to know that God has saved you by sheer grace. Oh how he loved you and poured out his grace on you.

2. If God has saved us by grace, then this should eliminate all arrogance and boasting in the church. Where is any ground for our boasting? What possible explanation do we have for arrogance and haughtiness in the church? What do we have that we have not been given? And therefore, if we are saved by grace, then the only appropriate response is deep humility. None of us earned anything from God. It was given to us freely. And we are saved by his grace, nothing more and nothing less than his matchless grace. And so, in our relations to one another, let the high and mighty attitudes be transformed into meek and lowly attitudes. This is quite contrary to our old human nature, but quite consistent with our salvation by grace.

3. If God has saved us by his grace, then let us preach the lofty doctrines of grace so that others may be saved by grace as well. I am so convinced that what is happening in churches today is that the gospel is being watered down to where it is not the gospel at all. They are preaching that God didn't elect particular persons at all. They are preaching that Jesus didn't die for particular persons at all. They are preaching that man isn't depraved after all. They are preaching that man dictates to God who will be saved. And that kind of preaching is well received because it gives man a foothold to boast. But if we preach the gospel of grace, it pulls that foothold right out from under the sinner and he has nothing to cling to but the sheer grace of Christ. And when sinners see that Jesus and his grace is the only hope, then some will grab hold of him and they too will sing, Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound!