

WHY GOD'S GRACE IS ENOUGH FOR YOUR SALVATION

Ephesians 2:8-9

Good morning! I like this new schedule. You know why? Because I don't have to think twice when greeting you. Should it be "Good morning!"? "Good afternoon"? Now, without hesitation I can just say "Good morning!" But then I realize that we have now a global outreach because of Zoom and some from the Philippines are watching us and, therefore, I should say also, "Good evening!". Oh well, the pandemic has really brought confusion into our world. But it's good in a way because we are now reaching out to more people.

So, we have reached the conclusion of our 3-part series, "Enough". First, we said that Jesus is enough to meet our needs, then the Bible is all you need and now, God's grace is enough for your salvation. So, our message is entitled, "Why God's Grace is Enough for Your Salvation".

Salvation is a big word. It means, of course, you're being saved from something. What is that something? What is being saved? Why the need for salvation?

Centuries ago, I think I was in college, I read a book by someone, I don't remember anymore who that someone is and I don't know whether he was a Christian or not, but the guy said that when he was growing up, he would go out the street and walk in his neighborhood and every now and then his eyes would catch a phrase posted on a wall or in a store and that puzzled him greatly. The phrase was "Jesus saves". He didn't come from a religious background but he's heard of Jesus but he wondered, "What does Jesus save?" Does he save money? Does he save bottle caps? Does he save stamps? It wasn't clear to him. Later on, he came to understand what it meant.

This morning, I'm sure many of us here know Jesus. Not only intellectually but in our hearts. We also know why Jesus saves. But I want us to dig deeper into this concept of salvation and God's grace. After all, the apostle Peter wants us to make sure that we are saved. He says, "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble" (2 Peter 1:10)

Ok, I know those words "calling" and "election" are big as well. Are we talking here about a vocation like becoming a singer is your calling? Are we talking here about voting for a position? No, no, certainly not. In a future sermon, we can talk about calling and election. But for now, you can just substitute calling and election with saved. That's why another version of the Bible says, "My brothers and sisters, try very hard to show that God has appointed you to be saved." (NIRV) In short, Peter is saying "Make sure that you truly are saved".

Now, let us define salvation. According to the dictionary, it means "deliverance from harm, ruin, or loss". For many of us who grew up in the universe of Marvel and DC Comics, we know exactly what that means. Like there's a movie where the world is plunged into chaos because of the ruin and destruction in the hands of villains like Lex Luthor or Thanos and the world is saved by the arrival of the Avengers or some superheroes. That's fiction, of course, but the idea is there. Salvation or deliverance is something that every person on this earth clamor for. Many people feel they are doomed and therefore they need salvation. In fact, this has been the cry of every person on this planet since the creation of man.

In the book "Eternity in Their Hearts", the author, Don Richardson, a pastor and missionary, demonstrates through compelling stories from many different cultures how the concept of a supreme God has existed for centuries, preparing people worldwide for the gospel.

In the stories he shares, he notes that every culture or people group in this world since the beginning of mankind has always waited for the coming of a savior. Where do you think these ancient cultures got this idea from? Well, if you trace their origin, you will end up in the Garden of Eden when God promised in Genesis 3:15 that he was going to send a savior. Without a doubt, this story about the coming Savior has been passed from generation to generation all throughout history. Not only that, the desire to be saved has also been passed from generation to generation because ever since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, all people who ever lived knew that something is wrong in their soul. What is wrong? It is sin that is wrong. Sin was committed by our first parents when they disobeyed God and anyone who is born on earth has that stain of sin in their beings. It's like when you cast a mold using plaster of Paris, let's say a face of a man. But somehow you didn't realize that there was an imperfection on the nose, like a small chip. So, everything that you put in that mold will have that chip in the nose. Adam was our mold, he had the chip in his soul and everyone therefore who were born after him had that chip. That chip has to be fixed. And there's only one way to fix it.

In our message this morning I'd like to talk about why God's grace is enough to fix this problem. Let's look at Ephesians 2:8-9. Let's read together: **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."**

So, in this message I'd like to talk about first, what God's grace is all about, then why we need God's grace, then, how is God's grace expressed and lastly, what do we need to do in response to God's grace. So now,, the first principle we can learn from this passage is that

1. God's Grace is Given to Us Freely.

There are hundreds, if not thousands of religions, that are known to mankind since the beginning of time.

I've been involved or got acquainted with some of them like the Iglesia ni Cristo in the Philippines, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Worldwide Church of God, Ananda Marga, Hare Krishna, Eckankar, Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age, and a few others.

All these religions share similar doctrines more or less. All of them teach love, compassion, doing good, self-sacrifice, etc. At one time in my life, I thought of becoming just a Universalist, you know, one who subscribes to all religions because they're all the same anyway. I thought Christianity was just like any of them. Until it became clear to me that there was one thing that separates Christianity from the rest of mankind's religions. And that thing is called God's Grace.

You see, the idea that God's love comes to us freely, without any strings attached and asking nothing in return, goes against what is taught in all the other man-made religions of the world. The Buddhist's eight-fold path is a religious walk based solely on the individual's performance. Likewise, the Hindu doctrine of karma with its successive phases which determine a person's destiny is based on certain things a person accomplished. The Muslim's have the code of the law which must be followed precisely in order to enter into paradise. All of these are ways which a person must work to earn approval. Christianity alone makes God's love and acceptance something which is offered to undeserving human beings without cost or condition. Indeed, it makes clear that it cannot be earned, it comes as a free gift.

All the other religions with their gods and goddesses do count people's sins against them. However, reconciliation is an impossible climb for them. But Christians understand that the true God of heaven is one who is full of compassion and mercy. Even in the Old Testament we read: *"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and*

faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6-7). God wants to be reunited with us more than we want to be reconciled with him. And the cost of this reconciliation is free — paid for by the offended party, God himself. This is at the heart of the Christian faith. God’s love and forgiveness cannot be earned — it comes as a free gift.

So, God’s grace is given to us freely by God who loves us unendingly. The second principle is

2. God’s grace is needed because we cannot save ourselves.

As I mentioned earlier, various religions in the world teach their adherents that to attain salvation they need to do something. In short, they have to exert effort. It could be by practicing spiritual habits, or by observing certain religious rituals, or just by trying to do more good deeds than bad deeds. But the Bible says that all of them are a waste of time and effort. It’s futile. They really don’t count. Why? Because the Bible says that because of sin we are all dead. Our souls are dead. We may be moving around physically, but spiritually we are dead. Dead as in dead. Nothing. Nada. Zilch. Not just dying. But dead. Lifeless. Without breath. And, therefore, we are incapable of doing anything.

If we back up to verses 1 and 2 of this chapter we’re looking at, this is what the Bible tells us about our real spiritual condition.

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 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.”

Paul is talking to the Ephesian Christians. He said that when they were still following the ways of the world, before they became Christians, they were dead in their sins. And, of course, that applies to everyone. If you are steeped in sin, you are dead spiritually. And because you are dead, you are immobile, you are motionless, you are still, you cannot do anything to save yourself.

That's why Paul says in Romans 3:10-12 to those who think that by doing good they're earning their way to heaven, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

So, because there is nothing good in us due to the fact that we are dead in our sins, it would require enormous power to resurrect us, to make us become alive. That power comes from God. From him alone. Verses 4 and 5 says, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

It says we are made alive with Christ. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that raises us from the dead. Nothing is impossible with God. From death to life that is what God offers to us. We are delivered from our sins! Amen?

So, we know that God's grace is given to us freely to save us from our sins and that we cannot save ourselves but only God can, how is God's grace expressed?

3. God's grace is expressed through the death of Jesus Christ.

Now, this is what we read in verses 6-7, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 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."

In verse 6, Paul repeats his assertion that when we were dead in our sins, we became alive when God raised us up and then gave us eternal life and all of this took place as an expression of his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus is in the center of this all.

Paul makes this clear in verse 13, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Paul was obviously referring to the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

You see, because of our sin, we have been separated from a holy God. God loves us but he cannot just say, “Ok, everyone of you, even though you are sinners, I’m saving you and you can all come to heaven.” That is a loving God, right? But is that a just God? The Bible says that he is a God of justice. Deut. 32:4a says that God is “A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.”

In fact, because he is just, the Bible also says that “the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.” (Nahum 1:3) So, where is justice when he decides to save everyone without punishing sin? That means when you get to heaven you’ll meet all those people in history who have committed great atrocities like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and so on and so forth and probably they’ll continue to do their thing in heaven and therefore that’s not heaven anymore. It’s hell.

Now, on the other hand, if God punishes everyone, who will get to heaven? We are all sinners, right, and therefore, we all deserve to be punished. What is the punishment for sin? Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death”. That’s talking about spiritual death. That means eternal separation from God. That means existing for eternity in hell.

So, there seems to be a dilemma here. On one hand, God is a God of love who wants everyone to go to heaven. On the other hand, he is a God of justice, who should punish everyone with death because of sin. How did God solve this problem? By sending his Son Jesus to earth. In Jesus Christ, God’s love and justice converge. As John 3:16 tells us, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

God’s great love and mercy toward us compelled him to sacrifice his only Son Jesus to be punished and suffer a shameful death on the cross.

The death he died was the death we were supposed to die. But because God's Son died for us, he made us alive in Jesus. Finally,

4. God's grace should make us respond in faith.

Again, verse 8 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith". Salvation is a gift. What do you do with a gift? Do you say to the giver, "Hey, wait a minute, before I take that gift, can I pay for it? How much does it cost?" You know what? It doesn't cost you anything. But it cost the life of someone who loves you so much.

If you then believe with all your heart that Jesus died for your sins, you don't have to do anything. Just put your faith in what Jesus Christ has done for you. Just acknowledge that he died to save you. Just trust in Jesus.

You see, it is important that you recognize that Jesus died for you. He died for the forgiveness of your sins. The Bible says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Heb. 9:22) So, when you come to Jesus, when you receive him in your heart, acknowledge that you're a sinner and that you need forgiveness. Confess any known sin in your life and tell God that you are repenting of them. Repentance means making a u-turn. Turning away from sin.

The Bible says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9) Note the promise in that verse, if you believe not only in the death of Jesus but also in his resurrection, you will be saved. And that salvation entails being saved from sin and death which means enjoying eternal life in heaven. Jesus says in John 6:47, "Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life."

Let me share with you a video about how God's grace as transformed the life of a young woman. And then, we'll pray.