

Sermon Series - By Grace You Have Been Saved (Week 4)
Sermon Title and Text - Saving Faith: Ephesians 2:1-10

Sermon Points:

Introduction: Walking in Sinful Passions of Flesh (vv.1-3)

1. Saving Faith is a Gracious, Miraculous Gift (vv.8-9)

2. Saving Faith Unites Us to Christ (v.6)

3. Saving Faith Shows Off God's Grace (v.7, v9)

Application: Walking in Good Works by Faith (v.10)

Corporate Prayer

Lord, thank you for the gift of faith. Thank you for uniting us to Christ by faith and for showing off your grace to us in Christ for all of eternity. Help us never boast in anything but your grace to us in Christ. And help us now, walk in the good works you've prepared beforehand by faith in Jesus.

Introduction: Walking in Sinful Passions of Flesh (vv.1-3)

So far, in this series we've seen that God chose us in love before the foundation of the world, called us with an irresistible call through the gospel, and made us alive when we were spiritually dead by his Spirit and through his Word. God is the main actor in this story and his grace is the key factor in this story.

My prayer last night as I was thinking about my own brokenness and sin was simply that today again, like these past week we would understand how deep and how completely God's grace is towards us in Christ.

So as we talk about "saving faith" let's be very clear about what we need to be saved from. Look at Ephesians 2:1-3:

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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— 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.

Notice a couple things here. First, we were dead. No signs of life. What were we dead in? Our sins. In other words, the place of our death was our sins. We were missing the mark, acting out of step from the holy God who must punish sin if he will still be God and uphold his own character. So, our death is in our sins. That's what must be taken care of.

Second, notice that we had no desire for Jesus and no understanding that we were headed toward hell because we were committing treason against God who created us. We had a huge appetite for sin and we ran after the world and the devil to fill ourselves up with it in our bodies and our minds. Therefore, we deserved God's wrath.

Some of us did this with drugs, alcohol, sexual sin, and money, we traded away the permanent joys found in Jesus for temporary sinful pleasures of this world. Others of us did this by checking off religious boxes. We tried to be really good people. We tried to have really nice families. We tried not to let people know too much about our weak spots. We tried to get ourselves cleaned up pretty well for church activities, but we weren't doing it because we loved Jesus and wanted to be with him and with his people because we needed him, we

were doing it because it made us feel good about ourselves. We tried to pretend like we could “do enough” for God.

Either way, whether at the bar or at the church we were all at some point ignoring the saving grace that is found in laying down all of our efforts and simply trusting what Jesus had done for us. That he really had come. That he really had lived the perfect life we couldn't live and died the death we deserved to die. That it really was as simple and as hard as laying down all other identities, all other efforts, and all other hopes and putting our faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life *with him*.

That is what saving faith is. It is trust in Jesus for everything that he is that you can never be. It is trust in Jesus to save you from yourself and your sins. It is trust in Jesus that says, “He is the treasure I receive by faith, not the porn, not the drugs, not the promotion, not the alcohol, not the money, not the vacation, not the nice family, not the church gatherings, not the good grades, not the athletic achievements, not the moral life. Jesus is the treasure and I trust him to do for me in his death and resurrection what those things could never deliver for me, he forgives my sins and I get eternal life *with him* starting now. And by faith he is my treasure.

Now, you might say, why do you describe saving faith that way? I describe it that way because the Bible talks about people who “believe” in Jesus, but it's a false faith. In James 2, it says “the demons believe and shudder.” In other words, demons know and believe everything we do, but they don't count Jesus as their treasure, they count him as their enemy. And then in John 2:23-25 when Jesus did his miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding it says some people **believed** in him because of the signs he did, but Jesus didn't entrust himself to them because he knew what was in them. In other words, he knew that they were there for the show and not to repent from sins and trust him. The signs were meant to point to the saving work he would bring, but many believed because they liked the show and the benefits.

But, Jesus says true faith means coming to him and putting his yoke upon you. Jesus says true faith means selling everything else you have for the treasure that is in the field, the treasure that is him (Matthew 13:44). So, saving faith sees Jesus not just through some facts about him (the demons believe like that), but saving faith sees Jesus as the treasure of the universe that we want to come to and be with forever, because everything else is loss compared to him (Philippians 3).

So, with that idea of saving faith before us, let's look at our text and see how God makes it happen, what it accomplishes for us, and why God does it.

Saving Faith is a Gracious, Miraculous Gift (vv.8-9)

So, first, we need to see that this kind of faith is a gracious, miraculous gift. We talked last week about how it is a miracle of the word and Spirit to be made spiritually alive from the boneyard of sin and rebellion against God. Well as we talk about God's irresistible call to us, and him making us alive, and this week our saving faith, we must realize all of these things happen within a split second. God calls us irresistibly, we walk out from the grave as he makes us alive, and we believe. And so, new spiritual life inevitably leads to saving faith in all that Jesus is for us. And just like new spiritual life is a miracle, so is this faith is a miraculous gift. Look at Ephesians 2:8-9:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

We are saved by grace. If we tracked this grace back to its source we could go up to verses 4-5 and what we would find is that this saving grace comes to us because of the love and mercy of God for us. No other merits. No other qualifiers. He loves us. Therefore, he has mercy on us. How does this grace save? Through faith. In other words, this saving grace comes as we trust Jesus.

When we trust someone to do anything, big or small, it never reflects back on how great we are, but how great they are. That's the point of faith. It's not about us. It requires us realizing we cannot do it on our own and putting all of trust in Jesus to accomplish what we never could through his perfect life and his death for

our sins. Notice how Paul goes out of his way to show how much this is not about us. Paul literally says, *not from you and not a result of works*.

This isn't from you, Paul says. You couldn't produce this. You couldn't muster this kind of saving grace. You couldn't figure this out. You are out of your league when it comes to salvation from sins against a holy God. And it's not from works. God isn't checking your merits, he's checking the merits of Christ that are yours by faith. He's not seeing how well you live today, he's seeing how Christ lived and you are connected to his life by faith. He's not checking how well you kill your sin today, he's seeing how Christ was slain for sin and you have died to sin with him by faith. This is not from you! This is not from your works.

Faith proclaims loudly, "I can't do it. I'm not enough. My works are not enough. All my hope is in what you've done for me." Trust in someone else glorifies that person, not you. So trust in Jesus glorifies Jesus.

And trust in Jesus glorifies God because he gives us this faith as a gift. And then he says that all of this, the faith, the grace, the salvation, it is all a gift. Paul couldn't be any clearer here. He says, "you don't do anything, you can't do anything to earn this, you simply receive it as a gift." Even our faith is a gift from God.

Now one of the things we all have to get over is that we all like to be self-made people. We like when things go well, but only if we had a big hand in it. We like to know we were the ones who made the difference, the winning play, the smart business decision, the great counseling moment, but here, we must admit that all we can do for our victory is receive the gift of faith to trust that Jesus is the treasure and he's accomplished everything for us. Isn't that offensive? Doesn't that go against everything we're wired to be? Yes, but it's also sweet and true.

Satan held us captive. We loved the sins of the world. And our flesh dove headlong into both. But, then God gives us the gift of faith in Jesus and defeats the devil, the world, and our flesh and grants us salvation if we receive Christ for all he is. Simple, yet hard, when we so badly want to earn our way to favor in everything else.

Perhaps the greatest miracle of this gift is that God overcomes our prideful need to contribute to our own success by his Spirit and simply makes us turn from sin and receive the gift of faith in Jesus and his work in our place as so beautiful that we lay down our pride and trust him.

Saving Faith Unites Us to Christ (v.6)

So, we know that faith saves us from our sins. But, how? Look at verse 6:

God raised us up with him (Jesus) and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Why does faith save us from our sins? Because it unites us with Christ. God didn't just raise us up and seat us, but he raised us up *with him* and seats us *with him*.

Colossians 3:3-4 says something similar:

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

You have died *with Christ*. Your life is hidden *with Christ*. Christ is your life. And we will appear *with Christ* in glory. This is what faith does. When we receive all that Jesus is for us, we become united with Christ. His death becomes our death. His life becomes our life.

If you have trusted Jesus for salvation from sins, you are already seated with him at the right hand of God. You have already been raised with him from the sins that should have killed you. You are already with him, reigning.

By faith you have died with Christ to sin and are with him reigning over death and seated with him in the heavenly places.

Because of the gift of faith, when God looks at you, he doesn't see your failures, your sinfulness, and all your mess ups, he sees Jesus. He sees you having died to your sins *with him*, raised *with him*, seated *with him*, and he knows one day you'll appear in glory *with him*.

I think most of this is applied to us by the Holy Spirit in this life. In Ephesians 1:17 and 20, Paul prays that the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation would be given to them to help them see the:

"The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places."

So, Paul wants all who have believed, that is those who have received the gift of faith, to have the Holy Spirit help them to see the power that was worked toward us in Jesus when God raised Jesus from the dead and seated us with him. And then in chapter 2 he says he wants us to know that we are raised and seated with him.

Christian, pray for eyes to see this. To see beyond the laundry. Beyond the long work day. Beyond the suffering and trials. Beyond the sinful temptations. Beyond the daily routine. See yourself *with Jesus* by faith. *In Jesus* by faith. If we could see this and believe this we could endure suffering. We could walk away from sin. Because Jesus endured suffering perfectly and Jesus overcame sin perfectly and we are *with him* now by the Spirit.

I remember my professor saying that "eternity in heaven has broken into reality on earth" by faith. We are already with Christ in the heavenlies even while we are here on earth.

So, saving faith that counts Jesus as the treasure that brings us eternal life through his death and resurrection also unites us to Jesus so that we are with him now and will be with him forever and God forgives our sins because he sees us united with Christ by faith.

Saving Faith Shows Off God's Grace (v.7, v9)

This point is short, but important. Look at verse 7 and then at the end of verse 9:

So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Why does God raise us up and seat us with Christ by grace through faith? So that for all of eternity he can show off the unfathomable riches of his grace. How will God show off his grace for eternity?

By pointing to his kindness toward us in Jesus. We will be the trophies of his grace. And we'll love it. There will be no spotlight to share. We will be trophies of his kindness toward sinners that hated him, but he won with the selfless love of Christ. We will be trophies of the grace he gave us by granting us the gift of faith that united us with Christ. In all of this, we get the salvation, we get united with Jesus, we get eternity with God, we get rescued from our sins, our flesh, the world, and the devil, and God gets the glory because it is all by his grace. What should our response be when we realize this faith unites us to Christ and is a miraculous, gracious gift from God that we can only receive? Bow in thankful humility, forever. Look at the end of verse 9. *No man can boast.*

God chooses. God calls. God makes alive. God grants the gift of faith. God unites us to Jesus by faith. God gives us the Spirit to see these spiritual realities. And so we cannot boast. Boasting over a gift would not just be silly in this case, it would be sinful. So, instead of trying to steal any of the spotlight, we can happily find ourselves as just another trophy of God's grace that will be used forever to point to his glory and his grace because he was kind to wicked sinners like us at the cross of Jesus.

And we love to simply point back to the grace of Jesus, because Jesus is our treasure.

Application: Walking in Good Works by Faith (v.10)

So, what's the application? Well, first, if you're here and you realize you've been trusting in other things to earn you some favor with God or other things to bring you true life besides Jesus, then trust him now. He lived the perfect life. He died the death you deserved to die.

Or perhaps you realize you've known the facts, but you've never really embraced Jesus for who he is personally to you, but just have known the facts about him, like the demons, or you've liked the things he brings to your life, like the people liked his signs, then turn from your sins now and trust Jesus for true life.

But, if you've trusted Jesus and you are saved by faith in Jesus, then how do we walk now? How do we live now in light of our being so deeply *united with him*?

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

Our good works can't save us. Only faith in Jesus can do that. But, if we have trusted Jesus and we are united with him, then God means to use our lives for his purposes now. We are God's workmanship. We are God's poem. And we were created in this newness in Christ Jesus, why?

For good works. What kind of works? The ones God prepared beforehand for us to walk in.

In other words, from before the foundation God chose you and knew he'd make you alive and give you the gift of faith to trust Jesus, and before the foundation of the world he prepared good works for you to do that would never save you but would point the world back to him. The world would see you and the works would be so genuine and so focused on the glory of Christ and so driven by genuine, self-giving love that they would see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven because they would see the strength to follow God's commands could never come from you, but only from God. So, how do we do these good works?

We do them by faith. Let me read you one more verse:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

We are so united with Christ by faith that we've died to sin with him. We no longer live. Now Christ lives in us. But, we do live. We are here. And so, how do we live like we're not alive but Christ is alive in us? We live by faith in Jesus who loved us and gave himself up for us. In other words, we live with our eyes fixed on Jesus. The author and perfecter of our faith. We lay aside every sin and weight which clings so closely by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, because we are with him.

We live knowing he is our treasure and being with him now and forever is better than anything else. We live knowing he has already won the victory and so we run the race full of confidence that we'll make it. We run the race to help others join us in our victory in Jesus. We run the race knowing it will be hard, there will be bumps and bruises and suffering, but that just like Jesus endured, we can endure because we're with him. We live with him and for him with our eyes on him. We kill sin by faith in Jesus. We love others by faith in Jesus. We endure with his help and for his glory because we've already been saved from our sins by faith. We don't live trying to appease God anymore or earn anything, we simply live with Jesus in the joy of our salvation, happy to be trophies of God's grace that God might be pleased to shine his gospel through and bring others onto the trophy shelf with us. So, rest in Jesus by faith. And run with Jesus by faith. You are with him now by faith. You'll be with him forever face to face.