

**EPHESIANS: GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY**  
**EPHESIANS 2:8-10**  
**2ND STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, 13 JUNE 2010**  
**GREGG LAMM | LEAD PASTOR-TEACHER**  
**www.2ndstreet.org**

Welcome to 2nd Street's time of gathered worship. It's great to be here with you once again. The Bible is only book ever written that when read and studied and read and studied, you and I will keep getting more and more out of it. You might have read a book by C.S. Lewis, or a Ken Follett novel, or one of the seven Harry Potter books one, two, three times, or more.

But gang, no matter how great the writing of any human author, you'll stop getting new things out it after a while. But that won't ever happen with the Bible. Because the more we get into the Bible, the more we'll learn from God, and the deeper and deeper we'll dig down into the truths God has for us in His Word.

There are some passages in the Bible we can study through rather quickly and gain an understanding of what God wants to reveal to us. But other passages in God's Word require a more careful dissection and study in order to see what God is saying to us ... and this morning we're going to dig into one of those kinds of passages ... as we continue on in our study of **EPHESIANS**, and look together into **EPHESIANS 2:8-10**.

Last Sunday the Apostle Paul reminded us in **EPHESIANS 2:1-3** that before meeting Jesus we were **dead in our trespasses and sins**. And in **EPHESIANS 2:4-7** Paul told us that because of God's great love for us, He saved us from being the **walking dead** and brought us into the eternal life Jesus talked about when He said in **JOHN 10:10** ...

**JOHN 10:10** (THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE)

<sup>10</sup> The thief [Satan] comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I [Jesus Christ] came that you may have *and* enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).

And now this morning, in **EPHESIANS 2:8-10**, Paul continues on with this same thought as he explains to us how a loving God saved **dead sinners** like you and me.

**EPHESIANS 2:8** (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

This is a verse that's been quoted, memorized, sung, and taught a lot. And our familiarity with words of truth like the ones in this verse can leave us accepting them as **COMMON**, **SIMPLE**, and **EASY**, instead of seeing them as they really are, as **RARE**, **DEEP**, and **A CHALLENGE TO ACCEPT AND LIVE INTO**.

The Greek word **grace / charis** has a variety of meanings including “**kindness, favor, gift, and blessing.**” But the definition I’ve shared with you over and over again during my past four years with you is that “**grace is the undeserved, unconditional love of God that takes away our sin.**” We were dead in our sins and in our transgressions (**EPHESIANS 2:3**), but God made us alive, saving us by His grace. So **EPHESIANS 2:8** could easily begin by saying ...

**EPHESIANS 2:8** (PARAPHRASE)

<sup>8</sup> For by God's blessing, kindness, gift, and favor (which none of us deserves), we've been saved, brought back home into the life, relationship, and fellowship that Jesus provided for us by His totally selfless death on the cross.

**EPHESIANS 2:8** (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

The Greek word **saved / sozo** is another familiar, “*Christianese*” word that you and I often fail to actually understand or define when we use it.

**ILLUSTRATION** ... In the fall of 1991 Billy Graham held an outdoor evangelistic crusade in Portland. I had just begun the first of my 14 years as the campus pastor at George Fox University, and knowing that Billy Graham was getting up there in years, I figured that it was the last time any of us in Portland would be able to see him speak here in our city. And so, on the night of the crusade that it rained the hardest, I took several vans of GFU students into Portland, and since Civic Stadium was already packed, we sat on the grass on the Lincoln High School football field and watched on giant TV screens.

After Billy Graham preached and gave the invitation, people from Civic Stadium and the field where we were got up from their seats, came forward and surrendered their hearts to Jesus. Counselors had been trained to talk and pray with the people who came forward, and they were identified by their lanyards, nametags, and clipboards.

After a while the football field was filled with people who'd come forward to “be saved” ... and so many other people were milling around that it was hard to tell who'd “come forward” and who was just walking around. And it wasn't long before a middle-aged counselor came up to me and asked, “Have you been saved?”

To which I replied, “Ya, several times already today.” When he heard my smart alec response to his important question, the counselor's eyes blinked and his posture slacked. He didn't know what to say or do, as I'd taken him “off script.” And I replied again, “Yes bro, I know Jesus. But let's go find someone whose still looking to meet Him.” And so off we went.

Most of us, if asked would say that “being saved” means, to be rescued or delivered from danger, harm, or death. But when a Christian says, “I’m saved.” “Are you saved?” “Do you want to be saved?” “Or do you know how to get saved?” what is it he or she saying that **WE NEED TO BE SAVED FROM?** Paul’s use of the word saved in **EPHESIANS 2:8** actually refers to being saved from many things. Here are just four examples of how the word saved is used throughout *The New Testament* ...

1. “saved from this perverse generation.” **ACTS 2:40**
2. “saved from perishing.” **SECOND THESSALONIANS 2:10**
3. “saved from the wrath of God.” **ROMANS 5:9**
4. “saved from eternal judgment.” **HEBREWS 5:9**

**EPHESIANS 2:8** (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

*The New Testament* was written in Koine Greek, and it’s unique from many other languages, including English, in that it has several different kinds of tenses that help express the specific and nuanced meaning of it’s words, sentences, and thoughts. Here are a couple of the Greek tenses that are different than the three, basic tenses we have in English, past tense, present tense, and future tense ...

aorist tense            Regular past tense.  
*My car broke down last week.*

imperfect tense        The action happened in the past again and again, at a number of different times, and at different intervals.  
*Last Monday, Wednesday and Saturday my car stalled. Sometimes it stalls after shifting into second, and other times when I turned on the radio. But on Tuesday, and Friday it ran fine.*

Another tense used in *New Testament Greek*, and in fact, it’s the only language that even has this tense, is the perfect tense. And the word saved in **EPHESIANS 2:8** is in the perfect tense.

perfect tense            The action takes place in the past, but the results continue up to the present tense.  
*My car broke down last Saturday, and so beginning then, and right up until today, I’ve had to find a different way to get to work.*

I love how 20th-Century *New Testament* Bible teacher Kenneth Wuest, in his *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* translates **EPHESIANS 2:8** ...

**EPHESIANS 2:8** (KENNETH WUEST NEW TESTAMENT)

<sup>8</sup> For by the grace have you been saved in time past completely, through faith with the result that your salvation persists up through the present time.

And I see our **FIRST FAITH LESSON** here this morning ...

### **FAITH LESSON**

When we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, eternal life is given to us, and whether we “feel” like we’re saved or not, we are saved, and our eternal life begins and then continues (cf., **JOHN 10:28**). This is the *ongoing action* of the *perfect tense*, and there’s no way we can make it happen, or earn it on our own.

Please welcome our 2nd Heart Drama Ministry as they share with us a drama that illustrates our inability to earn salvation by our own efforts.

### **2ND HEART DRAMA: BUCKET OF WORMS**

And I love how Paul brings **grace** and **faith** together here in **EPHESIANS 2:8** ... because they always fit together ...

### **EPHESIANS 2:8** (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

**Grace** is God reaching out to us, and **faith** is us reaching out to God. It’s common for us to think Paul is saying that **grace isn’t of ourselves**. And while it’s true that grace is only from God, what Paul’s telling us here in **v. 8** is that **salvation and the faith that it takes to come into a relationship with God isn’t of ourselves**.

Now Paul goes on in **EPHESIANS 2:9** to tell us that when it came to receiving this free gift of grace from God - this salvation - when it came to being saved - that none of us had the ability to become born again ... and that God had to even give us the ability to be able to receive this free gift of salvation.

### **EPHESIANS 2:8-9** (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;  
<sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**ILLUSTRATION** ... Imagine that Steve Jobs, the president of Apple Computer is a good friend of yours. A new computer is about to be released, and Steve comes over to your house a week or so before the unveiling to show it to you. Steve’s just so excited about it that he can’t wait to show it to you, because you’re such a good friend.

After seeing the computer, of course, you want to sign up to be one of the first people to purchase it, but the wind gets sucked out of your sails when Steve says that it costs \$3,500.00. You let out a nervous laugh because you're just making it through life month-by-month, and there's no way you can afford to buy it. Bummer.

Steve, kind of dumbfounded at your reply, then asks why you're laughing. And after you tell him, he says, "It's okay, I've already wired \$3,500.00 to your bank account so you can buy one the day it comes out." In other words, Steve not only *designed this new computer*, but he *also gave you the ability to purchase it*.

Gang, faith isn't just how we're born again. Faith is also our means of living in this life with God day-by-day. We can't do it without faith. Yes walking through this life is difficult. Health challenges, money challenges, crisis times with our kids, our jobs, anxiety about our futures, and guilt about our pasts. None of us can navigate these things without faith in Jesus. And even this faith is a gift from God. Do you see it?

And God set it all up this way so that all the glory for Him traveling through all these deep waters with us, can only be given back to Him, and not taken onto ourselves. If the faith came from us, we could boast, before God and before others that we were the architects of our own salvation, when nothing could be further from the truth!

#### EPHESIANS 2:9

<sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

<sup>9</sup> None of this "God reaching out to us with grace" stuff, and none of this "us reaching out to God in faith" stuff comes from our own planning or doing. God made it all this way so that He'd be the only one Who could take credit for the changes He brings about in our lives when we surrender to Him and begin our new life with Him. (PARAPHRASE)

And I see a SECOND FAITH LESSON here this morning ...

#### FAITH LESSON

Let's not ever worship the gifts of grace or faith. Let's worship the *Giver of the gifts*. Faith is a wonderful thing, given to us by God so that we can have access to Him and to all He has in store for us. Grace is the oil that keeps the machine of our faith running smoothly, so let's make sure we keep the eyes of our hearts worshiping God and not just focusing on the provisions God gives us.

EPHESIANS 2:10 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

<sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The Greek word for workmanship here is **poema**. It's the root word we get the English word **poem** from, and it has to do with the **special creation of God**. Gang, you and I are **God's special creation**. When you read a great poem by *Walt Whitman*, *Emily Dickinson*, *Ogden Nash*, or *Dr. Seuss*, the glory doesn't go to the paper and the pencil used to write the poem. The glory goes to the creator of the **poem**. We are God's **workmanship** and **masterpiece**, and God created us for **good works**. And God wants to express Himself in us and then out through us to the world that's filled with people who are trying to discover Him and come into a relationship with Him.

Not one of us have been saved by religious works. No matter how much money you've donated to the church, no matter how many hours of your life you've spent in church, no amount of good deeds, no number of prayers ... none of us are any closer to heaven by any of that until we've **been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ**.

How foolish for Christians to start thinking that our religious works can save us. Gang, this is one of the biggest traps that Satan has laid out for us, and we've got to avoid it. Likewise, how foolish, for people who aren't yet Christians to believe that only **REALLY GOOD PEOPLE** can get to heaven. It's God's grace that saves us, not our works. It is God's goodness, not any fumbling kind of attempt on our part to be good.

Like Paul said in **EPHESIANS 2:3** we were, by nature, **children of wrath**. **Good works** can't produce a **good nature**. But a **redeemed nature**, can produce **good works** and **works of faith**. I like to think of these **good works that God prepared for me beforehand** as **doors** that God has put in front of me ... doors that I can choose to walk through, because I know that God has placed them before me and expects me to walk through them. God's job is to set the doors in front of us, and our job is to walk through them in surrender, in confidence, and in obedience.

How many different times a day do we see an open door and keep right on driving, walking, or talking? We see an open door, and we say to ourselves, "**I don't have the time to deal with this person. I don't have the money to connect with this need. I don't want to get involved with this situation. I'm just going to mind my own business.**" Gang, **good works**, or as Jesus' half-brother James calls them, **works of faith** in **JAMES 2:14-26 ARE OUR BUSINESS**. And in fact, Paul tells us here in **v. 10** that they're why you and I were created in Christ Jesus in the first place.

So when God prepares a **good work** for you to do, walk in it. Walking through the doors God opens will lead to opportunities to witness to other people about who Jesus is, and the difference He has made, and is making in your life. And walking through these God-ordained open doors, will be acts of worship, and as we do so, we will increase in our knowledge and understanding of God and His will. Do you see it?

**NEXT SUNDAY ... CELEBRATE RECOVERY SUNDAY!**  
**COME PRAYING AND EXPECTING!**