

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

DECEMBER 2020

Saved By Grace

Writing “*to the saints who are at Ephesus*” (**Eph. 1:1**), the Holy Spirit through Paul said, “*by grace you have been saved...*” (**Eph. 2:8**). Consider some things Scripture teaches about *what* the grace referenced in this verse is, *why* it is needed and has been extended, *how* this grace has been extended, and *who* it is available to and accessed by.

What – Unmerited Favor: The word translated grace in **Ephesians 2:8** (*charis*) can have different meanings in Scripture. For instance, *charis* at times refers to thanks on the part of one receiving a gift (cf. **2 Cor. 9:15**).

When speaking of God's grace, the emphasis is on finding *favor* with God. A definition often used that fits the meaning in **Ephesians 2:8** is “unmerited favor.” This emphasizes God doing something for us that is *undeserved*. It involves Him doing for us what we *need*, but cannot do for *ourselves*.

The unmerited nature of salvation is the key to **Ephesians 2:8-9**. Notice the full teaching in these two verses: *for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast.*

While God requires good works to *receive* salvation (cf. **Phil. 2:12**), salvation is still a *gift*. It is not earned, and provides no basis for boasting in *self*.

As the Holy Spirit through Paul said in **Galatians 6:14**, “*far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*”

Why – Salvation from Sin: The word “*saved*” in **Ephesians 2:8** hints at *why* God's grace is needed. While God's grace makes all spiritual blessings possible, the foremost reason we need God's grace is to be *saved from sin and its consequences* (cf. **Rom. 5:9**).

Without God's grace, each of us would be hopelessly doomed for eternal torment in hell (**Rom. 3:23; 6:23a**). By *grace*, God planned a means by which we might have eternal life instead of being left to perish (**John 3:16**).

Why – God's Love: While salvation from sin is why we *need* God's grace, the *motive* for God allowing us to be saved by grace is the depth of the *love* He has for each of us.

A word in **John 3:16** that can be easy to overlook is the word “*so*.” God not only loves the people of the world, but He loves us to such an *extent* that He gave what was needed to offer us salvation.

How – Jesus Christ: The One God lovingly gave to offer us salvation from sin is His Son. When an angel of the Lord assured Joseph that Mary would give birth to a Son, he instructed Joseph to name Him Jesus, a name which means “Jehovah is salvation” (**Matt. 1:21**). The

explanation given by the angel of the Lord for why this name should be given was, "*it is He who shall save His people from their sins.*"

While God *planned* the means by which we can be saved by grace and the Holy Spirit *revealed* this plan, Jesus is the *embodiment* of God's grace.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 references God saving the faithful "*according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ...*"

Jesus' work on earth is what God planned before the world began to offer us salvation by grace. "*By the grace of God,*" Jesus "*taste[d] of death for everyone*" (**Heb. 2:9**).

Who – Available to All: The fact that Jesus "*taste[d] of death for everyone*" shows that the salvation made possible by God's grace is available to *anyone* who is *willing* to receive this gift. This point is made in **Titus 2:11**, which says, "*the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.*"

In spite of the choice each of us has made to rebel against God's will, He still wants all of us to be saved (**1 Tim. 2:4**). As He looks on *anyone* who is in sin, He sees one who needs cleansing and healing. His love is such that He is "*not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (**2 Pet. 3:9**).

Who – Accessed By Choice: While God *offers* salvation by His grace to all, salvation is *accessed by choice*.

Salvation is not forced upon anyone (i.e. "irresistible grace"). Rather, salvation by grace is accessed by faith (**Rom. 5:2**).

"Faith" in this context is a summary term that includes *obedience* to the Gospel (cf. **Rom. 1:5; 16:26; 2 Thes. 1:8**). Those who enjoy the full blessings God offers by His grace have *chosen* to become repentant believers, and have been "*baptized into Christ*" (**Gal. 3:27**).

Those who *have* obeyed can *fall* from grace if obedience is not continued in. In **Galatians 5:4**, the Holy Spirit through Paul said, "*You are alienated from Christ, you who desire to be justified by the law. You have fallen away from grace.*" The context deals with looking to the Old Law for justification, but a broader principle taught in passages such as this is that we can be "once in grace, but not always in grace."

Those who have done, and are *continuing* to do, what God requires to receive salvation have full access to the spiritual blessings God offers by His grace.

As the Holy Spirit through Paul emphasized to the saints at Ephesus, this choice is not cause for self-centered boasting. Rather, all the credit goes to *God*. His grace is cause for humility and gratitude. Moreover, His grace should motivate us to surrender fully to Him.

Though none of us deserve it, we can each be saved upon submitting to God, thanks to His amazing grace.

- **Michael Hickox**