

The Gospel

Teaching Notes

Summary: God saves sinners not because of anything in them, but entirely because of His sovereign grace. All mankind is dead in sin and helpless to contribute in the least towards their own salvation. Yet, God, according to His eternal purpose and for His own glory, has chosen to save some in Christ, bringing them to life by Grace through Faith in Christ.

Objectives:

- To establish that we are saved fully and completely by God's grace alone.
- To make clear that God has chosen to save His people by giving them new life through faith.
- To show that Christ is the object of our faith.

Saved By Grace

"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. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:1-7

- **What does Ephesians 2 teach us about our natural spiritual condition? Why do we need grace?**
- WCF 7.1 "The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant."
 - Even separate from salvation, God's interactions with us are all gracious. He is the creator, we are the creature. Apart from His voluntary condescension we could know nothing of him.
- *"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."* 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

- But as sons of Adam we are helplessly dead in our sins. (Ephesians 2 and 1 Cor 15) How could the dead contribute anything at all to their resurrection from the dead? So not only are we creatures, we are dead creatures.
- *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:3-6*
 - He has saved those whom He predestined from eternity past to save.
 - Westminster Larger Catechism: Q. 12. What are the decrees of God? A. God’s decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.
 - Q. 13. What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men? A. God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory; and in Christ hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof: and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favor as he pleaseth), hath passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice.
 - **Why is it good news that God chose whom He would save before the foundation of the world?**
- Salvation is ALL of grace because it is all of God. He determined according to His own good pleasure who would be saved and who would be damned and brought about salvation despite us being utterly dead and incapable of contributing to our own salvation. He gave new life by Grace.
 - **How would you explain to someone that salvation is “all of grace”?**
 - **Why does it matter for you and your children that we are saved by Grace alone?**

Saved Through Faith

“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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10

- Faith is the instrument through which we receive Christ and the benefits of salvation. It is not the cause of our salvation: Christ is. Even the faith by which we believe is a gift of God's grace.
 - **What does it mean that we are saved “through faith”? How is faith different from a work?**
- Westminster Confession of Faith 14.1-2 “The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened. 2. By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”
 - Faith is more than belief, faith changes the way you live your life.
 - **How should true saving faith impact a man's life, choices, and obedience?**

Saved in Christ

“...let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
Acts 4:10-12

- Salvation is not found in generic belief, religious sincerity, or vague spirituality. It is faith **in Christ**, the Son of God who lived, died, and rose again.
- Westminster Confession of Faith 25.2 “The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”
 - *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6 ESV)*
- **Why is the object of our faith (Christ) more important than the strength of our faith?**

- This is why it is SO important to understand theology. Not because you need a deep understanding of theology to save you, but because knowledge of true theology shows you more of the character and glory of the God who saved you and keeps you from falling into damnable errors.
 - The Athanasian Creed, an ecumenical creed of the church puts it strongly, “This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.”
 - You are saved by a simple faith in Christ, but as the mormon Jesus and the muslim Jesus and the “historical Jesus movement” shows us, it matters greatly “which Jesus” we believe in!
 - **How much do we need to know to be saved?**