

Life's Most Important Word
Ephesians 2:1-10

February 12, 2017
FBCS Day

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A story is told about the great author C.S. Lewis that goes something like this. Lewis arrived at a meeting a little late with enthusiastic debate already in progress. Lewis inquired about the subject of the conversation. He was told that the debate focused on the single most important issue that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. "That's easy," Lewis said, "It's grace." That would be hard to argue. We consider that word today. For in this one word, we find the essence of the Gospel.

We believe that one of the foundational core values of our church is to preach the Gospel—to every generation, ultimately to the nations, and do this all for God's glory!

Text: And you were dead in your trespasses and sins 2 in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler who exercises authority over the lower heavens, the spirit now working in the disobedient. 3 We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, 5 made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! 6 Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens, 7 so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— 9 not from works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

Introduction: One of the crucial questions that we must encounter as people of faith is the question of salvation. Salvation is a word that Jesus used to refer to eternal life. We use the word, "saved," to communicate a relationship with God through Christ that results in eternal life. In short, "to be saved" is to have the assurance that at the end of your life, you will be "saved" for eternal life. I believe that all religious thought can be divided into just two categories—those who teach a salvation by works and those who teach a salvation by grace. We unequivocally teach that the Bible proclaims that salvation is by grace and grace alone. When asked about grace versus works, we can validate two truths according to the Word of God. First, salvation is by *grace, not works*. Second, we believe, though, that *grace works!*

Salvation is a Gift: Grace, not works

To properly understand the full impact of grace, we probably ought to realize life without grace—life before grace.

Our Condition before Grace (2:1-3)

1. We were dead in our sins.

2. We walked according to the world.
3. We were controlled by Satan.
4. We were children of wrath.

The Cause for Grace (2:4): *He Loves Us!*

Phillip Yancey describes grace in his book "What's So Amazing About Grace." He writes, "Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more—no amount of spiritual calisthenics and renunciations, no amount of knowledge gained from seminaries, no amount of crusading on behalf of righteous causes. And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less—no amount of racism or pride or pornography or adultery or even murder. Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love."

Conclusions about Grace Salvation

1. We do not deserve salvation.
2. We cannot earn salvation.
3. We would boast if we could earn salvation.
4. Salvation would not be a gift if we had to earn God's grace.
5. We must receive God's grace.

God's grace is available to all, but it is not automatic.

The Channel of Grace (2:8): *Faith!*

We must believe. This is not a work; this is an acceptance.

Salvation has a Goal: Grace works (2:10)

There are two goals actually.

Heaven and Holiness.

- These goals are the purposes of our lives.
- These goals are the products of our salvation.

In his book, *In the Heavenlies*, Dr. Harry Ironside tells the story of an attempted assassination of Queen Elizabeth I. The woman who sought to do so dressed as a male page and secreted herself in the queen's chamber awaiting the convenient moment to stab the queen to death. She did not realize that the queen's attendants would be very careful to search the rooms before Her Majesty was permitted to retire. They found the woman hidden among the gowns and brought her into the presence of the

queen. She realized that humanly speaking, her case was hopeless. She threw herself down on her knees and pleaded and begged the queen as a woman to have compassion on her, a woman, and to show her grace. Queen Elizabeth looked at her coldly and quietly said, "If I show you grace, what promise will you make for the future?" The woman looked up and said, "Grace that hath conditions, grace that is fettered by precautions, is not grace at all." Queen Elizabeth caught it in a moment and said, "You are right. I pardon you out of my grace." And they led her away, a free woman. It is said that from that moment Queen Elizabeth had no more faithful, devoted servant than that woman who had intended to take her life. That is exactly the way the grace of God works in the life of an individual--he or she becomes a faithful servant of God.

Conclusion:

What's the difference in a salvation by works and a salvation by grace?

A person with an understanding that salvation is by works is always asking, "What is the least I can do to earn and keep my salvation?" People saved by grace are always asking, "What is the most I can do to show my love and thanksgiving toward my Savior?"

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

SOURCE: Dietrich Bonhoeffer "The Cost of Discipleship"