

Our Saving Grace (Ephesians 2:4-10)

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Preacher: William HC

[0 : 00] So today we'll be reading from Ephesians and actually our memory verse is actually a part of it. So if you guys whip out your Bibles I'll be reading from NIV and because our memory verse is Ephesians! 8 to 9 so I'll get you guys to read with me when I reach 8 to 9 so you guys have to follow along.

Okay are you guys ready? As for you you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts like the rest we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions it is by grace that you have been saved. And God raised us raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Jesus Christ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Jesus in Christ Jesus. And together let's read this next part which is our memory verse. Verse 8. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not from yourselves it is a gift of God not by works so that no one can boast. And verse 10. For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

That's the word of God. Pastor William. Great. Thanks so much for reading that with us today. And so we're going to spend a little bit of time in this part of God's Word. So if you have your Bibles please keep them with you open and let's spend some time getting into kind of in-flight mode really thinking through what God has to say to us about our saving grace.

So why don't we pray. Let's ask God to help us out. Father we thank you that you truly have saved us. We thank you that this is not just a small idea but it's a big idea. A big truth that has transformed our world. So would you help us to pay attention? Help us to see how this applies to our own life and the lives of those around us. That justification that being made right with you is completely your saving grace. Our saving grace through faith in Christ Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.

Last week we had the privilege didn't we of hearing from Pastor Michael Drake. Everyone remember that? Okay. We're going through a series right now step by step through our statement of faith and he was able to help us because he's written a book about this and he's able to teach us about from the scriptures our fallen condition. All right. Who remembers something from what he shared with us last week? Seven days ago. It's a long time. You're going to die. How many out of 10 will die?

[3 : 16] Ten. Okay. It was pretty bleak wasn't it just to think about that. I know most of us are in this half of our life you know of our lifespan we think about death probably you know as a far away distant thing but it's true isn't it? Just as 10 out of 10 people eventually face death actually that points us to something. It points us to a spiritual reality. We have inherited a fallen condition haven't we?

Actually the reason we all die is because we all share in the likeness of our first parents. In Adam we all die and in Adam we are born in sin. Unable and unwilling to choose life in Christ. Now this is our fallen condition and actually something every member of PCBC should actually believe about themselves. Right. We are not just more good than bad. We were not just born as blank slates. Tabula rasa. The Bible actually says in Adam we all die and likewise we share in his sinful nature as well. In Adam we all sin and we all need to be made right again. And again this is a very hard truth. It's not a truth that gathers thousands and thousands of people into a stadium wanting to hear more about it. Because we live in a culture especially in New Zealand 2025 that celebrates me first right?

encourages us to live for pleasure and comfort and long walks on the beach. It's very hard to put that against the truth that we are all fallen in need of a rescue.

[5 : 08] Our fallen condition is not popular news to hear. But listen again to how Fran read the start of Ephesians chapter 2. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air. This is a spiritual issue, isn't it? Before knowing God, we befriended the evil one.

By being dead in our trespasses and sins. We lived among the disobedient. Gratifying what our sinful nature craves. Following what it desires and thinks on.

And the way that Ephesians 2 verse 3 summarizes it is that we were by nature objects of wrath. All deserving of God's settled anger against sin.

That's it, right? Let's close our Bibles. Let's pray. No way. Of course not. That's not all, is it? There's so much more.

[6 : 13] Because we just read on, don't we? Verse 4 in your Bibles. But God, because of his great love for us, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. Isn't that good news? In God's great love, here is our saving grace. Here is what we often call salvation.

Salvation, right? Quite a churchy sort of word, right? Do you use it at school much? Salvation? Hey, how's your salvation going? No. How about a workplace?

Anyone ever used it in a water cooler conversation? Yeah. No matter what language you've heard it in as well, right? It's a real churchy word. It kind of needs explaining. What is salvation?

What are we saved from? How are we saved? What are we saved for? These are all questions at the heart of our Christian faith. And so, in our own church's statement of faith, this is the kind of central line, right?

[7 : 15] We go through each point and we get to the center of it, and here is what our church believes about salvation. And it's a long line, isn't it, right?

That justification is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. By grace, God sent his only begotten son to the world to be crucified as an atonement for the sin of all humankind.

And through faith, when a person is convicted by the Holy Spirit to confess their sin and willingly accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and commits their life to Jesus, once saved, they are always saved.

Big words about salvation, yes. Here in these two sentences are actually thousands of years of deep reflection on the message of salvation from all of Scripture.

If we could sum up this in maybe one sentence, this truth of salvation, we could perhaps sum up actually the whole Bible with one sentence.

[8 : 20] We could simply say, the Bible tells us this, you are not your own Savior, but God will provide someone who will save you. You're not your own Savior, but God will provide someone who can save you.

And actually, if you think through the whole Bible, think of all the Bible stories you've read through the Old Testament, we can actually see hints of this same message, right? Think about how, what happened straight after our first parents' sin.

Naked and ashamed, Adam and Eve. Yet God himself covers their shame, literally. promises a Redeemer, a Savior, who will one day crush the serpent's head. It's a story of salvation, right there from the opening pages of Genesis.

Think of when the whole world was bent on evil, and God judged the whole world through a flood, grace found Noah, one righteous man and his family, saved by grace through faith.

He's not his own Redeemer. God had to provide the saving. And think again, through God's story of, the story of God's people, Israel. Time and time again, they're unable to save themselves, right?

[9 : 34] They get stuck in very messy situations. And God keeps telling them and us, you are not your own Savior, but God will provide someone who will save you.

He provides little Saviours and Redeemers, maybe salvation with a small S, judges like Deborah and Samson, mighty warriors like David, rulers like Nehemiah.

The story of the Bible is that you are not your own Savior, but God will provide someone who is. But then when Christ comes, the focus then shifts on how he is the capital S Savior, right?

Our saving grace. What was once God giving us kind of temporary rescues, right, to his people over time, now we get a full and final peace offering.

Jesus Christ himself, Savior with a capital S, for the sin of all humankind. That's what our statement of faith highlights. Now I want you to imagine, right, in those early meetings of our church, right, in the 90s, right?

[10:40] So it's like 30 plus years back. It's probably your parents. Some of your parents were there. And they're trying to lay down the foundational beliefs of PCBC. Imagine if they had the privilege of the Apostle Paul being one of their original members.

Someone who knew their Bible was back to front. You know, that was what the Apostle Paul was like, who wrote this letter. Paul, as we've heard in other situations, he was a very cross-cultural kind of guy, right?

Knew his kind of Jewish scriptures back to front. Very religious, up to a fault, you know, to the point where he would try and persecute other people. Until his gracious salvation, his saving grace, appeared right in front of him on the Damascus road when he met Jesus.

And if Paul could narrate his own salvation story and all of ours, maybe he would use words like Romans 5, chapter 5, verse 8, right?

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. You heard that one before? It's beautiful, isn't it? Or maybe Romans 8, 29 to 30. For those God foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of a son.

[11:50] And those he predestined, he called. Those he called, he justified. Those he justified, he also glorified. That's how Paul would describe his salvation story and ours.

And let's say Paul was a PCBC member trying to shape our statement of faith. I wonder if he had a hand at writing the statement of faith. Maybe he would actually write basically what we read, Ephesians chapter 2, verse 4 to 10.

Right? Because wasn't that a beautiful description of our saving grace? Right? Those six verses. And so today, I just want to suggest let's spend some time breaking those six verses down.

Okay? And I want to break down those couple of verses, Ephesians 2, 4 to 10, into a couple of parts. And so let's have a look. Ephesians 2, chapter 2, verse 4 to 10, says that in God's great love, by grace you've been saved, through faith in Jesus Christ, not by works, but for good works.

I hope you can see that's the clear plan. That's a clear summary of our saving grace in our Bibles. All right? So do keep your Bibles open with you because I don't want to say this and then you go, oh, yep, that's true.

[13:08] I want you to see it from your own scriptures. So firstly, in God's great love, right, what is God's deepest impression of his children?

There's a wonderful worship song we sing of how your heart is kindness. I forget the name, but what is God's heart when he looks at us as his children?

A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Dave reminded us that God has a gentle and lowly heart towards us. You remember that? So important. What do we see here in verse 4? We see God's heart, right? It says here, verse 4, because of his great love for us, God. Isn't that beautiful? Not just great love, rich in mercy.

And in verse 7, if you go down, expressed in his kindness towards us. We expect human beings, nice ones, to kind of show this kind of love to people they like or people that deserve it, right?

[14:13] Arise, Sir Ernest Rutherford, says the king, right? You split the atom, so I'm going to give you lots of favors and give you lots of accolades. Dame Valerie Adams, you threw the shot put so well and you won world championships.

I'm going to honor you. I'm going to respect you. Show you love. We love you for being so good. But remember, you and I were dead in our sins and trespasses.

You and I are not worthy of the God of the universe's love at all. And yet, what does the Bible say here? Verse 4, God has great love for you.

Isn't that amazing? He's rich in mercy. The start of verse 5 says, while we were dead in trespasses, it's by grace you've been saved.

This is what God is like. That's his heart. Those of us who fail as fathers, ourselves, those of us who maybe lament for our own fathers, what a beautiful picture that we get here of Heavenly Father, full of love, rich in mercy, a proud dad, as it were, celebrating his own dear children, showering them with affection.

[15:32] Isn't that beautiful? Beautiful. Because of God's great love. Secondly, by grace you've been saved. You see that, don't you?

Verse 5 onwards. Remember our problem from last week. We were friends with Satan, the ruler of this world. We actually follow the serpent's lie today just like our first parents did. Week after week, day after day sometimes, we doubt God's good word. We avoid God's yes. We live lives that chase after the things that God says no to. We might not do it openly. We might do it just here. But it's the same. And when you and I live dead lives like that, you might say, oh, well, at least I'm a good person. Really? Oh, at least I'm a hard worker. Really? Even in your highest accolades, let's say you got a great test result.

[16:28] Let's say you got a wonderful promotion. How much of the glory goes to God? How much of it goes to your LinkedIn profile, your social media bragging?

Can you truly say your life consistently honors God? Day in, day out? Or do we live Christian lives that are kind of performative? I don't know if you've seen some of these reels about the performative male, right?

He's the kind of guy who holds matcha, you know, reads a really, you know, trendy book, but only so that, you know, the influencers that walk past, you know, can see that he's kind of sophisticated. Is that you when it comes to the Christian life? We need saving from our sin, not just our disobedience, but actually the obedience we do for show, don't we?

And because sin is the problem and we are the cause, the message of the Bible, again, is you are not your savior, but God has provided one for you. By grace, you've been saved.

[17:33] Do you see that? By grace. And so Ephesians 2, 5 and 6 then keeps going on. By grace, God has made us alive with Christ.

He has raised us up with Christ. He has seated us with Christ. Actually, in this little section, each time you see the word with Christ, you should feel free to chuck in another word together each time, right?

So together with Christ, together with Christ. We're regenerated, right? Together with Christ. We're resurrected, together with Christ, reunited, together with Christ.

What a gift from the God of the universe. He would send his only begotten son into our world to be crucified, crushed for our sins, to pay, make full atonement for the sin of all mankind.

Once we were dead in sin, now Christ's death has made us alive. Once we were buried in darkness, now we are raised up with Christ. Do you believe this?

[18:36] In God's great love, by grace you've been saved. Thirdly, through faith in Jesus Christ, verse 8. But it's by grace you've been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

And here, as you can tell, our statement of faith actually tracks almost word for word with our memory verse, Ephesians 2, 8. Justification is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Through faith, when a person is convicted by the Holy Spirit, to confess their sins, willingly accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, commits their life to Christ, once saved, they are always saved.

And laid out here is what some experts in the Bible call the golden chain of salvation. There's an inseparable link. Those whom the Father knew and predestined, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit calls them, right?

Regenerates them. And then Jesus justifies, makes them right before the Father to the glory of God. The Holy Spirit convicts us, reminds us, realizes, helps us realize we are sinners in need of the Savior.

[19:48] We confess our sins, our need for Jesus, that's all we have to do. We just say, Jesus, I need you. And he dies in our place as a perfect sinless substitute.

It's not, Jesus, I need you, plus, look at my nice results. No, it's not, Jesus, I need you, and by the way, I didn't sin this past week. No, it's just, Jesus, I need you. Please, hold on to me.

That's how we're justified before God, in Christ. Right? Justified, another big word, right? Try and think of it as just as if I'd never sinned.

Right? Justified, just as if I'd never sinned. That's how God sees us when we are justified. We're justified, we're made right before God. The spirit convicts, the savior atones, the father, he justifies us.

He says, he looks at us, sees Jesus' perfect work on the cross for us, and he says, ah, it's just as if you'd never sinned. Not that you didn't, we are still sinners, but he sees you and says, ah, my child,

it's just as if you'd never sinned.

[20 : 55] I love you. And God's great love, by grace you've been saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Number four, not by works.

Right? Verse nine, not by works. What does it say? Not by works. Why am I emphasizing this?

Well, Paul says, so no one can boast.

Right? God's saving grace cannot come by the basis of our good deeds. I mean, think about it. How could our filthy rags, as it were, compare to God's perfection anyways?

How can we say, oh, I'll just pile up all my many, many, many deeds, my good things, and compare to a perfect God who has never, ever sinned? How could my good things, let's say I decided age, I don't know, 15, I'm going to start being good from now on.

What about the first 15 years of my life? What do I do with that? Again, the Holy Spirit convicts us. Jesus Christ atones for our sins.

[21 : 59] The Father sees your sin. No, he doesn't. He sees Christ's perfect work on the cross, and you are justified. He sees you just as if I'd never sinned. That's how it works.

That is the good news of the Bible. Not by works, though. Not by works. This is not a new dilemma, by the way. Not by works, right? Paul's challenge, stop thinking about it as if your works saved you. Went to the shops earlier this morning, looked through the bargain bins at Pack and Save, and what was once viral, I was now sitting in bargain bins, right? Viral Dubai chocolate.

Anyone ever tried that? Viral Dubai? Yes. Yep. Thank you, Julianne, you and me both. Wow. For a while, I had to resist week after week the allure of viral Dubai.

Basically, it's just chocolate laced with pistachio and tahini cream and philo pastry bits. Loved by all kinds of people. Apparently, the guy who invented it was trying to love his pregnant wife and said, I want to give something for her cravings, and then it went viral.

[23 : 13] Viral Dubai. Have you ever heard of something where it's known by its location? Viral Dubai. Well, actually, 500 years before viral Dubai, there was actually viral Wittenberg.

Now, who's had viral Wittenberg? Nobody. Where is Wittenberg? Who is Wittenberg? Okay, Wittenberg is a town in Germany where this happened. So, I'll just put this up.

Alright, this guy is a drawing of a guy called Martin Luther. And, on the 31st of October, Halloween, 1517, he was 34 years old and he nailed 95 statements, alright, basically a long sermon, onto the door of the Wittenberg castle in Germany.

Alright? It seems a bit weird, but actually, this was how things went viral back then. Everyone would come and read what was on the door and then tell their friends.

Or, that printed out again and then tell their friends. And, before long, actually in a couple of weeks, the whole of Germany was talking about what was going on with the viral Wittenberg. Okay? What was on this message, though?

[24 : 25] On this message, he openly challenged, he questioned whether the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, at the time, had the right to sell what was called indulgences, pieces of paper that could cover your remaining sins and also fundraise for some of their church renovations at the time.

Martin Luther was not quite comfortable with that, but not because he didn't want the church to have all that support, but he read the scriptures and the scriptures taught that it wasn't penance, right? Paying back the church or giving something back to the church that marked the life of a true follower of Jesus. It wasn't penance, it was actually repentance, right? Turning away from sin on the inside to God.

And so he put up this challenge and then said, let's have a chat about this, right? It was a big move at the time, but actually this set off a firestorm, this set off a recovery of this truth that we're talking about, not by works, right?

but by grace through faith that we're saved. This Wittenberg publication, yes, it went viral with the help of the printing press of course, which had just been invented. Everyone in Germany soon began talking about this good news of God's grace.

[25 : 41] What was rediscovered here out of viral Wittenberg was this message that we've been talking about, right? From the whole Bible, okay? What does the whole Bible point us to? What does it show us?

You are not your own savior, but there is someone who is, right? And so actually later on, some of Luther's friends and students, they later summarized this truth, right?

These core truths of what's called the Reformation. And they summed up in kind of five alone statements. From the Bible alone, right, comes our assurance that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone, to God's glory alone, all right?

Bible alone was saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone, to God's glory alone. I had to make this point, right, and make it memorable because our proud hearts, even today, keep wanting to take credit for our own salvation.

You and I, we're like Pokemon masters. We say to God, I choose you. But God cannot be held in a box. That's not how it works. He's not our pocket monster.

[26 : 53] He's our glorious savior, is he not? Brothers and sisters, you see, if salvation in any way depends on your efforts, your decision, then it can just as easily become, I don't choose you.

How little guarantee you can have then, actually, that God will keep you. if your salvation depends on just your efforts. No. Now, don't get me wrong.

When God calls you to follow him, in Christ, and you follow that journey, actually, it is a daily decision. It is a daily, it is a daily choice of repentance and faith.

But if it's Christ who first raised us to life, then it is Christ and his grace who clothes us with the power to keep saying yes to Jesus and no to the world.

Does that make sense? It has to all be his grace because then all the glory goes to him. If it was kind of his grace plus my own efforts, right, and my, you know, my baptism certificate and, you know, what I said the other day, that was really nice, then the glory doesn't go to him.

[28 : 06] It starts to creep towards what I did. And so church, we actually have to be very careful because this kind of slide back can happen so easily, can't it?

Right? Because, let me ask you a question, what makes you a Christian? You might say, oh, I'm a Christian because I go to church every week. No, that's not what makes you a Christian.

What makes you a Christian? Oh, I'm a Christian because I play, you know, music for the Lord and I teach in Sunday. That's not what makes you a Christian. What makes you a Christian is that God has saved you by grace through faith in Christ, isn't it?

That's the only thing we cling to. That's the only thing we can fully rely on, our salvation by grace. And we have to be careful because in church we can kind of choke it all up.

We can say, I'm a Christian because I've been in the education department for five years or I'm a Christian because I have grown up in this church. Yeah, these are not good answers, right?

[29 : 10] These are not the answers that Paul gives. So we want to be careful. Let me paint another way. Like, let's say you're drowning in the ocean. Okay, who wants to drown in the ocean this summer? Nobody, right?

Let's say you're drowning in the ocean, right? How are you going to be saved? Someone has to throw you something, like a life-saving ring, right? It's actually, though, not how strongly you hold on to the life-saving ring that will save you, right?

In a sense, it could be, but actually, how secure is that ring? Is it tied to the boat, right? That's what will save you from perishing, and so it is with our saving grace.

The Bible says, in God's great love, by grace you've been saved, through faith in Jesus Christ, not by works. And finally, number five, four good works.

But hang on, didn't I just, like, tell you for the last ten minutes it's not by works? Where does works come into it then, right? Have a look at verse 10. For we are God's, actually, more literally, workmanship, craftsmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

[30 : 21] Can you see that? This is a final line. I get it's not part of our memory verse, but actually, this is actually really overlooked, isn't it? This is the place for good works in the Christian life.

Verse 10 flows out of verse 8 and 9. Wow, there is a place for good works and a life of faithful obedience. The reformer, John Calvin, once put it this way, it's therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone.

Just as it is the heat alone of the sun which warms the earth, and yet in the sun it's not alone because now it's constantly joined with the light, right? Okay.

The warm, I don't know, beach, the sand on the beach cannot take credit for being warm, right? It's the sun that does it, but in the sun's light everything else changes. You see that?

So what good works has God graced you with? Church. Because that's part of your salvation by grace too, isn't it? And isn't it wonderful he's prepared it beforehand?

[31 : 29] Even before you were baptized, God knew, wow, I've marked this brother or sister out for this kind of service in the church. Even before you repented and trusted Jesus, wow, God has already said, I prepared for this dear child all the different ways, that he will glorify me and magnify the name of Jesus.

There's a sense, isn't there, that actually when God saves you he becomes your new master. Once you were slaves to sin, now you become slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isn't that amazing? Isn't that beautiful? And he's not a master that is like this to you all the time, oh, you should have done better. No. Remember our Father's heart, great in love, rich in mercy.

So excited at how you will grow and develop into the man and woman that God has planned for you to be. This is what it looks like to live the Christian life.

We're saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by our works at all. But he's prepared us for good works as a result of that grace. Isn't that beautiful?

[32 : 41] And grace actually needs to be everything in our lives. Let me close with a very brief story. This was shared to me by one of my old teachers at college.

And Derek, he once shared a story about his friend back when he was at uni. He knew a girl who was called Grace. And so you want to imagine his friend Grace wasn't particularly rich.

But one day she sent out an invitation to everyone she knew. All her Christian friends, all her non-Christian friends, and said, come to a big party I'm hosting.

And in fact, she's booked out the great hall of the old Parliament House, a really, really bougie venue. And she calls the party Grace's Everything Party.

And people are like, wow, it's not her birthday. What's going on? Why is she celebrating? As my friend Derek shared, everyone who got the invitation, they were just so intrigued. What's this all about? She's going to make a big announcement.

[33 : 40] And, you know, when the night came, it was a real party. It wasn't like pretend. It was lavish. The food and drink, the entertainment was beautiful, amazing.

But then there was no big announcement or anything like that. There was no, and now you've got to pay me back or I'm fundraising for something. No. But at one point in the party, Grace just stood up and she explained that Grace's Everything Party was to celebrate that Grace is Everything.

She wanted to spend the money that she had in a party that said, thank you to God for His grace, for everyone to come and hear of His grace and to experience it and to hear that God's grace is everything.

Grace is everything. Isn't that a beautiful story? It's true. It's even more true for us, right? And the Bible tells us, embedded in our statement of faith, pulsing through every genuine Christian life, is the truth.

Grace is everything. Grace is everything. And whether you're still here and you're still working out, what does it look like to be saved by grace? What does grace look like in my life?

[34 : 56] Whether you are just trying to work out what exactly it means, or whether you're here and you're so thankful, maybe you want to throw your own grace is everything party.

My prayer is that more and more, as a church, we become a group of people shaped by God's grace, right? Not just at the center of a bunch of statements of faith, but actually we show this grace to each other.

Just as God has been gracious to us, we are gracious to one another. Just as God has been kind to you, your kindness overflows in lives that make a difference.

Not to save you, right? Not by works, but these are part of the four good works that God has provided for you and planned for you. Because we as a church believe that justification is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

let's pray. Father God, we were once your enemies, and yet now you have graciously seated us at your table.

[36 : 10] So we thank you. you. And we thank you that the grace that saves us from eternal condemnation, from eternity and suffering apart from your love, your grace continues to shape and change each of us.

us. Father, I pray this to be true of everyone here at PCBC, young and old. And I thank you so much, Father. The grace that redeemed us from the beginning is the grace that continues to clothe us with the power to do what is right.

And it will be the same grace that leads us home to you. So help us to celebrate this grace. Let it be true that grace is everything here at PCBC English. Not our works, not how good we are, not how qualified we seem before people.
That grace would be everything. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.