

GRACE PT. 2



Table of Contents

- Seek Him
- Context of Ephesians 2:8
- Paul in Ephesus
- More Context in Ephesians
- “Not-Quite Parable of the Burning Building”

Scriptures Cited:

Psalm 27:8, John 17:3, Ephesians 2:8-9, Ephesians 1:1, Acts 19:1-9, Acts 9:17-18, Acts 22:16, Ephesians 2:4, John 3:16, Ephesians 2:5-10, Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21

SEEK HIM

Before we get into the subject of this lesson, I want to look at a scripture that will remind us of what our approach should be whenever we study the Bible.

Psalm 27:8

⁸ When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

The reason I wanted to read that before we start this lesson, is to remind us to always be mindful that this should be our attitude; this should be our goal. When we worship, when we study the Bible, when we sing praises, when we take the communion – it should always be with a heart and with the attitude of seeking the face of the Lord.

We always want to make sure that we are seeking God, not just to know more *about* Him, but to actually come to **know Him**. As we saw in [Grace Pt. 1](#), according to John 17:3 Jesus says “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”.

So, I just want us to be mindful as we enter into this lesson, to live our lives with the goal of always seeking the face of the Lord.

As a quick review of our first [Grace lesson](#), we looked into the dictionary definitions of "grace". We then focused on the biblical examples of grace through the accounts of Noah and Jesus, to understand how "saving grace" operates in the Bible. And in this lesson we will gain a deeper understanding of "saved by grace through faith" in Ephesians 2:8, by looking at the context in which this was written.

CONTEXT OF EPHESIANS 2:8

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

This verse often comes up in Bible discussions and has somewhat become a slogan when talking about salvation, and how it is that we are actually saved. It is usually used as a "proof-text" when questions arise about the purpose and necessity of baptism in salvation, or whether we are just saved by grace, or by faith. Some even go so far as to label baptism as a "work". But hopefully in this lesson we will see how these biblical principles actually work together.

So, in order to get the proper understanding of this scripture, we will go back to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 1, where we will begin to see the context of what Paul was writing.

Ephesians 1:1

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

So right there, that gives us some context by letting us know *who* this letter was directed to: the saints in Ephesus, and the faithful **in** Christ Jesus.

The importance of this information can be highlighted by imagining if there were two different audiences reading Paul's letter:

1. A person who knows the gospel, has believed, and obeyed the gospel
2. A person who has heard the gospel and wants to be saved

If you were to go to that person who knows and obeyed the gospel – and say to them 'You are saved by grace through faith', they would understand it in light of their obedience.

But if you go to the second person who desires salvation and has not yet obeyed the gospel - and say to them 'You are saved by grace through faith' it would have a totally different connotation. You would be giving them an explanation of salvation instead of giving them instructions for salvation - and that would be misleading in light of the totality of scripture.

With that being said, let's look a little bit closer at the audience that Paul was writing to (the saints in Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus). We will examine how Paul interacted with them **while he was in Ephesus**, to gain a better understanding of what he wrote in his letter to that church in Ephesus.

PAUL IN EPHEBUS

In the 19th chapter of the book of Acts, is where we find the account of Paul in Ephesus.

Acts 19:1-9

¹ And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

² He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. ³ And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

⁴ Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. ⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. ⁷ And all the men were about twelve.

⁸ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Note: Notice that Paul was preaching the kingdom of God. This is one of the many examples proving that Paul preached the same gospel as Jesus and the other apostles.

⁹ But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

So we see that when Paul made his journey into Ephesus, he was there for about 2 years, preaching the kingdom of God and persuading many. But we see that when he first arrived, he found some who believed and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. Their response was that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit, and had only been baptized unto John's baptism. Paul then preached Jesus to them, and when they believed, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. We also see in this case, that they received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of his hands.

This gives some context as to *who* the letter of Ephesians was written to. It wasn't written to the outside world, it was written to the "saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" and Acts chapter 19 gives us an account of how they became saints in Christ Jesus. They heard the gospel, they believed the gospel, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and they received the Holy Spirit (**that is how they were saved**). When Paul writes 'you are saved by grace through faith' to the Ephesians, he is not informing them on *how* to be saved; he is actually elaborating on the salvation that they had *already received*.

MORE CONTEXT IN EPHESUS

It is interesting to note that if you were to read the book of Ephesians from the beginning of chapter 1, considering what the context is and who this is written to... you will notice the many times Paul uses the words "we" and "us" and "our". This lets us know that this is written to people who have already come into the *same* salvation that Paul himself had (see Acts 9:17-18 and Acts 22:16).

Keeping what we have just read in mind, let's go back to the book of Ephesians in chapter 2, and we're going to read what precedes verses 8 and 9, to give us a little more context, in order to make sure that we're getting a complete understanding of what's being said here. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 4 reads:

Ephesians 2:4

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

This is one of the examples where Paul uses the word "us". Also, we see it says "God, who is rich in mercy" and in the last lesson, we talked about mercy and grace being like two sides of the same coin. Mercy is when you *don't* receive a bad thing that you deserve, and grace is when you *do* receive a good thing that you don't deserve.

So, we see here that as Paul is leading into his comments about their salvation, he's already mentioning the mercy of God. After that he says "for his great love wherewith he loved us" and that is really the key. God's grace and God's mercy are both based on His love for us. This takes us back to John 3:16 'for God so loved the world that He sent His only son...' That *is* the grace of God, that was God showing His goodness to us, that was Him showing His love to us by sending His son and providing a Way for us to be saved.

But let's go ahead and keep reading here in verse 5.

Ephesians 2:5-7

⁵ *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)* ⁶ *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

⁷ *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

So now this leads us right up to where we were in verse 8. Once again you will notice it says “in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us..” His grace and His kindness – this really is His goodness.

We don't use that word 'grace' too often, and it's kind of lost its true meaning in religious circles. But another way we can look at the meaning is if you think of what it's like to visit a good friend in their home. You would say 'oh he was a very gracious host, he was very gracious to invite us in.' And all that really means is that he was good; he was good to you, he was kind. So that is how we can understand what Paul was saying here. **God's goodness to us is the reason we are saved.** So that was verse 7, and now in verse 8 we read:

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:* ⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

So now after looking at *who* this was written to (believers who have already obeyed the gospel)... and reading a little more of the context, we realize that it was because of God's great love that He has shown His grace to us. Hopefully, we're getting a better understanding of that verse; it is not something that should be held up in opposition to what the Bible says about the role of baptism in salvation (Mark 16:16). His love and grace are actually at the foundation of salvation, but that does not nullify His instruction concerning the way to be saved.

Now what I'd like to do is use an example to illustrate the different ways of looking at salvation in a “not-quite-parable”.

“NOT-QUITE PARABLE OF THE BURNING BUILDING”

So let's just imagine that one Sunday you are in a church building. And unbeknownst to anyone there, in one of the back rooms there is faulty wiring and an electrical fire starts. And there just so happens to be a neighbor outside, who is walking his dog. He notices the smoke coming from the building, and decides 'I'm going to run in there and let them know that the building's on fire.' So he darts in and says "Hey guys, the building's on fire – everybody needs to get out!" So everyone kind of looks around at each other, thinking 'we're not really sure who this guy is...' but one person hearing him, gets up and immediately leaves with the neighbor.

The rest just shrug their shoulders and say "Eh, I don't see any fire and I don't smell any smoke." But outside, that good neighbor talks to the one person who escaped, and says "Where is everybody else? Why didn't they come?" and that person says "I guess they didn't believe you."

So the good neighbor runs back in again and says "You guys, you've got to believe me, the building's on fire!" And after that, almost everyone exits, except two people. So now you have a group that left after the second warning. And the neighbor outside asks "Okay, is everyone here?" but someone says "Well actually no, there are still two people inside".

So he says "Okay" and runs back in. After he's been in there a while, the people outside who are watching the building, see the smoke and flames starting to intensify. And it's looking pretty serious. Next thing you know, of the two people that stayed, one of them comes out. They are covered in smoke, barely escaping. Everyone is now waiting for the good neighbor and that one last person to come out – but they never do. The building ends up burning up while they are inside.

By now, the first responders are there and a local news crew shows up. The reporter begins to ask "Okay guys, what happened? How did you escape? How were you saved?" And that first person who got out says "Well, the neighbor came in and he told us that the building was on fire and that we needed to get out, and I **believed** him. I was the first one out of there".

And then the reporter goes over to someone from the next group and says "Okay, well how were you saved? How did you get out?". And one of them says "Well, when the neighbor came in and said what he said – I believed him. I **jumped up, I hurdled a couple pews, I ran as fast as I could**... I haven't ran that fast since high school. And I got to the door and I was helping other people out, and so that's how I got out."

And then the last person who came out says “Wait, wait – wait a minute. Are you trying to say that you saved yourself? That what you did is the reason why you were saved? If it wasn’t for the goodness of that good neighbor, that good Samaritan – **if it wasn’t for him showing his goodness by running in here, none of us would be saved.** The only reason we were saved is because he was good enough to run in here and warn us. And yeah, we believed him, got out and were saved.”

Then the reporter says “Okay, well I’ve got to make this concise. I’m getting three different stories here on what happened. So, can I sum it up by saying:

“The good neighbor – the good Samaritan came in and told everyone what was happening. He told you guys how you could be saved... and those who believed and acted on that belief were saved.. but the one person who wouldn’t believe, they perished. Is that another way I could say it?”

The first one that escaped says “Well yeah, but make sure you emphasize that it was because we believed him.” And another person says “Don’t forget – I was sprinting like I was in high school”. And another person says “No, it was the neighbor’s goodness – that’s how we were saved.”

As you can see, there are four different ways that we could explain that same scenario, that same salvation, though there was only one scenario that took place.

There was only *one* way that people were saved, but there’s four different ways it could be explained, and similarly we see that in the Bible:

- In some cases it will say ‘you were saved by believing’ or ‘you were saved by your **faith**’ (this is comparable to the first person who was saved from the fire).
- And in other places like 1 Peter 3:21, it says ‘baptism now saves us’ (this is comparable to the person who emphasized that they were sprinting to escape the fire) – focusing on what it is that **we do**.
- So going back to what we read in Ephesians 2:8, when Paul explains ‘No, it’s by **grace** – it’s by God’s goodness that you’re saved’, this is comparable to the last person who escaped, saying ‘it was the neighbor’s goodness that saved us’.
- The fourth perspective would be the **summary of all of the above**, like what we see in Mark 16:16. This parallels with the reporter’s summary of what happened in the parable.

In Ephesians, Paul was speaking to people who – when he met them, he made sure that they believed the gospel. He made sure that they were baptized in the name of the Lord, and he made sure that they had received the Holy Spirit. And so when he's writing to those people, he's not discounting what they had done before. He's just letting them know, that had it not been for the goodness of God, had it not been for His grace and sending His son to give us a way to be saved, none of us would be saved. **Paul was not focusing on what they had done, but rather God's goodness which allows us to be saved.**

So hopefully that gives us a broader understanding of what's being said here by Paul - a little bit of context, that when he says that you are saved by grace, it is not something that conflicts with what the rest of the scriptures say - that we are saved by believing and being baptized, that we are saved by obeying the gospel, that we are saved by receiving His Spirit. It is all one big picture and it needs to be understood as such.

And that brings us to the question: How is it that we receive the grace of God? It says the grace of God is how we're saved, so how do we receive it? Well, the way that we receive it is the same way that the people in Ephesus that this letter was written to, received it. **They heard the gospel, they believed the gospel, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-9).**

So I would say to you, if you haven't heard the gospel, if you haven't believed it, if you haven't been baptized in the name of the one who was crucified for you, and if you haven't received the Holy Spirit, can you *actually* say that you have fully received the grace of God? Because according to the scripture, that is the way we actually receive the goodness that God has shown us.

So today, if you would like to accept His grace or even study more of what the Bible tells us about salvation, you can contact us at www.hisway.life/contact or by [clicking here](#), and we will help you in any way possible to fully come into the grace of God.