

Reformation Observed / October 26, 2025

Ephesians 2:8

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."*

Saved by Grace, Received through Faith

Reformation Sunday provides an annual opportunity to remember and reflect upon the truth of the Gospel, salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. The Gospel is the reconciliation between God and human beings earned through the obedience, suffering and death of Jesus. The Gospel is the salvation God offers the world to receive through faith in Christ Jesus. The Gospel is the promise of forgiveness and eternal life God gives to all who receive Jesus into their hearts through faith and believe in Him as their only God and Saviour. Believe Him! He calls you now! The gospel is the grace of God in Christ Jesus offered for all people no matter who they are, where they come from, or what sins they have committed, given to all who believe. The gospel is that we are saved by God's grace in Christ Jesus, received through faith in Him as our God and Saviour.

The words of our text from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians are key to understanding both our nature as human beings in relation to God and God's nature in relation to us as human beings. We are by nature dead in relationship with God. Paul writes, *"And you were dead in the trespasses in which you once walked, following the course of this world."* We express the deadness of our relationship with God by being hostile to Him in action and attitude. Paul says, we are by nature children of wrath, sons of disobedience. We are disobedient against God, resisting His will, *"carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,"* without so much as a thought for God or any concern for His thoughts, if they come to our minds at all. How would we relate to people who were actively hostile to us, doing everything they could to displease, annoy and anger us? How does God respond to us? Paul says that God, who is *"rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loves us,"* made us alive in Christ. God seeks to bless us with His grace for the sake of Christ Jesus!

Generally speaking, if we want to be on good terms with people we need to find ways to please them, to entice them to be on good terms with us. First impressions are important. If we find ourselves on bad terms with a person from the start, the challenge is even more daunting. Now we have to get them to forget all that bad

stuff about us that annoyed them in the past. Sometimes it's an impossible task. If we get into someone's bad books that's probably where we are going to stay. That's human nature. Consider how God relates to us in Jesus Christ. Paul says that even before we thought of getting into His good books, God took the initiative in Christ Jesus to get us into His good book. He gave Jesus into the world to reconcile it to Himself through the blood of His cross. He gives Jesus into our hearts through faith to reconcile us personally to Himself. He saves us by His grace received through faith in Christ Jesus. By grace we are saved through faith, not as our own doing, but as the gift of God.

Salvation is one of the most frequent words and overriding concepts in the bible. Salvation is at the heart of scripture and the centre of our reading from Ephesians. Paul says, *"By grace you have been saved."* Then he says it again, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith."* Saved from what? The catechism answer is from sin, the devil and death. Sin is everything we do to disrespect God and others. The sin of the world is before our eyes in the violence and hatred that infects our societies. Sin is seen in the irony of people holding vigils outside prisons opposing the death penalty, celebrating the murder of people who support the death penalty. The sin of the world is the way people abuse each other and treat their fellow human beings as a commodity to make a profit. The sin of the world is our indifference to the suffering of others. Salvation in the bible is first and foremost being set free from the forces within ourselves that resist God and bring hurt to others.

Salvation in the bible is God coming to save His people. First from our outward circumstances. Secondly and most importantly from our inward condition of sin. God's first great act of salvation in the bible was saving the children of Israel from the Egyptians. That was easy in comparison to His greatest act of salvation, saving the children of Israel from themselves. Salvation is God saving us from our sinfulness, which chains us and brings misery to others and to ourselves. God gave His Son, begotten from eternity, to share our humanity in this world in bondage to sin, under the power of the devil, to take our place in the condemnation of death. How deep the Father's love for us! He gave Jesus to be one with us in our humanity, so that through Him we would be forgiven our sins, delivered from our sinfulness and one day share forever in the glorious freedom of God's children in eternal life. By grace we are saved through faith in Christ Jesus.

Grace is an equally important word in the bible and goes hand in hand with salvation. Grace is the undeserved kindness of God. Grace is that God looks upon our afflictions caused by our sin and sinfulness and feels compassion for us. Grace is the counter-balance to God's justice. Grace is that God does not treat us as our sins deserve, but instead treats us with kindness for the sake of Christ Jesus. The psalmists sang, "*with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared.*" This is not the fear of punishment that comes with feelings of guilt. It is the awe of realizing that though our sins are as many as the sands of the sea, they are forgiven for the sake Jesus, His blood and righteousness. Grace is that God knows our sinfulness, which make us dead in relationship to Him and hostile in our attitude and actions towards Him, but nevertheless He continues to love us. Grace is that God feels for us and seeks relationship with us. Grace is the father in Jesus' parable of the rebellious son, who watched his son go his way, which brought poverty and ruin to himself and pain to the family he left behind. But who waited for him with open arms and upon his return, received him back with loving arms.

God's grace is His undeserved kindness expressed fully and most incomprehensibly in Christ Jesus, whom He gave to share in our humanness and to bear the guilt of our sin in the sacrifice of His cross. Grace is that although there is nothing in us that makes us loveable to God, He loves us nonetheless. He loves us and comes to us in Christ Jesus that He would make us loveable in the forgiveness of our sins and in the bestowal of Christ's righteousness to cover our sinfulness. Grace is God's work of salvation in our lives by which His Spirit opens our eyes to see our sin and sinfulness and then opens our hearts to receive Jesus as our God and only Saviour. Grace is not our doing. Grace is the gift of God's forgiveness received through faith in Christ Jesus. There is nothing more amazing than the grace of God in Christ Jesus!

Salvation, grace and faith are key words in the bible. Salvation is deliverance from the consequence of our sin, the bondage of sinfulness and the condemnation of eternal death. Grace is that God does not treat us as our sins deserve or according to His justice. Grace is that God gives Jesus to fulfill His justice, so that instead of receiving what our sins deserve, we receive what He has earned, forgiveness, reconciliation with God in a relationship of peace and the inheritance of eternal life in His presence in the resurrection of Christ. Faith is believing God's salvation for the sake of Christ Jesus. On one level it sounds, easy, perhaps too good to be true. All we need to do to receive it is to believe it. Yet how hard is it for people to believe! Deep down inside a part of us struggles to believe. Faith is the

gift of God given through word and working of the Holy Spirit. Faith is both the means by which we receive salvation for the sake of God's grace in Christ Jesus and the greatest miracle of God.

People will more easily believe we evolved from a single cell that spontaneously came into existence and somehow mutated into all the myriad species on earth, than believe the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Grace is God overcoming the doubt of our hearts. Grace is God making us alive to Himself through faith in Christ Jesus. Faith is the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to first make us conscious of our sins and sinfulness and then bringing us to repentance through the grace of God in Christ Jesus. There is nothing on earth harder than the human heart. The only thing harder is the word of God, by which the Holy Spirit breaks through our hardness and gives us faith in Christ Jesus. His word is a hammer that breaks away our hardness. His word gives hearing to the deaf in spirit and life to the dead in spirit. Through the word of the gospel, the Holy Spirit gives us ears to hear and hearts to believe in Jesus as our God and Saviour. This is not our own doing. It is the gift and working of God.

On the Sunday of the Reformation, we celebrate the grace of God in Christ Jesus, revealed to us in the sacred scriptures, implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ Jesus. We are saved by grace received through faith in Christ Jesus. This is not our own doing. It is the gift of God. Praise His Holy Name. In Jesus' Name. Amen.