

## **Continuing in the Word, Saved By Grace through Faith Ephesians 2:8, 9**

What an example Paul is of being saved by grace through faith! He was confident that he was secure in his works, but those very works led Him down the path of opposing the only one who could save him. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, zealous, and a keeper of the law in every detail. And out of this self-righteousness he became a persecutor of the church, thinking he was standing for God when in fact he was opposing Him.

Remember what Jesus said to him on the road to Damascus? "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" What a shock it was for Saul to be confronted by Jesus whom Paul had rejected as Savior and to find that Jesus was who He claimed to be – the Messiah, God who had come in the flesh to pay the price for sin. This was the turning point for Paul. He hadn't earned it, hadn't pursued it, and was actually headed in the exact opposite direction, doing that which made him most undeserving, and God intervened!

It's interesting how Paul's perspective was changed. All those things he had valued and clung to before were now nothing to him. His background, upbringing, his keeping of the law, his zeal – he now knew they were nothing. "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:7, 8).

According to the meaning of the word "loss" Paul counted all his past claims and works as a detriment, or as damage to him. Such things were a hindrance to true salvation. In light of the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ Paul now counted such things as garbage. Such things were as worthless and useless as chaff, and as appealing as a pile of dung. Paul knew that he had brought nothing to the table in the transaction of salvation.

He then says that he wants to be found in Christ, not by his own righteousness, but by the righteousness that comes from God (Philippians 3:9). That is the only righteousness that will do, because that is the only righteousness that is truly righteous. And Paul knew how that righteousness came – by the means of faith in Jesus Christ, and faith in nothing else.

It is the same for us. We bring nothing to the table in the transaction of salvation. We are undeserving in every way. Isaiah 64:6 puts it this way: "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness's are like

filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." But by God's grace He intervenes on our behalf and through the means of faith we respond to His grace and are saved.

It will serve us well to remember our total dependence on Christ and our utter lostness apart from Him. There is no place for pride in the life of a Christian. Our salvation is no exception to that. All there is room for is praise and worship to God who has saved us by His great gift of grace through faith.

Pastor Jim