

Saved By Grace

Joe Slater

Satan has a vested interest in perverting the truth. As Jesus said, *“he is a liar and the father of it”* (John 8:44). The old serpent has deceived multitudes with the Evangelical falsehood of salvation by “grace alone.” As we strive against that error, let us avoid the temptation to deny the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace. To say we somehow earn or merit salvation is every bit as much a doctrine of the devil as “grace alone.”

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). How could words be clearer? A gift, by definition, cannot be earned. Grace, by definition, is unmerited favor.

Much of the controversy stems from assigning a one-size-fits-all definition to “works.” Scripture speaks of several kinds of works. There are works that earn you the right to boast; Paul specifically said such works will not save. There are works of the Law of Moses; they couldn’t save people who lived under that Law, and they certainly can’t save us today since we’re not even under that covenant! James chapter two deals with works of obedience that complete one’s faith and result in salvation. Abraham offering Isaac, for example, was a work of obedience; in no way did Abraham think he was earning anything.

An obvious issue today is baptism. Evangelicals falsely claim it can’t be necessary for salvation because, according to them, baptism is a work. Seriously? Letting someone plunge you under water is earning salvation? By that flawed logic, Naaman earned healing from leprosy by dipping seven times in Jordan. That’s preposterous! Naaman was cleansed by God’s grace when he obeyed. We, likewise, are cleansed from sin by God’s grace when we obey Him in baptism. In no way is that a work of merit!

What Defines You?

“For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect” (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

What defines you? A select few throughout history thought their titles of nobility defined them: kings, queens, or nobles. The vast majority during that same time thought that they were defined by their titles of servitude: peasant, serf, or slave. Those who believed this pernicious foolishness trapped themselves and others inside a lie. There is no noble blood, only human blood.

Others allow their professions to define them: doctors, lawyers, or, yes, even preachers. Still others allow their race, nationality, or social status to define them. History tends to define people by their accomplishments (“William the Conqueror”) or failures (unfairly, “Doubting Thomas”). In that regard, Saul of Tarsus could very well have been defined as “Saul the Persecutor.” Instead, he is the Apostle Paul.

Paul tells his Corinthian family and us, why: *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”* There it is! Paul would not allow anything else to define him! His life would not be defined by what had happened to him, but by what God had done for him.

At 11 months of age, I became a victim of polio. I could have become, Tim the victim. BUT I was blessed with great parents, family, and church! The identity as victim is a self-imposed, debilitating prison. I chose and still choose today to be defined by what God has done for me, and it is all grace.

So, I shall end where I began: What defines you?

--Tim Kelley (Littleton, CO)

WATCH YOUR STEP!

Who did you influence this week? Did someone change a bad habit because of the good example you set for them? Did someone not say a curse word because they know that you’re a Christian and you don’t approve? Did someone commit to a more wholesome lifestyle because they’ve observed the patience and contentment that you possess in your life? Did you encourage someone to be more positive and happy?

Because you are a Christian, you have a great amount of influence on the lives of other people. They look to you for guidance even though they may never ask for it. They respect your judgment though they may never ask for your advice. But they are constantly watching you and how you conduct yourself in every situation. We must always be aware that the eyes of the innocent, immature, and unsaved are fixed on our every move. In order not to disappoint them or lead them in the wrong direction, we must watch every step.

The bible teaches us that we must even be willing to sacrifice our liberties in order to keep someone from sinning. The Apostle Paul said, *“I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean”* (Romans 14:14). However *“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak”* (Romans 14:21).

This week, commit to being a better example to those around you. Have you recently made someone stronger or caused them to be weaker spiritually? Remember, “Watch your step!”

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)