



## **Shelby Christian Church**

CORE 52: GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD - GRACE

EPHESIANS 2:8, LUKE 15, ROMANS 3:23-24, 10:13 \* 11/09/2025

### **MAIN POINT**

By Grace you have been saved by Faith.

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Why do you think our culture struggles with the notion of grace so much?**

**What issues arise when we don't get the relationship between grace and works correct within the church?**

**Spend a few minutes discussing the various titles people use to distinguish themselves. What titles come to mind? (For example: doctor, reverend, professor, or lieutenant) Why do we like to have titles associated with our names? What do these titles tell other people about us?**

People like to be introduced with titles of distinction, Paul introduced himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. This sets the tone of humility and selflessness that believers are to demonstrate, an attitude modeled by Christ Himself. Most lost people cannot fathom the grace of Jesus Christ. Even some Christians struggle with the idea of grace over works.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 2:8**

**Why is it significant that salvation is described as a “gift of God”?**

**How does this verse contrast God’s work with human effort?**

**What does this verse teach about the sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross for salvation?**

Ephesians 2:8 emphasizes that salvation is entirely a work of God’s grace. Believers are saved through faith, but this faith itself is a response to God’s gift, not a product of human effort or achievement. Salvation is described as a gift, highlighting that it is undeserved and freely given by God. The verse underscores that no one can earn their way into a relationship with God; it is solely by His mercy and the work of Christ. This truth encourages humility, gratitude, and reliance on God rather than on personal merit.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 15**

**What do these parables teach about God’s heart for the lost?**

**What similarities exist between the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son in terms of God’s pursuit of the lost?**

**In the parable of the prodigal son, what do the responses of the father and the older son reveal about God’s forgiveness and human attitudes toward grace?**

**How can we celebrate and encourage one another when someone turns to God or grows in faith?**

The chapter emphasizes God’s love, mercy, and joy over the repentance and restoration of the lost. It also contrasts God’s generosity with human tendencies toward pride, self-righteousness, and jealousy. Luke 15 teaches that God actively pursues those who are lost, desires their repentance, and rejoices when they are restored, calling believers to reflect this same grace and joy in their own lives.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 15:11**

**What does it mean that salvation is “through the grace of our Lord Jesus”?**

**Why was it important for the early church to clarify that salvation is by grace, not by law or works?**

**How does this verse reflect the broader theme of God’s sovereignty and mercy in salvation?**

In Acts 15:11, the early church affirms that salvation—both for Jewish and Gentile believers—is entirely by the grace of Jesus Christ. This statement comes during the Jerusalem Council, where the apostles and elders were addressing whether Gentiles needed to follow the Mosaic Law to be saved. Peter declares that salvation is not earned by works or adherence to the law but is a gift of God’s grace, received through faith in Jesus. This verse highlights the equality of all believers before God and reinforces the central Christian teaching that God’s mercy and grace, rather than human effort, are the basis of salvation.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 3:23-24**

**What does it mean that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”?**

**How does the phrase “justified freely by his grace” emphasize God’s initiative in salvation?**

**What is the role of “redemption through Christ Jesus” in making justification possible?**

**How do these verses highlight the relationship between human sinfulness and God’s grace?**

These verses emphasize both the problem of human sin and the unearned, gracious solution provided by God. They teach that salvation is not earned by works but is a gift received through faith, underscoring God’s mercy, the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice, and the inclusivity of His offer of redemption.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 10:13**

**What does it mean to “call on the name of the Lord”?**

**How does this verse relate to God’s grace and human response?**

**Why does Paul emphasize “everyone”—who does this include?**

Romans 10:13 declares a simple yet profound truth: salvation is available to everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. This verse emphasizes both the inclusivity of God's offer—no one is excluded—and the accessibility of salvation through faith. Calling on the Lord involves acknowledging one's need, trusting in Jesus Christ, and turning to Him for deliverance. The verse highlights God's grace and willingness to save, showing that salvation does not depend on human merit, heritage, or effort, but on faith and reliance on Christ. It reassures believers of God's readiness to receive all who seek Him and underscores the universality of the gospel.

## APPLICATION

**Share a time when you were given something (a gift, opportunity, or experience) you absolutely did not deserve. How did that make you feel toward the person who gave it to you?**

**Can you give an example of a person who felt they had to earn love in a relationship (parent/child, husband/wife, etc.)? What dangers arise in this kind of relationship?**

**What is the difference between the words "faith" and "fidelity"?**

**Is there an area of your life that you are not showing God the loyalty that reflects his grace to you? What step could you take to align with God's grace in that area?**

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

### Ephesians 2:8

Ephesians 2:8 is a foundational verse for understanding the nature of salvation in the New Testament. Paul clearly teaches that salvation is entirely by God's grace and is received through faith. It is not the result of human effort, good works, or moral achievement, but a free gift from God. The phrase "it is not from yourselves" emphasizes that no one can claim credit for earning salvation; it is wholly initiated and accomplished by God.

Grace refers to God's unmerited favor toward sinners, highlighting that salvation is undeserved. Faith is the means by which believers receive this gift—it is the personal trust and reliance on Christ. Importantly, faith itself is empowered by God and is not merely human decision or effort. This verse therefore establishes a balance: salvation is fully God's work, yet it requires a response of faith from the individual.

Theologically, Ephesians 2:8 contrasts divine initiative with human self-reliance, assuring believers that their standing before God is secure because it is based on God's work, not their own. Practically, it calls for humility, gratitude, and reliance on God in the Christian life. Understanding salvation as a gift also frees believers from the burden of trying to earn God's favor and encourages a life of thankful obedience.

In context, this verse leads naturally into verse 9, which clarifies that good works are the fruit of salvation, not the cause. Together, they show that God's grace provides both the foundation for salvation and the motivation for holy living.

### Luke 15

Luke 15 contains three parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son—that collectively reveal God’s heart for the lost and His joy in their restoration. Each story emphasizes God’s pursuit, mercy, and delight in repentance.

### The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1–7)

Context: Jesus is addressing the criticism of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who were upset that He welcomed sinners.

Meaning: The shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to find the one that is lost, demonstrating God’s personal care and attention to each individual. Salvation is not only for the majority who are secure but for those who are lost and in need of restoration.

Application: God values every person; we are called to show similar concern and care for those who are spiritually lost.

### The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)

Meaning: A woman searches diligently for a lost coin and rejoices when she finds it. This parable emphasizes the value God places on every individual and the joy in heaven when a sinner repents.

Application: We can mirror God’s joy and persistence by praying for, seeking, and celebrating the spiritual restoration of others.

### The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32)

Meaning: A young man squanders his inheritance but returns home in repentance. His father warmly welcomes him, representing God’s forgiveness and unconditional love. The older son’s resentment illustrates human tendencies toward self-righteousness and envy when others receive grace.

Application: This parable teaches us about repentance, humility, and grace. Believers are called not only to return to God when lost but also to rejoice in His mercy extended to others, avoiding jealousy or pride.

Overall Themes: God actively pursues the lost and values every individual. Repentance brings joy and restoration. Believers are called to reflect God’s grace, rejoice in the salvation of others, and resist pride or resentment. Salvation is relational and restorative, not merely legalistic.

Luke 15 challenges believers to understand the heart of God: His love is personal, persistent, and joyful when the lost are found. It also encourages the church to cultivate a culture of grace, mercy, and celebration over repentance.

## **Acts 15:11**

Acts 15:11 is a pivotal statement from the Jerusalem Council, encapsulating the early church’s understanding of salvation. In this verse, Peter (or the speaker, representing the apostles and elders) affirms that both Jewish and Gentile believers are saved “through the grace of our Lord Jesus”. This comes in response to the debate over whether Gentile converts must observe the Mosaic Law, including circumcision, to be fully accepted into God’s covenant people.

Key Points:

**Salvation by Grace:** The verse emphasizes that salvation is entirely a gift of God's grace. It is not earned by human works, religious observance, or adherence to the law. This underscores the sufficiency of Jesus' death and resurrection for redemption.

**Equality of Believers:** By stating "just as they are," the verse affirms that Gentiles are fully included in God's covenant people on the same basis as Jewish believers. There is no hierarchy; all are saved through Christ's grace.

**Theological Significance:** This verse reinforces a central Christian doctrine: salvation is initiated and completed by God. Human effort or compliance with external rules cannot add to the work of Christ. It also clarifies that the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan is intentional and part of His sovereign grace.

**Practical Implications:** Acts 15:11 challenges believers to rely on God's grace, not on personal merit, and to embrace humility. It also calls the church to welcome all believers equally, regardless of cultural or ethnic background, reflecting God's inclusive mercy.

### **Romans 3:23-24**

Romans 3:23–24 is a cornerstone passage for understanding human sinfulness and God's provision of salvation.

Verse 23 states: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This underscores the universal nature of sin: every person, regardless of background, status, or effort, fails to meet God's perfect standard. Humanity's inability to achieve God's glory highlights the need for divine intervention.

Verse 24 follows with the solution: "and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Here, Paul introduces key theological concepts:

**Justification** – Being declared righteous before God. This is a legal term emphasizing that God treats believers as righteous, not because of their works, but because of Christ's work.

**Freely by His grace** – Salvation is a gift, unearned and undeserved. Grace emphasizes God's initiative and mercy.

**Redemption through Christ Jesus** – Redemption refers to Christ's sacrificial death, which paid the penalty for sin, freeing believers from its power and guilt.

Together, these verses balance humanity's sinfulness with God's grace, highlighting that salvation is entirely the work of God, received through faith, not by human effort. They also set the stage for the broader argument in Romans about God's justice, mercy, and plan for both Jews and Gentiles.

### **Romans 10:13**

Romans 10 contrasts two approaches to righteousness: one based on works (keeping the law), and one based on faith (trusting in Christ). Paul explains that salvation does not come from human effort but from confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in His resurrection (Romans 10:9–10). Verse 13 then reinforces this truth with a promise rooted in Joel 2:32, showing continuity between Old Testament prophecy and the gospel message.

**Universality of Salvation** – "Everyone" shows that no person is excluded from God's offer. Jew and Gentile alike are invited, underscoring the inclusiveness of the gospel.

Calling on the Lord – To “call on the name of the Lord” is more than saying words; it reflects genuine faith, dependence, and surrender to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It’s both an act of repentance and a declaration of trust.

Certainty of God’s Promise – The word “will” highlights the assurance of salvation. God responds to all who call on Him with faith; there is no uncertainty or favoritism.

Grace, Not Works – The verse reaffirms that salvation is not earned but received as a gift through faith. It removes barriers of heritage, background, or performance, pointing solely to Christ’s saving work.