

Old Union Ministers School
March 26th ; 27th; 28th
Saved by grace through faith plus nothing
By Elder Don Watts

Lesson text Ephesians 2: 8-9

Introduction

To introduce this subject I feel like I need to use some elementary language. We as preachers and teachers need to be very careful as we began to speak upon the word of God or make comments to lost people while they are seeking the Lord, that we don't take any of the glory away from God. This is very easy to do. This is done sometimes unintentionally, but nevertheless it tends to insert works on our part toward helping someone to obtain the salvation of the Lord. Salvation is all of God. Once the Lord has made use of his vehicle to get the gospel to the sinners heart; He grants salvation totally by grace through faith with no works involved. When sinners are seeking the Lord, it is very important that we be extremely patient with them and let them repent to God's satisfaction. It can become a very devastating thing to lost people when we give advice of the wrong kind, and we should never offer any advice of any kind unless we really feel the Holy Spirit moving us to do so. This is another reason why we should maintain a healthy prayer life. God has never ask a sinner to do anything, and I do mean anything except repent and believe after they have heard the gospel, and having been convinced that they are lost. When that Godly sorrow and contrition sets in, its mainly between them and God.

Definition ----- Salvation --- deliverance from eternal death, and eternal destruction, and eternal damnation.

Grace ---- this is God granting divine favors for the undeserving.

Repentance-----

Faith ---- to place one's entire confidence or trust in God's ability.

Our lesson text tells us that we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God.

NOT OF WORKS LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST. We can't turn one little finger to help God, and this includes the saved and the lost; we are totally at his mercy.

Mankind will usually go down every human avenue to try and assist God, and sometimes we try too hard ourselves to help in his or her being saved. This is according to our nature.

This is the natural way for humanity to act. Our intentions to help may seem good, but our intentions are wrong. The best thing that we can do is to stay out of Gods' way and let him do his perfect work. If there was anything that we could do to help God, it wouldn't be by grace, but it would be by works. I know that we need to pray with the lost people, and be there for them, but I hope no one thinks that I am caught up in Calvinistic doctrine. I am not but I do think sometimes that we get in Gods' way. When sinners are honestly seeking the Lord, we shouldn't disturb them.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit prepared the plan of salvation, and it was designed in a manner to give the sinner ever opportunity to find God, and it was also designed to give the Godhead all honor and the glory when they saved someone's soul. It must be all of grace or all of works. They are two separate natures and they will not work together. These two natures have always worked against each other ever since Adam transgressed the law of God. Adam plunged himself and the entire human race of people into a condition of which he couldn't retrieve himself nor anyone else no matter how hard he tried, he was no closer to God with all his efforts. He placed us all under the bondage of sin. The apostle Paul made this statement in I Cor. 15:22 (For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive).

Ever human being who has reached a mental status in life to know that they are lost or separated from God should have the opportunity to seek God upon the grounds of repentance and faith without the mixture of any works on their part nor from anyone else. I think sinners would fair much better if we as God's people would get back away from the seekers and let them and God work this thing out; after all, it is between them and God. I don't mean that we should desert them, but we should stay close enough to build a wall of prayer around them. Sinners need to know that we are there for them, but they need to know also that it is God who is going to be doing the saving; they need to understand that mom and dad can't do it for them.

When God knocks at the hearts door of lost people with his word; He (God) has started a work that he is perfectly capable of completing. Christ is capable of making that sinner alive who died in the first Adam. God's machinery of salvation is something that wasn't manufactured by the cunning work of man's hands that could and would fail. This scheme of salvation was put together by the grand architect of Heaven and its intricate workings is all of God. There is nothing that we can do to assist God once the sinner is thoroughly convinced that he or she is lost. They must plea their case before God for themselves, after all they are the ones who are being convicted of this great trespass.

Does God ask sinners to rise up from seeking him and go perform some sort of function; some exterior act in the flesh before he will save them? I don't think so. It's not some outward act that the sinner has said or done that has separated him or her from God; It's the Adamic sin that has separated between him and God, and not the troubles between man and man; this is a trouble between man and God. God is the offended party, and he demands our attention to get this problem settled. I realize that we might feel that we need to fix things up with someone or something of that sort before God will save us. These are good and the right things to do, but God did not require it before he would save us, it was a feeling within yourselves that has nothing to do with being saved. God expects an unconditional surrender on the part of the seeker; he expect us to turn from the world and turn to him for life and salvation. Now I am confident of this one thing, if we have offended someone in some way, we will want to fix that situation after we get saved.

Now I have said quite a bit in my introduction, but it concerns me that some of our people are leaning toward works for salvation and anything besides repentance and faith is works, as most of the modern denominations are doing. This is totally unscriptural, and we must not allow this thing to grow to fruition in our old time churches.

Works are essential in the service of God after we are saved, but there is no place for them on the sinners part when trying to be saved.

We are saved wholly or completely by grace through faith without anything added to it by the human race of people. There comes a time in the seekers life that they must realize that because of their total depravity, they must lean totally upon the work of God at Calvary rather than the work of man here on earth. With our best intentions, we simply make a mess of things on our own. It must be the work of God if it is going to work.

When God sent Gideon down to fight with the Midianites; he sent him on an errand that was humanly impossible; they had no weapon to fight with, but by the grace of God they were given the victory. God wanted these people to know that the victory was won by the Lord, and that he deserved all the glory for it and not man. I think this is the same situation with the lost world; they can't save themselves; it is humanly impossible and the sooner they realize that and give God the glory, the better they are for it.

When a sinner realizes that they are lost and undone without God, they are as helpless as a dead man; they can do nothing to help themselves, but after the hearing of the word of God, the Holy Spirit makes the soul sensitive to its need. My friend it is impossible for a dead man to make himself alive. No matter what kind of instructions you might receive about doing this or that; life wont come until you put your trust in the Lamb of God.

The bible tells us that we were by nature the children wrath. It is our nature to do wrong. Paul said when I would do good, sin was always present. I was reading what B.H. Carroll was saying about this, and it brought a thought to my mind. When I was a lad of a boy being raised over in the hills of Eastern Kentucky, I would catch small snakes. I would carry them around in my pockets, but you learned early on which ones to catch. Sometimes we would catch small rattlesnakes or copperheads. These dudes had a nature about them that no matter how gentle you was with them, they always tried to bite. You couldn't change their nature no matter how hard you tried. Neither can we change the nature of a sinner by works no matter how hard we try.

When Paul the apostle was speaking to the young preacher Timothy in II Timothy 1:9 he had this to say concerning works. (Who hath saved us, and called us with a Holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.) I think God was saying that he didn't save us because of any works that we did that would make God think that deserved to be saved, but he saved us because of his own purpose and grace. No works can be preformed before or during seeking the Lord that will bring salvation.

In the book of Math. 1:21 (And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. The name Jesus is the same as savior It come from a verb that means to save. Jesus came to save out of sin, not in sin; Jesus came to redeem people from sin by dieing for them on the cross of Calvary. He and he alone paid the sin debt with the shedding of his own blood while we were still enemies to him.

What all this is saying is that people are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus with nothing added to it by man.

It's a hard thing sometimes for the nature of mankind to settle down and let God do his glorious work of saving people souls. Sometimes you may hear someone make different statements about what they thought they had to do before God would save them. Well, once again I think this is something that they felt within themselves; it was not a leadership from God. If this was a leadership from God, then Eph. 2 does not mean what it says. (For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.)

I think that it is important that we remember this; faith is the channel in which grace travels to bring salvation to the souls of those who are seeking. There is no room in that channel for any sort of works. Faith is an operation of Gods' grace in us performing his perfect work in giving salvation.

God is the fountain head from which all the blessings of our spiritual life flows. From this fountain comes the boundless love of God for a sin cursed world of people. The goodness, mercy, compassion of the redeemer flows from the same fountain toward us as a helpless people.

As a lost hell deserving race of people, who is totally depraved; what could we possibly do to help God save us? We have no more strength nor knowledge of how to be saved than a new born infant knows how fly a space ship to the moon. We are totally depraved, and that means that we are without strength ,and knowledge to save ourselves.

The soul sometimes seems to feel that it has no strength at all. Here lies this soul within sight of the city of refuge, but it can not enter at its' gates. Is there any hope for our weakness in Gods' plan of salvation? I think so. The work of the Lord has always been perfect. I begins where we are, and it ask nothing of us so that his plan can be completed. When the good Samaritan saw the traveler lying wounded, and half dead, he did not bid him to rise and come to him, no he went to where he was and ministered to him, and put him on his own beast and carried him to the inn. This is how the lord deals with us while we are in our lost and wretched condition.

Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation; faith, essential as it is, is only an important part of the machinery that is employed by grace. We are saved "through faith", but salvation is "by grace".

It is not in the will nor purpose of God to destroy men's souls in hell, but it is the will and purpose of God to save men's souls from hell, and he does that by grace through faith. Whatever God does by the operation of grace is unalterable. In Romans 4:16 we find this statement: (It is of faith, that it might be by grace: to the end, that the promise might be sure to all the seed).

If there was the slightest bit of merit in faith, there would be no channel through which grace could work. Faith not only excludes the thought of deserving anything from God, but it actually includes the idea of just how helplessness and hopelessness we are to save ourselves. In faith, we must call upon another to do what we can't do for ourselves. Our spiritual life is found in

looking to Jesus, not in looking to our own faith. By faith all things become possible to us, but the power is not in faith, but in God upon which our faith rest.

Grace is that almighty engine full of divine power, and faith is the chain connected to the soul to deliver it from the bondage of sin.

The weakness of our faith will not destroy us. I have seen athletes who would play so hard that they could hardly move, but they would stick out that trembling hand to take the trophy. The Lord would save us if only we had the faith of a grain of mustard seed. You see the power is in grace and not in our own strength. This may seem like a feeble , weak thing to do, but this is the will of God to put simple faith in his work at calvary.

I want us to think about this just for a minute; great messages can be sent along slender wires all across the country, but the peace giving witness of the Holy Spirit can reach the heart by means of a thread like faith which seems almost unable to sustain its own weight. When people are seeking after God, they must look away from themselves and see nothing but Jesus Christ, and the grace of God revealed in him.

What God is saying to us here is that no one can do anything to contribute to the salvation of mankind. God wants us to understand that we can do nothing to help him in the obtaining salvation for mankind.

Every argument against being saved by grace is based upon human element. Every human element is based upon works and that is adding to and taking away from the word of God. This is a dangerous place to put ones self in.

The thing is that nothing needs to be added to the plan of salvation for someone to find peace with God. Everything that was needed to bring salvation to mankind was put in there by the Lord himself before man was ever made. It is sufficient to complete the task if we would only ask with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

Surely the cross “figuratively” was that wonder working rod that brought water out of the rock. If we could only see and understand the meaning of that divine sacrifice, Jesus Christ, it is capable of bringing us to repentance because we ever opposed the one who was so full of love. The scriptures tell us “They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his own son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one is in bitterness for his firstborn son.”

Repentance will not make anyone see the son of God, but to see God through his preached word will bring people to repentance. When we look to Christ for repentance, it will enable us to look away from ourselves and look to Christ.