

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, September 18, 2011 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**Faith Alone in Christ Alone- Ephesians 2:8-9**

**Introduction:** Several years ago, Steve Martin starred in a movie entitled “The Jerk.” He played a character who went from rags to riches and then back to rags again. In the movie, after he’d lost all his money, his wife, his popularity, and his friends, he set out to run away from it all. But in one scene as he was telling his wife goodbye, he picked up a lamp off his desk and said, *“All I’m taking is this lamp. That’s all I need.”* Then in typical Steve Martin style, he proceeded to think of other things that he would need. By the time he left, he was loaded down with so much *“stuff,”* he could barely walk. As it turned out, he thought needed more in his life than just a lamp, but the more things he thought needed, the more he was being weighed down.

In **John 8:32 (NIV)** Jesus spoke to some Jewish believers, and said, *“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

Today I want to set you free with the truth from God’s Word about what a person needs in order to be saved. I don’t want anyone to walk away from here this morning loaded down with unnecessary burdens concerning their salvation. I want you to know the truth, so you can be free to live for Christ, and not have to worry about losing your salvation.

The Bible teaches that salvation comes by faith alone in Christ alone. So this morning, let’s first look at:

**1. An Explanation of Faith.**

Despite what the world and even many preachers say, salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. We see the Bible teaching faith alone in such verses as Acts 16:30-31 (NIV). The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, *“What must I do to be saved?”* and they responded with a simple reply: *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved....”* These verses are just one place where the Bible teaches faith alone for salvation.

The Bible also teaches that such faith must be in Christ alone. For example, in the most concise and definitive statement on all of God’s Word, Jesus Himself says in **John 14:6 (NIV)**, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* Jesus claims that He is the *“one and only”* way, truth, and life. There is no other. And the thing that makes this statement so definitive is the fact that Jesus backed up His claim that He is indeed the Son of God. So in no uncertain terms, Jesus said that He is the *“one and only”* way to get to heaven. There is no other way except through Christ alone.

But a lot of people don’t believe it’s that simple. They say, *“There’s got to be something more that I must do? It can’t be that simple can it?”* My response to that is... *“Yes and no.”*

I say *“Yes”* because salvation is easy for us. God did all of the work. Now salvation wasn’t easy for Jesus because God put the sins of the world on Him and judged Him in our place.

But I also say *“No”* because there actually is one other thing that must be done in order for a person to be saved. A person must believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Yes, Jesus did all of the work and paid the price of our sins in full; but we have to believe that that is enough. We have to believe by faith that there is nothing we can add to salvation to pay even a tiny part of it.

Faith alone in Christ alone is what separates genuine Christianity from other religions. Other religions teach that a person can earn salvation by following certain rules, or doing good works, and avoiding certain sins. However, that is contrary to what the Bible teaches. God’s word shows that God deals with His people by grace. Grace is blessing from God that we don’t earn or deserve, but that we receive through believing what the Lord tells us by exercising faith.

We have a hard time understanding and believing the idea of grace because it goes against the way we’re accustomed to. We receive a wage for the work we perform at our jobs. We get a prize if we win. We get an award in recognition of our long years of service. However, with grace, it’s different. With grace we receive a valuable gift for doing absolutely nothing.

I want to begin by giving you six principles from the Bible that teaches faith alone in Christ alone for salvation. They are found in **Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)**. Here, Paul writes, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.”* So we see the first principle is that:

**Salvation is by grace.** *“it is by grace you have been saved”* This means that salvation comes to us as an unmerited favor – we do not do anything to earn it, nor do we even deserve it. Second,

**Salvation is accessed by faith.** *“through faith”* God the Father poured the sins of the whole world on to His Son, Jesus Christ, and punished Jesus for what we have done. So by believing in and trusting in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for our sins, we are saved from God's wrath and judgment. Third,

**Salvation is not man-made.** *“this not from yourselves”* There is nothing that you or I can do to work for our salvation, and neither can we add anything to it. Fourth,

**Salvation is a gift from God.** *“it is the gift of God”* A gift does not become yours unless you receive it. By the same token, God's salvation is a gift that has to be simply received in order to be claimed. Furthermore, by making it a gift, God shows us His fairness. He makes it available to everyone, regardless of their abilities, because anyone can accept a gift.

Also, a gift depends on the work, merits, love, and generosity of the giver. All you or I can do when offered such a gift is to either refuse it or accept it. The receiver of a gift gets no credit or glory for simply taking it! Fifth,

**Salvation is not as result of works.** *“not by works”* It costs us nothing to be saved, so it is something we cannot earn. If we had to earn it or if we could add anything to it, Jesus' work on the cross would not be complete and sufficient. And finally,

**Salvation is not something from which we can receive glory.** *“no one can boast.”* God gets all the glory in salvation because He's done all of the work. People may not actually say it, but boasting about one's salvation says that the person deserve credit for a part of their salvation. In other words, they say, *“I've done something that an unsaved person has not done.”*

As I said, this is one of the clearest passages in God's word. You don't need to be a Bible scholar to understand these verses. Nevertheless, many believers deny such teachings. According to God's grace as described in these verses, anyone, no matter how great a sinner, no matter how ugly the sin, no matter how far a person may have gone...anyone can go to heaven because of a simple decision to believe and trust in Jesus Christ.

A simple way to remember Ephesians 2:8-9 is found in the following formula: Faith in Christ + NOTHING = Salvation. That is the Gospel truth. Next, let's see:

## **2. The Inspiration of Faith.**

The inspiration of faith is found in the gospel...the good news. And here is the good news about God's salvation:

- All people are sinners and fall short of God's perfect standards (Rom. 3:23).
- The penalty of sin is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).

Now, granted, these two truths don't sound like very good news, but hold on, it's about to get a whole lot better!

- Jesus' death paid the penalty for sin (1 Cor. 15:3).
- Whosoever will may receive salvation. (John 3:16,18).
- It is God's will that all men be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim 2:3-4).
- No one can come to Christ unless the Father first draws him (John 6:44). Therefore, God in His grace draws all men to Christ (John 12:32). Not just some, but all.
- Christ's death paid for all the sins ever committed. That's why you can't lose your salvation. You can't commit a sin that Jesus Christ hasn't already paid for (1 John 2:2; 1 Tim 2:5-6).
- God makes the gospel known to all men (John 1:9; Rom 1:18-20; Titus 2:11).
- The only way to God is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6).
- God gives everyone the ability to believe in Him through faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Despite the fact that God desires for everyone to be saved, and gives them the opportunity, many people simply will not take that road, but rather will choose to love darkness and live in it. So, God's grace is not irresistible or automatic. He does not force people to believe. It comes down to an individual choice, and many people choose not to believe. Finally, I want to close with:

## **3. An Illustration of Faith (Luke 23:39-43).**

The greatest Biblical example that proves salvation is simply by faith alone in Christ alone is the illustration of the thief who was crucified with Jesus, but pleaded for mercy on the cross.

Jesus was crucified between two criminals. Initially, both thieves were unbelievers who mocked Jesus along with the chief priest, scribes, and elders. (Mt. 27:44). However, somehow the heart of one of the thieves softened. He made the free will decision to believe in Jesus, to put his faith in him. The other thief could have done the same, but didn't. Let's read Luke 23:39-43:

*"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."* **Luke 23:39-43 (NIV)**

Notice what Jesus didn't say. He didn't say:

*"Whoa buddy! You think you're going to live your whole life in sin and then get into heaven at the last minute? Sorry, but you gotta be baptized before you can be saved."*

Jesus didn't say, *"Before you can be saved, you've gotta make restitution to all the people you robbed!"*

Jesus didn't say, *"You don't look or sound sorry enough for your past sins!"*

Jesus didn't say, *"You're not really saved because I haven't seen any fruit in your life!"*

Jesus didn't say, *"You've got to speak in tongues before you can receive the Holy Spirit and be saved!"*

Jesus didn't say any of those things, but because of the thief's one simple act of faith, Jesus promised him salvation. He said, *"Today you will be with me in Paradise."*

This man was born in sin, lived in sin, and was about to die in his sin. But just before his death, the grace of God was still extended to him; he repented of his sin; believed in Christ alone, and made his confession of faith.

He never responded to a verse of "Just As I Am;"

He never walked an aisle in a church;

He didn't recite the *"sinner's prayer;"*

He was never baptized or joined a church;

He never made restitution for what he had done;

He never bore any fruit of repentance;

He never spoke in tongues;

He never tithed, or gave one penny of his money to a church.

This man simply placed his faith totally in Jesus Christ. He was in a situation where he had to either fully trust in Christ alone, or take a chance that somehow he had done enough good things in his life to outweigh the bad. In fact, he wasn't going to get another chance to do something good. There would be no more opportunities to work for his salvation. For the thief on the cross, it came down to a simple decision: Do I trust in Christ alone, or take a chance on what little I have done?

The example of the saved thief on the cross disproves every theological argument that tries to add anything to simple faith in Christ for salvation. The repentant thief did nothing but believe in Christ as his Savior. So when people try to tell you that you have to do a bunch of other stuff to be saved, simply remind them that the thief on the cross didn't do any of that. He simply believed in Christ as Savior, and asked Jesus to remember him when He entered His kingdom. And Jesus responded by promising him that he would be in Paradise with Him that very day.

**Conclusion:** The Bible shows us that no person ever did less to be saved than the thief on the cross. But also, the Bible tells us that no person ever did more to be saved either. Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, period! Salvation = faith + nothing! Have you trusted in Christ alone? He's all you need to be saved.