

“Kissed by Grace: By Grace You Have Been Saved”—Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

This morning I want to give you an earworm.

Now, it's not as gruesome as it sounds—for while “earworm” is short for “corn earworm,” the more popular and useful definition for our purposes this morning is “a catchy song or tune that runs continually through a person's mind.” But I believe earworms can be verbal as well. I had one the other day—the ending of a poem I learned either in sixth grade or junior high school kept going through my mind and wouldn't go away! So what I want to give you this morning a phrase that I hope and pray will continually run through your mind.

By grace you have been saved.

It runs like a refrain through these verses: “By grace you have been saved.”

And well it should, because it's part of the center of our faith. It reminds us that our salvation—the forgiveness of our sins, our redemption from the power of sin in our lives, the freedom from our fear of spiritual death, our cleansing and new life, and the promise of life with God in the here-and-now as well as in the hereafter—is not our doing. The salvation that is God's gift to us comes only by faith—by our willingness to stake all that we are and all that we have on the love of God made real for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Son of God.

By grace you have been saved.

Now, let me remind you for about the millionth time what grace is—it's God's unearned, undeserved love and favor toward us. It's God's loving us when we were most unlovable and unloving. It's God's loving us when he didn't have to—it's God's loving us when, as the writer says, “You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world,

following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient.” It’s God’s loving us when, as the writer says, “All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.”

By grace you have been saved.

And, as the writer reminds us, “[T]his is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” In other words, this salvation from God through Jesus isn’t ours because we’re good enough in and of ourselves—we can’t possibly be. And it isn’t because we’ve done enough good to make God take us in, because we can’t. This is all God’s doing—it’s God’s gift to us; all we can do is accept it.

By grace you have been saved.

Now, some of us here this morning grew up in the church, and we’ve always known God’s love in our lives, and we’ve always known the truth of what this passage tells us—by grace you have been saved. Some of us didn’t grow up in the church, but we came to know the love of God and the truth we’ve heard again and again this morning—by grace you have been saved. But whether we’ve always known the love of God or came to it later, the challenge for us is to look deep within ourselves, through the power of the Spirit, and see if we’re really trying to earn our salvation or if we truly accept the gift of God for us.

For by grace we have been saved.

Thanks be to God!