

TEXT: Ephesians 2:8-10

THEME: GRACE: God's Undeserved Gift

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

A little girl wanted a new bicycle—a pink one with a basket and streamers on the handlebars. She went to her father and asked him to buy her the bike of her dreams. He smiled at her and said that he would not buy her a new bicycle. Instead, she would have to work and save her money until she had enough money to buy the bicycle herself. The little girl was disappointed but determined to get the bicycle she so desperately wanted. She began to ask for and do extra chores around the house. She even did some of her siblings' chores, as long as they paid her for her work. She sacrificed play time with her friends so that she could do more work around the house and yard. This went on for several weeks until finally the little girl was exhausted. She missed her friends. She was tired. She had done all that she could do. She gathered up all her hard-earned money and took it to her father. She told him, "Father, I have done all that I can do. This is what I have earned. Is this enough money to buy my new bicycle?" The father took his little girl's money, counted it, and replied, "No, this is not enough to buy a new bicycle. But because you have done all that you can do, I will add some of my money to yours so that you have enough to buy your new bicycle."

Now, you might be wondering what this story has to do with GRACE: God's Undeserved Gift. The short answer is, "Nothing!" This story does not in any way define, describe, or illustrate grace as God's undeserved gift. It is not the grace of God's holy Word, the Bible. It is not the grace spoken of in our text.

So, why did I share it with you today? Because it is a modern-day parable used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to teach its members about their definition of grace. According to the LDS church, grace is the father in the story giving his little daughter the extra money she needs to buy her own bicycle, after she has done all that she could do. The modern-day parable is based on a passage from the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25:23 "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do." This is a well-known passage among Mormons.

The passage starts out very similar to our text, Ephesians 2:8, **"For it is by grace you have been saved."** Joseph Smith in the Book of Mormon wrote, "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved." You start to think that maybe this Book of Mormon isn't so bad after all because it sounds just like the Bible. But then Joseph Smith dashes our hope to pieces when he adds, "after all we can do." In the Book of Mormon when he says that we know that we are saved by grace, after all we can do, he is saying that we are saved, at least in part, by our own good works—all we can do. This is a blatant contradiction of what God says in his Word, in our text: **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."**

LDS members are being taught an outright lie, a damning lie. They are victims of the father of lies, the devil (John 8:44). Please see LDS members, Mormons, especially the Mormons you know personally, as victims who desperately need your help. Not long ago, a middle-aged man, a recent convert to Christianity from Mormonism, commented to Truth in Love Ministry that his whole life he has had Christian friends. He asked, “Why didn’t any of them tell me the truth? Didn’t any of them care enough about me to share the truth about Jesus Christ?” Makes you think, doesn’t it? Mormons are victims who desperately need to know the true meaning and results of God’s grace. Share with them the truth, a truth we sometimes take for granted. Perhaps a quick review of grace would be appropriate.

Grace is a term that gives us a glimpse into the heart and mind of God. The essential aspect of God’s grace is that it speaks of a quality in God that makes him willing—yes, even eager to give us undeserving sinners great and precious gifts. Substitute “undeserved gift” for the term “grace” and you catch the sense of what Paul is telling the Ephesians and us in our text: “It is an *undeserved gift* that through faith you have been saved, for God gave you saving faith as a gift.”

Faith, of course, is trust and confidence that takes God at his word. But Paul told the Ephesians and us at the beginning of Ephesians chapter 2, “**As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.**” Since by nature we are spiritually dead, we cannot bring ourselves to faith; we cannot decide to trust in God’s promises and accept Christ as our Savior. Paul nails this important truth down with three unmistakably clear statements. He tells the Ephesians and us that our conversion is (1) not from ourselves; (2) it is the gift of God; and (3) it is not by works. With two negatives and a positive Paul leaves absolutely no doubt that the sinner’s conversion is God’s doing, not man’s. As a result, “**no one can boast**” as though they had done something to save themselves or that their works in any way contributed to their salvation. Salvation is by grace, an undeserved gift freely given by God without the contribution of any human works.

Yet, when God in his kindness called us to saving faith in his Son, he also gave us our purpose. **For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.** We are to live a life of good works because we are saved by God’s grace. But the good works we do are no basis for boasting. They are really not our own doing; we’re simply being given the opportunity to do the good things **which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

Paul has certainly made his point: Our salvation is totally and completely the gift of a gracious God. We did nothing, and we have no grounds for boasting. But we do have work to do. We are to share his truth and saving grace with all people.

That’s what Truth in Love Ministry seeks to do: share the truth of God’s Word with LDS members and train Christians to share that blessed truth. We do that through online courses, books, social media, door-to-door mission trips, and our newest ministry arm called *Jesus Is Enough*. It’s a series of powerful videos in which former Mormons tell of their difficult journey out of Mormonism .into Christianity and trust in Jesus alone for forgiveness and eternal life. LDS members with one foot in and one foot out of Mormonism are finding these videos especially helpful and powerful. Please consider learning more and giving a gift to support the work of Truth in Love Ministry on our website: tilm.org. Thank you. God’s grace is with you. Amen.