

## Salvation by Grace

Apostle Paul wrote this epistle in prison, probably from his last prison in Rome. It is one of his richest epistles, and perhaps it is not only sent to the Ephesians but to the surrounding cities of Asia Minor. He confirms in this passage that “God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions”. The apostle always makes us involved in Christ’s life and in sitting with him in the heavens after Resurrection. Paul doesn’t differentiate between the Lord and his people.

And for Christians not to feel proud about their virtues, he confirms to them that they are saved by grace, and in this small passage he confirms this idea twice. Christ embraces his beloved ones, and involves them in his death, resurrection and ascension to the heavens. Everything for him is a grace from above, and grace is God’s kindness towards us.

Where does this grace come from? The answer is: from faith, this means that it is for free. The Lord gives it because he wants to, and people have no favor in that. This salvation is God’s gift, and not from acts or from Moses’ Law. And here the Apostle meets with the epistles to the Romans and Galatians; and the epistle that he sent to the Galatians was read in Ephesus. All these cities learned that grace is for free and faith is for free, and all of this carries a fight against the Jews and the people influenced by them in Christian environments in Asia Minor. We are created for the good deeds that God prepared so that we live by them. The so called “pre-assigning” that appeared in protestant Calvinism and that says that some people are prepare for the heavens and others for hell is a belief that was refused by those Evangelical people in the nineteenth century, and we have already refused it since the beginning because it cancels any personal responsibility. A person is saved for two reasons: First, because God wants to save him through grace, and second because he accepts this Divine salvation. God says “I am the Savior”, and man says “God saves me”. This is what we call synergy or communion between God and man although the Lord is the initiator with grace and man responds to it. In the days of Blessed Augustine (fourth century), the heresy of Pelagius appeared in Africa and claimed that Man is saved through his efforts; it was considered a blasphemy by the Church. This doesn’t prevent the preacher from urging the believers to do good deeds and from telling them that they won’t be saved if they neglected effort. These are very beneficial words to stay away from laziness and carelessness.

However, our fathers taught that man doesn’t enter the Kingdom through his effort but through God’s mercy. You always seek so that God accepts your quest and crowns your giving, but remember that we are saved by grace and that you are always in need for God and that you gain salvation through his supreme love and

kindness. He is the one that revived you through Christ and seated you with him in the heavens. Knowing that you descend from above through grace puts in you the spirit of humility which is the power of your hope.

This convergence between grace and human effort is a shining teaching in the epistle to the Ephesians and a refusal to the fatalism that says that God obliges us to enter heaven or hell. Love doesn't want anyone in hell, but you acquire love through permanent obedience to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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