

The Gift That Brings You the Greatest Joy

Of all the gifts we could ever receive, God's gift of salvation is by far the most amazing and important one!

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved ... through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it came not through your own striving], but it is the gift of God; not because of works ... lest any man should boast. [It is not the result of what anyone can possibly do, so no one can pride himself in it or take glory to himself]" (AMPC).

We are saved by the grace of God through our faith in Him; our faith does not *buy* our salvation—it merely *receives* it. As Ephesians 2:8 says, salvation "is the gift of God." It is impossible to buy a free gift and this can be hard for us to understand. Our flesh wants to earn and deserve this free gift and take credit for being worthy of it.

But salvation is given to us freely, by God's grace, and the same way we receive Christ's salvation, is the same way we have to live—by grace. God gives us His forgiveness and grace daily; we just have to believe and receive it.

In Christ, You Are Sin-Free in God's Eyes

When God forgives your sins, it means *all* of your sins: past, present and future. You do not have to be afraid of sin because God has taken care of the problem. This is why the gospel is such Good News!

Some may worry that if we don't fear sin, we will keep sinning on purpose, but that's not true. If you are truly born again and really have a relationship with God, there is a new nature inside of you.

Second Corinthians 5:17 (AMPC) says, "If any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!"

Now, no one is perfect, and we all make mistakes sometimes. But if the Holy Spirit is living in your spirit through salvation, you won't be comfortable with those mistakes because God's nature is at work in you. The devil would love for us to feel like God is mad at us for our mistakes, but the truth is, God is love and we need to humbly accept His love and grace.

Changed by Grace

In John 15:5 (AMPC), Jesus says, "I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing." I love this Scripture because it reminds me that God doesn't expect me to change on my own. He is the power source and gives us the grace and strength we need to do what's right and make changes in our lives.

Here's how we cooperate with Him, doing what we can do to bring about change:

- We hear the truth in God's Word and we're convicted by it. It's the Word that shows us who we are and reveals the sin in our lives. We have to realize what we're doing wrong before we can know what needs to change and how.
- Then we repent of our sin. Being repentant means we're sincerely sorry and willing to turn away from it. (See 1 John 1:9.)
- The next step is to study the Word in the area we need change. For example, if I have a problem with anger, I

need to study scriptures about anger and forgiveness. Use the Word like medicine and take it into your heart and mind. James 1:21 (AMPC) says to “welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls.” There is power in God’s Word to bring change to our souls!

Receive All God Has for You and Enjoy Your Life

To receive God’s blessings and enjoy everyday life, we simply need to make the decision to believe Him and His Word more than our thoughts and feelings. The Bible is our instruction manual on how to grow into the new nature He’s given us and become who He wants us to be. So take some time each day to read and meditate on Scriptures that tell you about God’s love for you, who you are and what you have in Christ.

Ephesians 3:17 (AMPC) says, “May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love.”

This scripture is saying that God loves you; His will is for you to be His child and receive every blessing He has for you—righteousness, peace, joy, provision of your needs, healing and restoration. In Christ, you have a personal relationship with your Father God, and you can hear from God and be led by the Holy Spirit, who lives in your spirit.

In Christ, you have access to God’s grace and strength to do whatever you need to do. Because of God’s grace, you are blessed and you can enjoy your life! {eoa}