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OUR SALVATION

Pledge

**As members of this church, we pledge:
To hold steadfastly that our salvation is by grace
through faith in Christ, and not of our own doing.**

Scripture

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Lesson

Suppose a friend sends you this text message: “Good afternoon! We’d love to have you over for dinner this Friday at 5:30. Planning to grill hotdogs and hamburgers. Would that work for you?”

How would you respond? Probably something like this: “Absolutely! We’d love that. Can I bring chips or a desert?”

If that's the way you would respond, great job! It's simply good etiquette to offer to bring something to contribute to the meal.

But what if you got a letter in the mail, emblazoned on the front with the seal of the U. S. White House? You open it, and on thick gilded stationery, you read these words:

*The President of the United States
requests your presence at a formal banquet
at the White House.*

Would you reply by offering to bring your homemade whoopie pie? If you did, it would border on the ridiculous. You have been invited to dine with dignitaries, and the food enjoyed there is not the sort that you can prepare in your own kitchen.

But this is the way many people think they should respond to the gospel—by offering to bring their own home-made goodies. But to respond in such a way is to misunderstand what kind of invitation the gospel is. It is an invitation to a feast only the King can provide. That is why the proper response to the gospel is to *believe it*.

What it means that we are saved by grace through faith?

To be saved “by grace,” means that salvation is something that is given by God, not earned by us. “Through faith” means that we gain it simply by believing it to be so.

Why must salvation be by grace?

To begin with, there is no other way we could be saved, considering that we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Beyond that, however, the phrase “not by works, so that no one may boast,” presents a further insight into why salvation must be based exclusively on God's free grace: if it were not, then people would develop feelings of arrogance. But that would be no salvation at all, for it would continue the same problems that wreak havoc on the human race: pride, self-centeredness, and a sense of superiority.

What happens when we lose sight of this?

The doctrine that we are saved by grace through faith seems so basic we'll always remember it. But will we? Consider what would happen in a church if its members failed to believe this steadfastly. They would begin to feel that their own self-discipline, steady church attendance, or financial generosity put them on a notch above others who were not so disciplined, consistent, or generous. A spirit of judgmentalism would creep into their hearts. People

would divide into cliques based on personal preferences, each believing their preferences to be superior to others' preferences. Worst of all, people would have a cheap view of God's holiness, greatness, and love!

But this is what we see happening in churches and homes far too often! And whenever we see this, we can be sure that people have lost their view of God's amazing grace.

That is why we must pledge to hold steadfastly that our salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, and not of our own doing. It frees us to admit that we are so deeply flawed that it took Jesus' death and resurrection to rescue us *and* that we are so deeply loved that he did reach so far down to be our Savior. It frees us to pursue holiness without becoming proud, and to delight in God's grace without turning it into an excuse to sin.

Putting the Pledge to Work

1. What does it mean that we are saved by grace, not works?
2. What makes this hard to believe?
3. What tends to happen when an individual or church loses their grasp on this truth?
4. How might our church look different if we held this more steadfastly?