

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Now that we are in the month of September, I think we are all done with the Summer heat. Here in TX we have had record breaking heat this summer of 100+ degrees for over 2 months in a row. In California they have been hitting record breaking heat as well, and even in other countries, the heat has been unbearable. So with that, we are ready for the cool, crisp Fall mornings and even ready for the cold of Winter and the holidays.

So let's move backwards to last December, to Christmas. I remember it well because I remember the gift that I got for my youngest son, who was 16 at the time, turning 17 in January. You see my son played guitar and had this cheap, old electric guitar that he played, and even several months before Christmas we went to the music store and looked at guitars, but they were pretty expensive and he never thought that he would ever get a nice new guitar.

So, yes I got him one for Christmas, and it was a moment like the Christmas Story movie, about a young boy named Ralphy, who wanted a Red Rider BB Gun (You'll shoot your eye out) for Christmas, because I wrapped the guitar and put it behind the tree against the wall, kind of like the movie. So once we were all done with our presents, I did the dad thing and said, "*Hey there is another present there behind the tree?*" So he went and got it and saw that it was for him from me, his dad, (Not Santa, because we do not celebrate Santa but Jesus at Christmas) He opened it up and was all excited and thankful for this gift.

Now he could have responded with, "*Oh thank you dad, I will do all this work because of the gift, because I don't deserve it so I'll try my best to earn it*", which sounds crazy, because you don't earn a gift, it is given to you out of love from someone who loves you.

Another thing he could have done was said, "*I don't want this stupid guitar, I don't care how hard you worked to earn it or what you paid for it, in fact I don't even like you or want to be around you either.*" As he would throw the guitar across the room, breaking it in pieces.

I know that sounds harsh, but that's the way that people act and say when they reject God's gift of His Son, Jesus to them.

In today's verse it says that we have "***been saved through faith; the gift of God, not of works.***" Yet how many times do we try and earn our salvation with works, simply because we do not feel worthy of the gift. Well, in the example of my son, yeah, he is a good kid, but he also messes up like any teenager does, and he is far from perfect, but my gift to him is not based upon how good he is, but how much I love him. He can't say, "*Look at the guitar my dad got me because I worked so hard for it.*" No, he can only say, "*Look at the guitar my dad got me because he loves me.*"

It should be the same with our salvation, where we can not say, “*Look at all I did, all the money I gave, how much I read the bible everyday, how many people I witnessed to; therefore I am saved.*” No, we can not say that at all, all we can say is, “*I am saved because God gave me salvation through His Son Jesus Christ, who died for my sins, and He did it because He loves me!*”

But that’s not the end of the story. Remember I said my son was 16 turning 17 in January. So for his birthday, I got him a multi effects pedal for his guitar. (For those who don’t know what that is, is what makes the guitar have all those cool sounds.) And when I thought of that, I remember what Jesus told disciples.

† **John 14:16-17** *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

And we know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and has “gifted” (***He will give you***) us all with gifts that we can use to minister to others and to the body of Christ (The Church). When I thought of the effect pedal, I saw it as a companion, so to speak to the guitar, and the Holy Spirit is given to us as part of the Godhead (the Trinity) to help us in our daily walk with the Lord here on earth.

But also for my son to be good at playing the guitar and use the effects pedal, he needs to learn how to play it, by reading the instruction on the effects pedal, and even learning from others how to play the guitar. It’s the same for us as we receive the gift of salvation, we learn how to use that gift to minister to others and walk in that gift by reading the word, listening to others teach the word, and praying to the One who gave us that gift, God the Father, Who has sent the Holy Spirit, Who has gifted us all with Heavenly gifts for the benefit of others, and our own enjoyment... and you won’t shoot your eye out either.

† **Luke 11:13** *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

† **Romans 1:5 (MSG)** *Through him we received both the generous gift of his life and the urgent task of passing it on to others who receive it by entering into obedient trust in Jesus.*

† **1 Peter 4:11 (NLT2)** *Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.*