



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

Welcome. Today's sermon is titled: "Are There Two Ways to Be Saved?"

Our scripture lesson today comes from Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 8 and 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.”

May the Lord add His blessings to the reading of His Word.

Church, if you listen to the world around us, you would think there are many roads to heaven. Turn on the radio, read the news, walk down the street – and you will hear a hundred voices each telling you a different way to be saved. Some say, “Be good enough.” Others say, “Keep the law.” Some say, “Follow the rituals.” Others say, “Find your own truth.” So many churches, so many doctrines, so many opinions – all claiming to know the way to God, yet all contradicting one another.

The question that presses upon our hearts today is this, "Are there two ways to be saved?" Does God offer multiple paths to heaven, or has He given us one clear way? The Bible answers with a resounding, no, there is only one way. But before we unpack that truth, let us first see the many ways people try to save themselves, and why every one of them falls short.

Point 1... The Many Wrong Ways People Try to Save Themselves

From the beginning of human history, we have tried to reach God by our own effort. And every single attempt carries the same tragic flaw: it is built on the sands of human pride, not the rock of God's grace.

First, consider self-affliction. Some believe that by tormenting the body, they can set the soul free. In India, devotees hold their arms up toward the sky until their joints lock. They lie on beds of nails. They starve themselves. They make pilgrimages on their knees, hoping that pain will purchase pardon. Even in our own Christian history, the great reformer Martin Luther, whipped himself until he was covered in blood, desperately trying to earn God's favor. One early church leader named Origen went so far as to emasculate himself, thinking such a sacrifice would make him holy. My friends, this is a twisted concept, yet it still happens today. People grieve, torment, and punish their bodies, all in a futile attempt to be delivered from sin. But God never asked for your suffering, He asks for your surrender.

Second, there is human sacrifice. This is a dark and distorted echo of the supreme sacrifice God would one day make in His Son. The Aztecs of Mexico tore beating hearts from their victims to offer to their gods. In India, children were flung into the river Ganges to be devoured by crocodiles. In the Old Testament, the wicked king Ahaz threw his own son into the burning arms of the idol Moloch, children were regularly consumed by fire in that dark worship. Later, King Josiah turned that same valley into a garbage dump, a place of death and defilement, which the New Testament calls Gehenna. And even today in some parts of Africa, blood is splattered on sticks and stones to appease spirits. Rivers of blood have flowed for centuries, all from people trying to earn heaven with their own hands. But God does not want your sacrifices, He gave His own.

Third, there is the way of good works. "If I am good, I will go to heaven," many say. And they imagine a ladder with rungs of good, better, and best. Give up this, do more of that, climb higher and higher until you finally make it. But God says in His Word, "All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" Isaiah 64 verse 6. No matter how hard we try, sin is in every pore of our being. There is always an element of mistake, shortcoming, and error. Jesus Himself said, "No one is good but One, that is, God" Mark 10 verse 18. The golden rule may be noble, but it does not plumb the depths of human depravity. We cannot be good enough – and deep down, we know it.

Fourth, there is religious ritual. Now this is subtle, because it looks so holy on the outside. But listen: Satan is the most religious creature in all of God's creation. When he tempted Jesus, he even wanted Jesus to worship him. He loves to pervert people's minds with lies and ritualistic hoaxes. Some say, "Get baptized, and you are automatically saved." Others say, "Take the Lord's Supper, and heaven is guaranteed." Now understand me, baptism and communion are beautiful, God-given ordinances. But they are not saviors. If you trust in the ritual without trusting in the Redeemer, you are building on sand. Satan blinds people's eyes to true, saving worship, and substitutes empty ceremonies in its place.

So you see, from self-affliction to human sacrifice, from good works to religious ritual, every human way of salvation ends in death. Why? Because salvation simply cannot be earned. It can only be received.

Point 2... The Way God Saves, By Grace

Now we turn to the one true way, and it is not a way we climb – it is a way God reaches down. Paul tells us plainly: “For by grace you have been saved...”

What is grace? It is that indescribable something that causes one to love, to be attracted to someone – not because they deserve it, but simply because of the lover’s generosity. Grace is a burst of lavish kindness poured out on the unworthy, with no thought of repayment. The Greek word is *charis*, a gift, the forgiveness of a debt. In the ancient world, it came to mean the mercy of God in forgiving and saving us.

My friends, we were all perishing. Every one of us stood condemned, dead in trespasses and sins. But God, in His goodness and mercy, reached down and lifted us up. He did it. We did nothing. Because God is gracious, sinners are welcome. Because God abounds in infinite love, He forgives. Because His mercy endures forever, we are not destroyed. Because He is all-compassionate, we are saved.

Here is the glorious truth: Grace is not merely an attribute of God – grace is God Himself in action. When you see Jesus, you see grace. When you hear the gospel, you hear grace. When you are saved, you are saved by grace and grace alone. It is a gift. You cannot buy it, earn it, or deserve it. You can only receive it with empty hands and a humbled heart.

Point 3... The Way God Saves, Through Faith

But how do we receive this free gift? Paul continues: “You have been saved through faith.” Faith is the empty hand that reaches out to take the gift God offers.

Now, our entire lives are woven through with faith. We trust the pilot to fly our plane. We trust the doctor with our health. We trust the farmer’s seed to grow. We accept the words of people we have never met, believing what they say to be true. So faith is not foreign to us, it is how we live every day. But saving faith has three essential parts.

First, we must hear. The apostle Paul writes, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” Romans 10 verse 17. You cannot believe what you have never heard. So we must open our ears to the Word of God, the good news of Jesus Christ. Not just with a casual listen, but with a hungry heart.

Second, we must accept God’s Word as true. When we hear that Jesus died for our sins, that He rose again, that He is the only way to the Father – we must believe it. We accept the testimony of the Bible and of the Christian witness as truth. Just as we trust the words of others every day, we are called to trust the Word of God. Our hearts are like our hands – made to receive. But we must open them.

Third, we must commit ourselves to it. Faith is not mere mental agreement. As the farmer trusts his seeds to the soil, as the patient trusts the surgeon with his life, as the passenger trusts the pilot with his journey – we must entrust our whole selves to Christ. This is not just believing that the gift is real; it is taking it. It is saying, “Lord, I am Yours. I give myself to You.”

Salvation, then, is hearing God's Word, accepting it as God's truth, and giving ourselves wholly to it. That is the way of faith. No works, no ritual, no self-affliction – just a humble, trusting soul clinging to the cross of Jesus.

My dear congregation, I must ask you today: Where is your trust? Are you hoping that your good deeds outweigh your bad ones? Are you relying on your church attendance, your baptism, your communion, or your religious upbringing? Are you punishing yourself, trying to make yourself acceptable to God? If so, hear me clearly... all those things will fail you. You cannot save yourself.

But God has made a way. A perfect way. His Son, Jesus Christ, lived the life you could not live, died the death you deserved to die, and rose again to give you eternal life. Salvation is a gift – freely offered, freely received.

If you have never received this gift, I urge you today: hear the Word of God. Accept it as true. Commit yourself to Jesus by faith. Do not delay.

And if you are already a believer, let this sermon be a sweet reminder of your salvation. You were saved by grace through faith – not by your own efforts. Let that truth fill you with humility, gratitude, and boldness to share the one true way with a lost world.

As we bow our heads, if you have never placed your faith in Jesus Christ, I invite you, don't wait. The Spirit is moving. The Word is sounding. The gift is offered. If you want to receive God's grace, if you are tired of your own efforts, if you are ready to trust Jesus alone for your salvation, I ask you to come forward. Come to the front, take someone by the hand, and say in your heart, "Lord Jesus, I hear Your word. I believe it is true. I give myself to You."

And for those of you who have wandered, who have drifted back into trying to earn God's favor, come back to the cross. Remember that you are saved by grace. Let go of your striving, and rest in His finished work.

The altar is open. Please Come.

Bow your heads with me as we pray...

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your amazing grace. We thank You that You did not leave us in our sin, but You sent Your only Son, Jesus, to be the sacrifice for our sins. Father, we confess that we have often tried to save ourselves – through our works, our rituals, our efforts – and we have failed. Forgive us. Open our hearts to receive Your free gift. For those who have just come forward, we pray that You would seal their faith, strengthen their trust, and fill them with the peace that comes from knowing they are saved by grace. For those who have returned to You, restore the joy of Your salvation. And for all of us, help us to live each day not by our own

strength, but humbly and gratefully resting in the finished work of Christ. We pray in the precious name of Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. A MEN.

Go out this week and be a blessing. For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed.

Thank you for watching and listening and we will see you next week.

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