

### Saved By Grace Through Faith

**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”**

Samuel Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, demonstrated his new invention on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1844 on a line he strung from Baltimore, Maryland, to the Capitol building in Washington, D.C.. And what was the first message he sent over his telegraph line? “What God hath wrought.” A miracle in communications had occurred! With cell phones and emails today, the telegraph doesn’t sound like much, but in those days, when it took hours or days or even weeks to send news from point A to point B, the telegraphs was considered a miracle.

Friends, especially you, dear family, your hearts are heavy as you mourn the death of Jeff. This tells me you cared for him. I do not pretend that I can write such a perfect sermon for you today that the pain and grief will immediately lift from your hearts. But I do know that the Lord has something to say to you, something that will fill grieving hearts with joy and mix tears of happiness with tears of sadness. Today I want you to see what God hath wrought, that is.

#### *I. What man has wrought.*

**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith.”** The telegraph may have seemed like a miracle in its day, but God hath wrought a genuine miracle. It is our salvation from death and hell. But before we can appreciate the rescue, we must understand the shipwreck that led to the rescue. Let’s understand what man hath wrought.

Allow me to highlight a few observations from Psalm 90 which we read earlier. **You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning--though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered. We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. The length of our days is seventy years— or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.** This is our world and this is a description of us. Tour the nursing home. See people who once were strong and independent who now need help with just about anything. Mankind is swept away into the arms of death. And it tells us why. God sets our iniquities before us. He even exposes our secret sins. The trouble of this world is simply a symptom, or a result of our sins. As it says in Romans, **“The wages of sin is death.”** That is what man hath wrought. Let’s now see what God hath wrought.

#### *II. What God hath wrought.*

**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”** The first miracle we see is God’s grace. Look at Jesus in the city of Nain in our previous reading. **“When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’”** Jesus had compassion on a woman whose son died. It wasn’t because she was a widow and her only son died. It wasn’t because her son was a nice person. His heart went out to her because our Lord is a gracious God.

At a similar scene in Bethany, Jesus stood outside the tomb of the dead Lazarus, and seeing the grief of his sisters and all the people, he was greatly troubled. In the Greek it literally says that he became angry. God hates what sin has done to us. He hates death. He hates the devil for tempting us. He hates the grief you feel

right now, so much so that he decided to do something about it. He saves us from our sin and its consequences.

There is much talk today about identity theft. I am still a leery about using my credit card online. It doesn't take much, a credit card number, your social security number, something, and suddenly thousands of dollars are charged to your name in a matter of minutes. Someone pretends to be you and you are left with the bill.

Wouldn't it be nice if we can turn the tables on identity theft, that anyone who pretends to be you gets stuck with the debt, even all your debt like the mortgage, medical bills, everything?

That is exactly what happened. He assumed our identity when he went to the cross. Jesus who had no sin became sin for us. He owed God nothing for he was sinless, but when he became us, then the debt we owed God became his debt and he paid it. In fact, the identity switch is complete. He not assumed our identity, now we get to have his identity. The Bible is clear, God puts a robe on us, the robe of Christ's righteousness. God sees his holiness when he looks at us.

There is another miracle here. The body that is sown in sadness will be raised in gladness. Just ask the widow at Nain. When Jesus raised her son, he put life back into his body. Christ will come again to raise and glorify this body and let it enjoy heaven with Jeff's soul.

You noticed there is no boasting about Jeff today. We could. A number of our members spoke of him fondly. They were impressed that he did not sit around feeling sorry for himself because of his disability, but got a job and worked to a ripe old age. People like that should be heroes and models. And they are. But it is better if we boast about God today. **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”** When Jeff appeared before the Lord after his death, he didn't boast about himself. Nothing in his hands did he bring, but to the cross did he cling. He boasted of Christ. Your comfort is not what Jeff did or we do, but what God does for you in Christ. Look at what miracle God hath wrought for Jim and for you. Amen.