

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Saved to Work

Ephesians 2:8-10

Keywords: Grace, Faith, Works, Good Works

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. Last week we learned of God's glorious, gracious intervention on our behalf.
 - 1. Vss 1-3 is a veritable dog-pile of soul-shattering facts about how utterly helpless a person is without God's grace.
 - a. Dead in sin.
 - b. Trapped into a life that is according to this age, which is passing away.
 - c. Under the power and influence of Satan.
 - d. Known as sons of disobedience and children of God's righteous wrath.
 - e. We lived being driven through life by the lusts of our sinfulness and happily gave into them.
 - 2. But God.....
 - a. Rich in mercy and great in love did three things on our behalf:
 - (1) Made us alive in Jesus.
 - (2) Raised us up with Jesus.
 - (3) Seated us with Jesus in heaven.
 - b. And the reason? So that for all eternity we would be trophies of His kindness and grace.
- B. In the middle of this wonderful description of God's intervention Paul bursts out with the statement, "by grace you have been saved."
- C. Now he picks this up to explain and expand upon that statement.

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1. Paul makes it crystal clear that forgiveness of sin and salvation from the wrath of God shall never come through our efforts; rather, it is by God grace.
2. This salvation is appropriated when we believe the gospel.
3. And it moves us into a life of good works that God has ordained we walk in.

II. The Gift of Salvation (2:8-9).

- A. "For" tells us what? [reason].
 1. What he is doing is expanding on what he already declared in vs 5. It is almost word-for-word the same.
 2. This grace of which he spoke of is why we are saved.
 3. But he adds the prepositional phrase "through faith" here.
- B. God's Grace is what saves us.
 1. Keep that first in your thinking as we look at this verse.
 2. Only and ever you are delivered from your sin and from hell because of God's grace.
 3. This is so important to state, though it may seem obvious, because it is far too easy for a person to think that grace helped them be saved. But that would be false.
 - a. If you are here and you are thinking that you do not fit into the categories that Paul set forth in 1-3 then you are not a Christian. You do not yet understand that you are dead in your sins and only the grace of God can rescue your soul.
 - b. Perhaps you are thinking that you have done certain things that you are ashamed of and messed things up in your life but now you stopped doing them so God must be pleased with you. This is not salvation by grace either.
 - c. Grace is something unearned in any way. It is simply God showing rich mercy to one who deserves nothing but God's wrath.
 4. The way this is constructed is such that it emphasizes that this act of salvation is completed and continues on to this day.
 - a. You are saved and being saved daily.

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- b. A Christian lives in a sphere of salvation, where your heavenly Father is continuing to hold you in His hand. The blood of Christ continues to cover and redeem you. The Spirit perpetually seals and holds you safe.
 - c. Even in your darkest moment, where your fears are realized and your faith shrinks and fades, if it is found to be in the gospel, you are saved.
5. How are you saved?
- a. Yes it is by grace, but that doesn't mean that just because Christ died that you are automatically saved. "Grace is the divine source of salvation, and human faith is the means whereby salvation takes place." (Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A., p. 46 *A Handbook*. . .)
 - b. The instrument by which you receive this salvation is through faith.
 - c. I reminded you already of the nature of faith that saves a few weeks ago (review quickly one more time).
 - d. To be a person of faith is to be a person who rests or trusts in God's provision for salvation. It really is that simple.
 - (1) There is an eschewing/shunning/rejection of our contribution.
 - (2) Instead it is an embracing that God has accomplished it all through His beloved Son who was our perfect substitute.
6. How are you NOT saved?
- a. Due to anything in or by you (8b-9).
 - b. The challenge is how to handle the word "that" in vs 8 (this in ESV).
 - (1) You don't need to worry about the technicalities, suffice it to understand that it is a pronoun that is neuter. Normally the pronoun agrees with the gender of the noun it is attached to. "Faith" however is feminine as is "grace".
 - (2) But by using the neuter pronoun what Paul is actually doing is embracing the entire clause. Our salvation by grace through faith is a gift of God.
 - c. And that utterly obviates the thought that we help God in any way in our salvation. It is an act of God's grace from beginning to end.

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- d. This is driven even more powerfully home by the phrase "not of yourselves."
 - (1) The picture it paints is humbling because it literally is saying that our salvation is not out of the midst of us.
 - (2) Nothing in us can bring us to the edge of salvation, much less the entrance into it. If you need a reminder, reread vss 1-3 to remember why.
- e. Therefore it reminds us that it is simply the gracious, loving, merciful gift that is from God to us.
 - (1) It is here that is the well-spring of all true thankfulness of a Christian.
 - (2) As that old hymn goes,
When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,

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The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

7. And to beat this into a pulp Paul then adds the words of vs 9.
 - a. It is not a result of our efforts. It cannot be that way for it is a gift.
 - b. It is here that the truth of Christianity steps out from among the countless religions of humanity. For true Christianity rejects utterly the idea that through our efforts we can be acceptable to God.
 - c. This is the folly of the one who sits and thinks that they are not that bad and that God will accept them. He will not and they have no hope in that way of thinking.
 - d. How many funerals have you sat in where people get up to talk all about how good the person was and how God needed an angel in heaven and such rot. It is the age-old lie of our inherent goodness and that God rewards hard workers with salvation.
8. The grace that saves us causes us not to boast in ourselves.
 - a. We, instead, must place a hand over our mouths when that temptation comes.
 - b. The Christian should be truly humble among mankind. Whatever they are is not by their goodness but God's grace.
 - c. Therefore they should boast in God's mercy.
 - (1) This is why we are called to boast in the Lord and the cross of Christ.
 - (2) This is much of what we should, and do, sing of, the mercy of God in saving us.
- C. Vs 10 then brings us final clarification on the gracious nature of our salvation.
 1. We are God's workmanship.
 2. Note the "for" again. This is finishing the thought of vs 9 about not boasting.
 3. When I started to grow in my skill in woodworking I bought a branding iron that marks a piece I did as mine. This is essentially what God does. We carry the seal of the Spirit upon us marking us out at God's work.

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4. We are not an image of our own workmanship. That is left for the one who rejects Jesus to their own ruin. We are an image of the work of God upon us as He conforms us into the image of His beloved Son.

III. The Gift of Good Works (10).

- A. Notice how it reads, "having been created in Christ Jesus"
 1. The term for "created" is only uses of God's acts of creation.
 2. And again notice the sphere/realm in which this work of creation occurs—Jesus.
 3. We are thankful recipients of God's work of creating in us a new life, realm and purpose.
 4. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- B. What have we been created in Christ to be or do?
 1. For good works.
 2. We will describe what that looks like in a moment.
- C. When did this occur?
 1. God prepared them beforehand.
 2. This points us back to Ephesians 1:4 where God chose us before the foundation of the world that we would be holy and blameless.
 3. So not only were we chosen to be holy but God even prepared the very works we were to walk in.
 4. My goodness, even our works as a Christ are a gift of God!
- D. Finally, these works are designed so that we would walk in them.
 1. That "so that" speaks to the purpose of God. Not just a wish or a hope. He did not save us so that maybe we would perform good works.
 2. The bible simply does not recognize a person as a Christian who does not perform good works. It is to that very end for which we were given life and salvation in Jesus Christ.
 3. As James says it so clearly in James 2:14-26 (take them through the passage.)
 4. Last week I made mention of the fingerprints of Satan in this world. Here we see the fingerprints of God our Father.

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IV. Conclusion.

- A. So here we find our purpose in the here and now. Richly saved not merely to sit and pat ourselves on the back, but to be busy in good works.
1. In 1 Timothy we find that the women of the church are to be known first and foremost as those rich in good works (2:10).
 2. Later, Paul makes it bluntly clear that a widow in the Church is not to be recognized as a widow indeed and therefore cared for by the Church unless her life was marked out by good works (5:10).
 3. To those who are rich Paul admonishes them to stop trusting in the money and begin to be "rich" in good works (6:18).
 4. Paul tells Titus that all who believe in the gospel are to be "careful to engage in good works (3:8), which means that this is not some passive thing, but requires thought, planning and execution.
- B. But what are these good works? I want to take the rest of our time to consider many of them as Paul lays them out clearly in Ephesians. He does not leave it to our invention.
1. He speaks of this "walk" in 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, and 15.
 2. So starting in chapter 4 let's get a sense of what God has created us in which to walk.

Community Group Questions

- **What concept has been challenged or changed in your mind through this sermon?**
- **Why do you think works are so easy to rest in or look to for one's acceptance by God?**
- **Prior to this message when you heard "good works" what did you think of?**
- **What stood out in looking at the various works that Paul laid out for us? More importantly what is one work you see a need to grow in?**