

Salvation Works

Ephesians

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Bible Text: Ephesians 2:10

Preached on: Sunday, November 2, 2014

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I invite you to turn to the book of Ephesians which we are studying verse-by-verse together. Ephesians 2 is our text for this morning and last week we saw in very clear and definitive terms written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the pen of the Apostle Paul, that salvation is a work of God not a work of man and Paul made this so very clear that man cannot save himself. He does not have the capacity in himself even to respond to God without the help of God. God must do the saving and Paul made that clear. That's what we looked at in verses 8 through 9 and if you happened to miss that message, I'd encourage you to pick a copy of that message up on your way out because it's kind of a companion piece to what we're going to see today.

After verse 9, look at the end of verse 9 there. Paul said, "Not as a result of works, so that no one would boast." One writer says this as you move into verse 10, and I quote, "One might imagine that by now Paul has made his point and is ready to pass on to another topic, but no, he is determined not to leave his theme until he has expounded it beyond any possibility of this understanding." What Paul is talking about in the work of God in salvation and the fact that we as Christians were on the receiving end of the sovereign movement of God in our souls, is so critical to the whole understanding of salvation. It is so critical to the philosophy of ministry. It is so critical to the way that you live your individual Christian lives that Paul knows that this point must be driven home very deeply into our hearts and that's why as we saw last time, he says the same thing in a dozen different ways. He approaches it from every possible angle so that there can be no misunderstanding by someone who sincerely and seriously reads the text.

Now, today's text reinforces the emphasis on God's work in salvation. Look at verse 10 Ephesians 2:10 will be our text for this morning. Paul says,

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

And just as a preliminary observation of that text, in every aspects of this one verse you see God on the initiating end of salvation, not man. It was God's workmanship that made us into believers. He created us in Christ Jesus, we did not create ourselves. And even the lives that we live and the good works that we live now as believers, it says that God was

on the initiating side of that as well when it says that, "God prepared them beforehand so that we would walk in them."

We are going to expand this text this morning and see two really simple aspects, simple but profound, clear but necessary items on salvation. We're going to see, first of all, the source of our salvation and then secondly, we're going to see the purpose of our salvation. And for you young people who are just beginning to learn what it means to listen to God's word, what you should be able to do at the end of a message like this is walk out to say that, "God saved me so that I would glorify him," with the emphasis on, "God did the saving so that I would glorify him." You young people, you have in this text what it is to become a Christian and you have the defining purpose, the reason for your existence and it's not too early for you to embrace this and to set your heart upon it. It's better to set your heart on these things as a young person 8, 10, 12 years old rather than waiting and thinking that, "Well, I'll get to that later in life." Trust those of us who waited a little bit later that God didn't save until a little later in our lives, it's better to live a life for God from the beginning rather than trying to pick it up halfway. It's better to just leave the luggage in the trunk and never pull it out and try to carry it around the rest of the way. We have here who would it is that accomplishes salvation and we have the purpose for which he did it and that's what we're going to see this morning.

First of all: the source of our salvation. The source of our salvation. Where did salvation come from? Whose idea was it? Whose power was it? Whose desire was it? Those questions are so fundamental and what this text, beginning in Ephesians 1, and all the way down to where we're at today, particularly chapter 2, verses 1 through 10, which sets the context for this verse, shows us that the desire for salvation had to come from God originally, not from us because we were dead in our transgressions and we were captive to evil powers and we had no desire for it. And so if you today find yourself here as a Christian and you know that you've been born again, the clarity and the simplicity of this text is simply for you to see one more time in one more way that that came from the good heart of God and not from the accomplishment of your life and it is a humbling truth but it is a necessary truth.

What is the source of salvation? Look at verse 10 with me. Paul says, "We are His workmanship." We are his workmanship. The original language emphasizes the possessive pronoun "his." It places it first in the sequence of words. Salvation is God's achievement, not ours. It's his workmanship and it's like Paul is saying, "It's his workmanship," so that by the emphasis and the stress of his written voice, he says, "Don't think anything else. Let go of your desire to take credit." We live in a world, the spirit of the world is that people want a piece of the action. If there's money to be had, people want a piece of the action. If there's glory to be had, people want a piece of the action. If there's power to be had and influence to be had, people want a piece of the action. They want to be in on it so that they benefit from whatever is happening. Well, here in Ephesians chapter 2, Paul is confronting the spirit, that spirit of our age, and saying when it comes to the glory and the acknowledgment and the responsibility and who was the source of salvation, what this text is saying is that you and I don't get it piece of the action. We are his workmanship. Not God's and ours, this wasn't a collaborative effort,

we weren't in joint partnership. We didn't form a limited partnership or a corporation and do it together with God. God saved us and that changes everything. And this word "workmanship" is a word that is used only of the works of divine creation, that the object is on the receiving end of the creative power of God in such a way that the object could not have contributed to bringing itself about.

If you turn over to Romans chapter 1, the same Greek term is used. Romans 1, just back a couple of books in your Bible, the same Greek term is used in Romans 1:20, as Paul talks about, in part, the physical universe. Chapter 1, verse 20, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through," here's the word translated differently but it's the same underlying term, "through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Paul says, "The physical creation displays the glory and the power of God." He says, "The nature of God, in part, is displayed through what has been made." And the point for our discussion here this morning is that this created world that he's speaking about did not make itself. God created the world and what stands after that is the display of his creative power and his originating source of creative ability.

Now, it's that same word, turn back to Ephesians 2. It's that same word that we see here in Ephesians 2:10, "We are His workmanship," we are the object of something that God has done. God, if you're a Christian today, here is the way that you should think about yourself with great gratitude and humility before the throne of God: God did a work of creative activity upon you in your spiritual life to save you. You did not do anything to deserve that. You did not prompt that. You did not earn that. You did not participate in the creative act any more than the universe participated in its own creation. That's the significance of this word. You were no equal partner in securing your fate. You were not the captain of your soul. You were not the master of your own destiny as we've seen and we can't review it all but if you follow the course of the Scriptures that we've been expounded up until this point, you realize that it could never be that way. You did not bring yourself to spiritual life, beloved, and I didn't bring myself to spiritual life, it was a work of God and there's no hidden meaning here. There's no qualifications or reservations to what Paul says. The simple clarity of what he says here is the reality of why we are a believer in Christ here today, it's because the source of our salvation was God himself.

Look at the text again with me, "We are His workmanship." We stand today as living, breathing Christians, spiritually alive. We're like that now in an ongoing way because God did a work beforehand in order to bring that result about and just as the created order stands as a testimony to his creative power in the physical creation, so a Christian now stands as a manifestation and a demonstration of his creative power in the spiritual realm. We didn't participate in that. We didn't make that happen.

And so Ephesians 2:10 is reinforcing everything that Paul just said in verses 8 and 9, look at it with me and you see this together and you see how the cumulative power of each word brings this to pass. Let me say one thing here, okay? Your view of Scripture really affects the way that you look at this. We believe that every word of Scripture was

inspired by God. It is the word of God, word for word, not just thoughts but the actual words that we have in front of us are expressing the intention of God and say exactly what he wanted it to say so that when we read a compact rich verse like this passage, verses 8 through 10, every word matters, every word is significant. There wasn't some excess. Paul wasn't saying more than was necessary. We are reading what God wanted in print to testify to man throughout the existence of the physical world. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away." And so word by word we treasure what is said here; this is why we treat it carefully. This is why it takes time to preach the Bible.

But look at verse 8 with those things in mind, every word being important, "By grace you have been saved." Notice that you are on the receiving end of the salvation and it's "by grace through faith, that not of yourselves." Don't think that you contributed to this by your own unaided effort or your own unaided desire. Paul says, "No, it's not from you. It's from God. It's the gift of God, not as a result of your work so that no one may boast for," he keeps going you wonder if he even drew a breath while he was dictating this. He says, "For we are His workmanship," and what I want you to see is that wave after wave is reinforcing the same thing: by God's grace, by what he did, his gift, not of yourselves, not of your works, we are his workmanship.

The source came from God and so by a work of God's Holy Spirit on your heart, God enlightened your mind to understand the things of Christ in the Gospel. He renewed your stubborn will and drew you to Christ when you would not have chosen to do that if he had not but he worked on you. He broke your chains of sin in such a way that you did not come against your will to Christ. He worked in your will in a way so that you came willingly in response to what he had done. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father draws him." That's what we're seeing here in this text, you came to Christ freely because God first broke your chains and left to your own desires, you never would have been saved. And so today as we stand here as believers in Christ, we recognize that we are on the receiving end of something that God started and accomplished on our behalf and we are grateful to him.

Now, let me say with as much love and tenderness as I can possibly bring up out of my heart: if you're not a Christian here today, I want you to understand something, that as you sit there alone and separated from God without the Spirit in your heart, without belonging to Christ, still dead in your trespasses and sins, I want you to understand something and I say this to help you but you are hopelessly lost. I grieve for you in your condition because there is nothing that you can do to make things better on your own. You simply have to cry out to God for mercy and say, "God, be merciful to me in this situation," and appeal to him to do something in mercy on your soul that you freely acknowledge that you cannot do for yourself. And so at the same time, understand as we make that appeal to you that Christ says, "Come to me and I will receive you. Those who come to me I will never cast out." When you come to Christ crying out for mercy, you find that he was calling for you first to begin with and as you feel that sense of conviction and that pull towards Christ, respond to it with a humble submission that says, "Yes, Lord save me too."

Now, we're talking about the source of salvation. You see the source again in the following phrase. This just fascinates me just from the repetition of it all. The multiplied repetitions tell us that we must be slow to receive this. Slow to understand it. Slow to accept it. Slow to embrace it. If it was easy for us to accept this, Paul would have only had to say it once but because we are so prone to miss the point, because the pride of our heart so much wants a piece of the action, Paul says it again and again and again under the direction and the influence of the Holy Spirit so that we wouldn't miss it.

Look at it with me there in verse 10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." There we are, passive voice, on the receiving end of the creative work of God. "Created" means that God caused it to come into existence. This word is also used to refer to the physical creation, God bringing it to pass.

Look over at Colossians 1:16. There are a lot of parallels between Ephesians and Colossians and as you read Ephesians and Colossians, they reinforce each other. Paul wrote them at practically the same time and while he was in prison but here you see it in verse 16. In Ephesians he is talking about the spiritual creation of the new birth, here in verse 16 Colossians 1, he uses it to refer to the physical universe among other things but here you see it Colossians 1:16, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created," there is our word, "through Him and for Him." And when we read that in Colossians 1, no one would seriously say, "Ah, but what that really means is that creation participated. Creation helped out by bringing itself to the table. Creation exercised faith so that God would create it." We would never say that because it's obvious that's not what it means in that context. Well, the same word is being used to talk about God's spiritual work in Ephesians 2 but somehow we find our way, some people, will find their way trying to say, "But I had a part. I contributed something to this. I worked together with God to bring about my new birth." And Scripture is saying that's not the case. We're his workmanship. We were created in Christ Jesus by the overwhelming power of God.

Now look at Revelation 4:11, if you would. The same word being used here. Revelation 4:11, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." Same word there. God receiving glory, honor and power because of his creative act. It is him alone. He alone gets the glory for it. The physical universe exists because God willed it to be so. The same word shows that you are a Christian by the will of God. It's because he wanted you that way. It's because he worked on your dead heart to bring you to life. It was a divine resurrection. It was a divine liberation.

And so as we wrap this up and it's all in the realm of Christ Jesus as we are joined to him, as we wrap this up, it's clear, it's humbling, it's at the same time very exhilarating to realize that Paul is not congratulating us for having exercised faith in Christ and that by our human act we distinguished ourselves from others who do not believe. That is not his point. Paul is saying that the distinguishing mark, the reason that you are distinct, the

reason that you are in the body of Christ is because of the work of God and the will of God, not because of the will of man.

John 1:12. Not by the will of man who received him not by the will of man. We are born not from ourselves. A baby cannot bring about his own birth. His workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. Martin Luther said this and I quote, "A man cannot be thoroughly humbled until he comes to know that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsel, endeavors, will, and works and is absolutely dependent upon the will, counsel and pleasure of God." Salvation is of the Lord, that's what that means.

Paul now, having explained the source of salvation beyond any question, and let's just add one last thing so that it can be clear. I have a number of guests this morning. Welcome, we're glad that you're here with us today. You having not been with us as we've gone through the whole passage, I wouldn't want you to miss something by this. I understand that these doctrines of salvation can be taught in a cold, indifferent spirit, in a way that seems like, "Well, what does it matter then. What's the use then?" But the whole context of the passage that we've looked at prior and you're just kind of catching the tail end of it here, makes it impossible for us to do anything but to respond in love and gratitude and a warmhearted affection to the God of our salvation.

The question is: why did he do this? And Scripture says, look at verse 4 with me, it's so important for you to understand this that this work of God in the lives of believers is a display of his mercy. It's because God had compassion upon us in our lost condition and wanted to help us and rescue us from it before we perished eternally with nothing in us to draw out his affections. Nothing to compel him, nothing to earn this kind of motion from God to us, nothing like that at all, simply from the pure, perfect goodness of his attributes. In his great mercy, verse 4, with his great love, by grace in verse 5, in verse 7, in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus, God did this. And so far from this making us with draw in coldness from God, perish the thought, we realize that God has shown such unutterable eternal, magnificent, goodness and kindness and affection toward us to bring us into his family so that he could secure us and bless us forever to realize that he did a work in us to bless us like that makes us say, "Hallelujah, Lord God, you are so very good to me." And we love him with a soft and tender heart rather than turning away because we can't take any credit for ourselves.

And you see, beloved, the sooner, the more completely that we divest ourselves of trying to take any sliver of credit, the more our hearts have now been released and free to give God the glory which he so richly deserves. When you understand that a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, bled on a cross in order to bring this about for you, that he left heaven in order to shed his blood with such mercy and grace that he could look down upon those who were crucifying him and mocking him and say, "Father, forgive them for they don't know not what they are doing." When you realize that he was gashed and bruised and endured the wrath of God as your substitute, that the crown of shame that was thrust into his scalp was the scalp that should have been on you. That that sense of eternal separation, "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?" was your destiny apart from his intervention. Oh beloved, don't you see, don't you see that these truths from Scripture

are what bring forth the love for God in our hearts and it's not until we let go of wanting credit that we can fully embrace honoring him exclusively and not trying to stand up on the top tier of the podium with him with our arms around him, "Lord, we did it together." No, no, oh, the thought of that. Oh, the thought of that just shatters me. No, Christ ascends to the top of the platform, as it were, and receives the gold medal and we're in the audience applauding him, not trying to steal the moment by our so-called participation in the work. He gets all the glory and when we embrace that, then we love him far more than when we tried to keep some for ourselves. That's when we're thoroughly humbled and that's when the blessing of God is unleashed on the human soul.

Now, this has a defining impact on so many things and Paul is now going pivot here in verse 10. He's going to pick up into what's going to occupy the rest of the letter here at the end of verse 10. He is pivoting now. He's made his point so that it is beyond being contested. He has made it and silenced all human pride and now he pivots to this other aspect of salvation as we look at point number 1: the purpose of salvation. We've seen for one last time for now the source of salvation and now Paul goes on to talk about the purpose of salvation.

Look at verse 10 with me. Let me say this before we read the text: it's not like you're a little robot toy that God wound the key up at your conversion and then let you go and you just kind of went off into your life unchanged and God says, "Hey, I'll see you in heaven," as if you could continue on after that kind of miraculous work unchanged or unaffected by it. God didn't wind us up and then let us go and, you know, with no intent of anything else to come from it other than making a transaction in his book that says, "This one goes to heaven, not to hell," and nothing else matters. No, no, God's creative act, God's workmanship was for a purpose. It was to take ownership of your life so that, watch this, so that understandings that your secure, blessed, spiritual position having come exclusively from him would now, watch this, places a sense of gratitude and obligation and responsibility and desire on your part that you want to return all of your energies to this God who exercised his creative energy in order to deliver you from your horrible state in sin. And so this massive power of God that was brought to bear on us was for a purpose so that our lives would be transformed. So that our lives would have an eye on, that our hearts would be motivated in what he declares to be good and the purpose of our existence now. He saved us and now he owns us and we like it that way.

We want it that way and so look at verse 10 with me again. Paul says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," here's the pivot point. Now he introduces the purpose, "for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." We'll spend the next few minutes just kind of unpacking what this means.

Beloved, I want you to understand, I want you to see from Scripture because it defines your life and it defines why we exist and what we do together as a church going forward in the years to come. This defines everything for us. The goal of salvation is not merely that you would go to heaven. The goal of our church is not merely that we would have a place to meet to worship together on Sunday and, you know, have pot luck dinners together. God saved you. God brought our church into existence so that you, we, I would

live to the glory of God. That sounds so basic. That sounds so simple. You almost despair of saying I'm saying things that are too simple but do you know what? It really is, it's that basic. This point has to be clear in our minds because this point affects everything. Now the reason that you live, now purposes for which you make your decisions, the basis upon which you determine what you do going forward once these come home with power in your life, is no longer, "What can I get out of it?" but "What most glorifies God?" Our purpose as a church is clearly defined in this point. The purpose of our church is not to please the world, not to make things as welcoming to unrepentant sinners as we possibly could. That's not the point. I know you understand that. I know that you elevate your passions with me as I say that. I know that you get it, that's why you're here so we are on the same side together but that's not the point. That couldn't be the point. The main point, the primary point is that we would do good works as defined in Scripture so that all of our existence, every living breath that God gives us would abound to his glory out of a grateful response for this creative workmanship that he did in our hearts to save us from sin. That little basic point is a lever that changes the trajectory of everything and so we don't mind if unsaved people come into our service and say, "I don't like the music here." Well, do you know what? It's not for you. It's not for you. Please stay. Please visit with us. We're glad you're here but the fact that an unsaved person wouldn't like songs that talk about all glory, laud and honor to Christ our King, is a matter of indifference to us when it comes to determining and deciding what we do. That doesn't define our philosophy of ministry at all. It's defined by good works as God sees them because we're so captivated by the glory of God saving us that we would have it no other way. That's corporately and the same spirit carries over individually. Good works is a way of simply saying godly behavior

Look at the verse with me here. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." Now as you first read that, if you're just reading that verse in isolation, you might say, "What's good works?" You know, you start to define it in a lot of different ways. Well, you know what? We don't have to guess what Paul meant here in this verse. I told you that this is a pivot point. What happens, now watch this, we're not going to define it anymore than what we've already done in this broad way but here's what I want you to see is that Paul goes on and finishes chapter 2 and then he writes chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 in this book and what he's doing from this is the pivot point on is saying and laying out, "Here are the good works, here are the demands of a godly life. This is how you glorify God in the church, in your family, in work and in your prayer life." And so when we want to know what the good works are that Paul is talking about, well, we just keep reading and studying rather than trying to guess what he meant by it. In general, we could say that these good works of which Paul speaks means that you live with biblical attitudes and according to biblical priorities in the life that God has providentially ordained for you. Let me say that again, there's a mouthful there, I want you to hear it. What are the good works of which Paul speaks? As you read the rest of Ephesians, as we study it together, what we will see is that you live with biblical attitudes and according to biblical priorities in the life that God has providentially ordained for you.

God prepared things in advance for you to walk in. As we have studied the doctrine of providence in the past, the very life that you have right now is the life that God has for

you now. You don't have to second guess and wonder, "Well, what if I had me this decision, or married a different spouse, or said something different, or taken a different job?" Forget all of that and leave it behind. None of that matters anymore. What matters is today. This is the life that God has given you today and this is the life, this is the time in which you are to bring forth the good works. You can't live any other life than the one that God has given you. If it's a life filled with pain and sorrow then, beloved, I want to encourage you that what God has set before you is for you to live to the glory of God and trust him in the midst of your pain and disappointment and that ennobles your pain and disappointment so that you say, "Okay, whatever else I do, I'm going to glorify God right here. I'm going to show the world what a godly Christian looks like living through sorrow, pain and disappointment without resentment, with courage, with cheer. That's the kind of Christian I'm going to be." That's the life of good works for you. For those of you that are blessed with prosperity, you live a life of good works according to a godly prosperous man, godly prosperous woman. It's not complicated.

Here's the thing, this is what I want you to get, not because I'm upset with you but because this is so transforming to your life and so utterly liberating: you do not have to become somebody else, speaking to Christians here, you do not have to become somebody else in order to live this life of good works that God calls you to. I realize that there are voices that sound really persuasive about do hard things and you see stories of pastors that leave their church because they want to go live with people in Thailand and it creates this sense that unless I do something really, really dramatic, really, really big that gets written up by Christian bloggers or in Christian magazines, then my life really doesn't, you know, I'm really not like that and you have the sense that I haven't done all that I could. No, no we utterly reject that and throw it out on the curb because of the false expectations and the false pressures that it puts on people.

What Paul says, what Paul has in mind when he talks about good works, can be seen in what he says. He says, look at verse 10 with me again, I need to pick back up on the text so that you can follow the string of thought here. Paul says, "Good works God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Well, he uses that word "walk" repeatedly in the rest of the epistle and shows us what kind of walk it is that he has in mind. Follow with me as we trace this word "walk" through the rest of Ephesians and you can see that I'm not making this up. Ephesians 4:1, "Therefore," based on everything that I've said before, now he says, verse 4, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Do you want to see a good work? Do you want to do a good work for Christ in response to your salvation? Live in the midst of the people of God in a unified, harmonious, supportive way, preferring them over yourselves and you're doing a good work according to the Scriptures. And yeah, no one's going to write a headline about it on earth. There will be banners displayed in heaven. There will be enthusiasm in the voice of Christ when we live this way and there will be enthusiasm in his voice when he says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master." But nobody applauded me on earth. "I don't care. That's not what it was about. It was never about that to begin with. It was about you

seeing what I laid out in my word and living according to that." For occasional rare exceptions, they will enter into prominence, most of us will simply fade into obscurity and that's the way, we don't mind that, let's say it that way. If Christ's name is lifted up and my name dissipates and people forget it, that's great and I don't care if anyone writes a book about it because, beloved, you see, and I'm not speaking just for me, I'm speaking on your behalf, I'm illustrating this for you. If somehow actually our name stays out of the way then the glory of God can be on greater display and that's what we want. Why? Because we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus on the receiving end. He's been good to us and I just want people to see the one who has been good to me, that's all that matters. That's the way we think as Christians.

Chapter 4:1, chapter 4:17, Paul says, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them," and he goes on and on. We live this life of unity in the body of Christ. We live a life of separation from the world, disengaged from its lusts, disengaged from its desires, disengaged from its priorities. Walking to the beat of a different drummer. Why? Because we're created in Christ Jesus for good works. We're his workmanship. He did something for us. He took us out of that and set us apart for something else and it's not surprising that that something else doesn't result in us accumulating or seeking glory for ourselves. We surrendered that. We gave that up. We sacrificed that. We were saved from that so that we might do the good works that God calls for.

Look at chapter 5:2, you can start in verse 1, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us," that sacrificial, self-effacing spirit that so many of you manifest day by day and in your walk with our church. Chapter 5:8, just a simple life of holiness, "Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them," be separate from the world in which you live in. Chapter 5:15, a walk of wisdom, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Here is your good works, "And do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with always giving thanks and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."

Now, in one sense, that's calling us to do hard things but it's hard because of the conflict of our remnants of sin, our indwelling flesh rather than hard things that the world is going to praise us for, even if it's the Christian world, so-called Christian world. And so, beloved, here it is this: your understanding what the Scriptures are saying here is morning, if you have a sense of release and liberation and a growing sense of gratitude coming upon you and realizing that this is different from what the world tells us to do, look at your current life in light of what we've said and realize that what God is calling you to is this walk of humility, this walk of separation, this walk of love, this walk of

wisdom and, beloved, you can do that right where you are at. You don't have to drop what you're doing and go someplace else and make up a life that was never on your trajectory. God has brought you to this life today Sunday, November 2, 2014 that will date the message in the future, Sunday, November 2, 2014 right where you're at with the family, with the spouse, with the children, with the difficulties, with the prosperity, with the goodness that you have, right here is where you manifest this walk and it is for this exact life that you have now in Christ that God prepared you to live and God has good works for you right where you're at for you to do. This is wonderful. All of a sudden, everything about your life means something. All of a sudden, you no longer think, "Life passed me by." All of a sudden, you're no longer thinking, "I should have done it some other way." All of a sudden, you do away with that sense of saying, "I wish I was someone else. I wish I was like him. There must be something wrong with me because I didn't attain like he did." All of that gets wiped away and you see that it doesn't even matter because God prepared you for this life, saved you to live out the actual life that he gave you, not one that he didn't give to you. That's the implications of this verse. That's the implications of God's sovereign Providence.

Look back at chapter 2:10 with me. Let me just say just to be clear that these good works of which Paul speaks, they don't do anything to improve your standing with God whatsoever. Your standing, the legal basis on which you can come to God by which you are declared righteous with God, your legal basis is the righteousness of Christ and that is perfect and you can't improve upon it and so Paul isn't calling us to keep up our salvation by doing these good works and if we don't we're going to lose out and our status will be diminished. No, Christ has secured a perfect status for us with his righteousness. The righteousness on your account is perfect and so it's not that suddenly you're warned to do these things or you're going to lose this salvation if you don't, that's not the point at all. No, what Paul is saying here is that this is the purpose of your salvation.

Look at it again in verse 10 with me now, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." Now listen, let me state it this way: these good works of which we speak must necessarily occur not so that you can preserve your salvation and lose it if you don't but rather these good works necessarily happen because of the very nature of salvation. You see, salvation was more than a moment of you praying a prayer, it was a miraculous work of God's Spirit on your heart that changed you into someone new. You had a new disposition, a new nature imparted to you and now with that having been permanently done, you live according to your new nature. You've been changed and therefore your life changes because of the inner change that took place inside you. God designed salvation so that we would reflect the divine design. New things come from a new heart. That's why Paul can say this, "God saved you so that you will do this."

Now, and even in that, we're still giving God the glory. Look at verse 10 with me again where it says that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works," I love this, "which God prepared beforehand." God appointed your circumstances ahead of time. God laid out the path for you to walk and so that gives us a sense of confidence as we move forward. We do away with anxiety. We do away with fear. We do away with doubting and say, "No, God has saved me. God has placed a path before me and while it's difficult

and I may not be able to see too far down the path, these are the steps that God has ordained for me to walk in. Let's go for it. Let's rejoice in it. This difficult mixed-up life that I've got," you say to yourself if your life is difficult and mixed up, "somehow now I see clarity, this is the way forward. God intends for me to prosper, to glorify him, to respond with biblical attitudes and priorities right here, right now. I can do this right now. I can be grateful to God right now. I can rejoice in my salvation right now. I don't have to wait until things change." God prepared it in advance and I would go so far as to say: the more difficult and impossible your circumstances seem to be in light of this teaching, the more emboldened you should be. Say, "This is utterly impossible. This life I have right now," you'd say before you hear this, "is utterly impossible." Now, you view it completely differently and say, "No, no, I'm a Christian and this life is somehow what God has appointed for me. This is not impossible. I'll take the next step forward trusting God, satisfied, content and glorifying him in it because I see right here, God prepared this beforehand."

You say, "I've been a Christian for so long and I've never heard this before and now look at all the accumulated stuff." Don't think that way, beloved. Just set that thinking aside and rather than saying, "What about all this lost time?" say, "Thank God, I understand this now and I've still got breath to live some of this out while I can." Be grateful for the opportunity that is ahead rather than regretting the lost opportunities that are behind. Forget it, "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead," Paul says in Philippians 3. "I press on toward the goal of the call of God in Christ Jesus." And so, if you're in your 40s or 50s and you're just a new Christian, that's great. It's not a cause for regret. Now, look at life and live out the good works that God has for you right in front of you.

So as we go on in Ephesians, Paul is going to exhort us to godly living in our church, our personal conduct, our family, our work, our prayer, our dependence upon him but what we see is that God saved you to walk in precisely the life that you have now.

Look at the end of verse 10 with me, "God prepared this beforehand so that," here's another aspect of the purpose, "so that you would walk in them." There is a divine design at work in your life that God intends you to fulfill. You can do that without fear. You can do that with courage. And you do it all with a sense of glorifying God in the process. God saved you to walk in precisely the life that you now have, period. A true Christian delights in that life that God has given him out of gratitude and out of respect for the God who did such a great work to save him and, beloved, what I want you to see is that that delight, that response, that willingness shows that it is God that is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Charles Spurgeon said, "God's choice of us was not because we were holy. God chose us to make us holy." So let's run the race that's before us pursuing the purpose of God which is to glorify him in precisely the life which he's given us both physically and the spiritual life that he has so graciously, abundantly given us in Christ.

Bow with me in prayer.

Father we are delighted to call you our God and our Father. We are delighted to be on the receiving end of unspeakably great mercy. We are delighted, Father, that we're able to live the life that you've given us rather than fretting over the life that we don't have.

I pray, Father, for these dear brothers and sisters in Christ in their sorrows and their joys and their trials and their opportunities in every aspect, Father, that they would so see and so rejoice and so delight in the reality of being on the receiving end of your work in salvation that the whole attitude and perspective on life becomes one of a grateful, eager response even if it's hard because we see, Father, that there is an underlying, hidden, divine purpose in it all whose outcome we don't fully know or understand and yet it is the flowing stream of water underneath that we can sink our roots into and find the vitality that lets us live. You saved us so that we would bring forth good works in the life that you've given us so that we would walk in them. You prepared it in advance. You saw it from the beginning. You saw the end before it started and said, "This is the life that I have for this one and he will glorify me there," and we say, "Father, yes, amen." In this life that you given to us individually, in this life that you've given us corporately as Truth Community Church, we say, "Amen, yes, hallelujah, we will glorify the God who saved us. We will walk in the works that he has set before us with joy, with confidence, with gratitude, with worship."

So help us to that end, our God. Thank you, our Lord Jesus, for being the one who paid the price to let us enter into all of these wonderful blessings that we now have. In your great and holy name we pray, Lord Jesus, and with humility in our hearts knowing that we did not save ourselves we pray. Amen.

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