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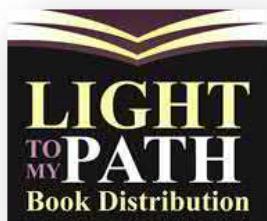
By Grace Through Faith

**An Examination of Ephesians 2:8-10:
The Means and Purpose of Salvation**



By Grace Through Faith

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The Means and Purpose of Salvation*



F. Wayne MacLeod

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By Grace Through Faith

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Table of Contents

Preface.....	5
Chapter 1 - By Grace You Have Been Saved.....	7
Chapter 2 - Through Faith	13
Chapter 3 - Not Your Own Doing.....	19
Chapter 4 - The Gift of God	25
Chapter 5 - Not A Result of Works	31
Chapter 6 - No Boasting.....	39
Chapter 7 - His Workmanship.....	45
Chapter 8 - Created in Christ Jesus	51
Chapter 9 - Good Works Prepared Beforehand.....	57
Light To My Path Book Distribution	63

Preface

Ephesians 2:8-10 is one of the most familiar passages of the New Testament. Certainly, there has been much written on these verses, and I do not pretend to add anything new that has not been examined elsewhere. Each writer, however, has their circle of influence. It is my purpose to share the truth of these important verses with that circle.

In these verses, the apostle Paul speaks about salvation, grace, faith, works, and being created in Christ Jesus. All these terms and concepts can be confusing. My goal is to bring greater clarity to these notions and show how they apply to us today.

In essence, the apostle Paul tells us that the salvation God offers is a free gift provided to all who place their faith and confidence in what the Lord Jesus has done on the cross. It is not something we merit by our efforts or good works. It is from start to finish the work of God through His Son Jesus Christ.

This concept has been a difficult one for many to grasp. It is human to feel the need to merit or earn our salvation by what we do or how we live. The salvation Paul presents here, however, can never be obtained by our religious activities. Sin has stained every aspect of our lives. What we need is not

more effort but pardon. This is what Jesus came to offer. This forgiveness cost Jesus His life but releases us from judgement and opens the door for all who accept His work to become children of God.

I trust that Paul will speak again to each reader through this short commentary. My prayer is that his teaching in these few verses will reveal to us the incredible grace of God in offering freely to us a salvation we could never obtain by our efforts.

God bless,

F. Wayne Mac Leod

Chapter 1 - By Grace You Have Been Saved

In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul reminds the Ephesian believers of the kind of people they had been before coming to the Lord Jesus and experiencing His salvation:

(1) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. – Ephesians 2:1-3

ESV

Here in these verses, the apostle spoke about how the Ephesians had been dead in their trespasses and sin (verse 1). That is to say, they had no relationship with God and were separated from Him. The Ephesians were devoted to their worldly ways following Satan, the “prince of the power of the air.” They lived according to their passions and desires. Because they did not honour God in this state, Paul described them as “children of wrath.” That is to say; they were children destined for the wrathful judgement of God.

By Grace Through Faith

Paul goes on in verses 4-6, however, to tell the Ephesians what the heavenly Father did for them through the work of His Son Jesus Christ:

(4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Out of love for them, the Lord God saved them from judgement and made them alive in the Lord Jesus. He raised them up from their sin and shame and sat them with Christ in heavenly places. Those who were dead to all things spiritual were made alive and given a place of honour in heaven. Now, as a result of this gracious work of the Lord Jesus, the Ephesians would experience for all eternity the “immeasurable riches of God’s grace and kindness.”

(7) so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. - Ephesians 2:1-7 ESV

The apostle Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to understand the incredible grace of God that brought about this salvation. He goes on, therefore, in Ephesians 2:8 to say:

For by grace you have been saved – Ephesians 2:8 ESV

The word “saved” speaks of being delivered or rescued. We have already seen from Ephesians 2:1-6 what the apostle had to say about this salvation. First, he reminded the Ephesians that they had been “dead in their trespasses and sin.” In other words, sin had stripped them of all spiritual life

By Grace You Have Been Saved

and relationship with God. More than that, however, it also placed them under His wrath and fearful judgement.

The second point Paul made is found in verse 6. Here he showed the Ephesians what took place through the work of Jesus Christ—God raised them and seated them in heavenly places. Instead of the fearful judgement of God, they were given a place of honour. It was Jesus who made this possible. The work of the Lord Jesus provided them life and pardon. They were saved from the eternal judgement of God and given hope of eternal life in the Father's presence.

Why would Christ raise these sinful Ephesians from death and give them life? Why would He give them an inheritance with the Father for all eternity? The answer is found in Ephesians 2:4-5. God was rich in mercy and love. It was because of His grace that the Ephesians were saved (Ephesians 2:5, 8).

Grace is a free expression of mercy, compassion and kindness. It is not owed to anyone. It is a reflection of the goodwill of God toward those to whom He has no obligation. In the case of the Ephesians, it was compassion demonstrated toward those who had sinned against God and rebelled against His authority.

Some believe that God owes them everything. They become angry with Him when they get sick or lose a loved one. They turn from Him when He does not answer their prayers as they think He should. These people demand that God serve them and minister to their every need. In essence, God becomes their celestial servant.

By Grace Through Faith

The God of the Bible is not our servant. He is our Lord and Master, and we are His servants. He owes us nothing but gives generously out of compassion and mercy. Everything we receive from Him is an act of kindness and grace. He is under no obligation to care for us or even notice us, but He does so out of love.

Because of God's grace, we can be saved from the death imposed on us by sin. God does not owe me forgiveness or a place in heaven. He offers this, however, out of the generosity of His heart. He extends His hand to you today and says – “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28 ESV).

This grace is extended to all who will hear His voice. None of us deserve this pardoning favour. Many reject it because they feel unworthy. Others turn from it because it seems way too simple. Paul tells us, however, that our salvation, forgiveness and eternal destiny are based on one thing –the grace of God.

We can know forgiveness because God extends unmerited favour to those who do not deserve it. He willingly placed His only Son on the cross to pay for your sin and mine. If there is one thing we need to understand about God, it is that, while He owes us nothing, He offers us eternal life and forgiveness. If there is one thing worse than being an unworthy sinner, it is being an unworthy sinner who rejects the offer of forgiveness and restoration.

Consider the grace of God to save us from sin and eternal punishment. Let the words, “by grace you are saved” filter down to the very core of your being. Grace is what saves us from sin. Grace is what assures us of a place in heaven. Salvation is a free offer from God. Let the reality of this

By Grace You Have Been Saved

penetrate deeply. The holy God extends His hand to forgive and bring you spiritual life. Though undeserved and unmerited, it is ours through the forgiving work of Jesus Christ.

If you struggle to know for sure you can be truly saved, reflect on the word “grace.” Of course, you are unworthy. Of course, you have done things that you are not pleased with in this life. Of course, you have failed the Lord and will likely fail Him again. But grace covers all that. God extends His hand to those who are unworthy and often fail Him. What encouragement we find in the words “by grace you are saved.”

For Prayer:

Father God, I recognize that I am a sinner. I confess that I am unworthy of forgiveness and pardon. I do not understand why Your eye would be favourably drawn to me. Father, as I reflect on what the apostle Paul said to the Ephesians, I realize that I was just like them. I followed after the passions of my own heart and the ways of the world. I was under the power of sin and Satan. Thank you for the mercy and grace extended freely to me. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that unworthy as I was, You took the penalty for my sin upon Yourself and died in my place so that justice would be served. Thank you for paying what I could not pay. Thank you for the forgiveness that your death brought. May I be forever grateful for the free offer of pardon. May I celebrate and praise the triune God who applied this pardon to my life and graciously gave me a seat with Him in heavenly places.

Chapter 2 - Through Faith

*8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. -
Ephesians 2:8 ESV*

In Ephesians 2:8, the apostle Paul spoke to the Ephesians about their salvation. In the first part of the verse, he reminded them that the basis for this salvation was the grace of God. In other words, the unmerited favour of God brought them forgiveness even when they did not deserve it. God was under no obligation to pardon their sin but did so willingly from a heart of compassion and mercy. In the second part of the verse, notice that this salvation was, according to Paul, “through faith.” Let’s take a moment now to consider what the apostle is telling the Ephesians here.

It would be easy to assume that if salvation is by grace, everyone should be saved from the consequences of sin and go to heaven. While grace is the basis upon which salvation is possible, Paul told the Ephesians that it became a reality “through faith.”

The word “through” is important. It shows us how salvation becomes a reality. When I go to church on Sunday, I must do so by following a certain road and going through a certain door. In the fire hall where we worship, there is only one door. I must pass through it if I am to join my brothers and sisters to worship. While the offer of salvation is based on the

By Grace Through Faith

gracious will of God to forgive and extend His blessings, if this salvation is to become a reality, there is a door through which I must pass. That door is the door of faith.

This brings us to the word “faith.” The Greek word for faith comes from a word meaning to persuade or convince. In essence, faith is a conviction and belief. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as follows:

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. - Hebrews 11:1 ESV

According to the writer of Hebrews, faith is an assurance of things we hope for but have not yet received in full. Some years ago, I was dealing with an issue that was heavy on my heart. I took a walk in the woods and sat on a rock to pray. As I spoke to the Lord about this matter, He reminded me about a package I had ordered on the internet. I had paid for that package, and it was in the mail. Though I had not yet received it, it was legally mine. I walked home that day assured that what I had asked God for was packaged and shipped. All I had to do now was wait for it to arrive. Faith is the assurance that the salvation offered is legally mine, and though I am not yet in the presence of God in heaven, I have the confidence that this is my future.

What is the basis for assuming that salvation is legally mine? In the case of the package I was waiting for in the mail, it was legally mine because I had paid for it and had the receipt to prove it. In the case of my salvation, while I did not personally pay for it, someone else did. The Lord Jesus purchased my forgiveness through His death on the cross. He laid down His life so that the penalty for my sin could be covered. The sentence has been served in full, and the legal matters

settled.

Faith is a conviction about things we have never seen with our eyes. None of us saw the Lord Jesus pay for our sin on the cross. None of us witnessed the transaction that took place in heaven when the Father cleared my debt and forgave my sin. When I ordered that package on the internet, I did not observe what took place when my money was added to the supplier's account. I did not even see the product I had ordered. I did know, however, that the product I purchased was now mine. I can have this same assurance about what Christ has purchased for me.

Now the question we need to ask ourselves is this: How do I have the faith to believe that the salvation and forgiveness God offers in mine? Consider the words of Hebrews 12:2:

2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12)

Hebrews 12:2 challenges us to look to Jesus, who is the founder and perfecter of our faith. The King James Version of the Bible uses the words "author" and "finisher." Our faith, like our salvation, is based on the work of the Lord Jesus.

If you want assurance of your salvation, you will never find it in yourself or your efforts. Assurance comes from our confidence in what the Lord Jesus has done. Your salvation will bring change into your life, but those changes are not the basis of your assurance. No matter how much the Lord has changed us, every one of us still falls short of His standard. If we look to ourselves, there will always be cause for concern.

By Grace Through Faith

Only what Christ has done can give us the confidence we need.

My conviction and assurance are based on solid evidence and not on my feelings or practices. I may wake up one morning and not feel like one who has been forgiven. As I go through the day, I may ask myself, “why did I act that way? That is not how a true Christian should act.” The faith I have, however, is not in me and my ability to live the Christian life, but in the Lord Jesus, who has legally made me His child through His work on the cross. I will never be perfect in this life. I will always be unworthy and fall short of God’s purpose. I am so glad that I have something more trustworthy to put my confidence in than myself and my feelings. My faith is in His work and not mine –in His promises and not my efforts. My faith is sure because it is based on the perfect work of Christ, who cannot fail.

Consider the words “through faith.” When you face your shortcomings, lift your eyes to Christ. When you don’t feel like you are a Christian, look to His work and put your confidence in what He has done. Salvation is a gift offered to us by a gracious God. It is given to all who will put their trust in the work of His Son Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for their forgiveness and salvation.

Have you ever seen young children jumping into the arms of their father? The father calls out to his child and asks him to jump, assuring him that he will catch him. The faith of the child is in his father. He risks everything yet risks absolutely nothing, for he has absolute confidence in the father. The faith of that child is a confidence in the father.

Through Faith

The faith Jesus asks of us today has nothing to do with us. He asks us to place our trust in what He has done and will continue to do in us. He is asking us to launch ourselves into His arms of love –to risk everything yet risk nothing.

If you have never put your trust in Him and His work, let me ask you to accept what you could never earn. Take your eyes off yourself and look to the One who has paid your debt in full. Trust what He is saying. Cast yourself with all your weight into His arms. Faith is believing God and surrendering completely to Him and His work. Can you trust Him? Then submit to Him and place your full weight on Him. How we sometimes hesitate but how willing He is to convince us of the truth of His Word and the sufficiency of His work alone.

For Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I confess that it is difficult for me to believe what I cannot see. My mind fills up with doubts and questions. All that is necessary, however, is for me to trust what You have done. You call me to cast myself upon You. Give me the confidence that You are the God of truth who cannot lie. Thank you that all who believe in You and Your work will never be disappointed. I ask that you would remove the distractions in my life. I pray that you would show me my need. I recognize that the ability to trust You is a gift You have placed in my heart. The courage to launch myself into your arms is also a wonderful blessing you willingly impart to all You love and cherish. Give me this kind of faith.

Chapter 3 - Not Your Own Doing

(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing – Ephesians 2:8 ESV

Notice what the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8. He reminds us that we have been saved through faith, but this is not our own doing. The words “this is not your own doing” can be confusing and could lead some to become quite complacent in spiritual matters.

In the late 1700s, William Carey stood before a group of Baptist pastors, challenging them to consider the need to send missionaries overseas to reach nations lost in sin. One of the pastors present in that meeting responded to his petition with the following words:

“Young man, sit down! You are an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he’ll do it without consulting you and me.”

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/missionaries/william-carey.html>

What would you do if you were deathly sick? Would you say: “If God wants to heal me, He will, I’m not going to see the doctor?” Or how about the man I met one day who justified

By Grace Through Faith

his adultery by saying that if God didn't want him to be with the woman, He would never have given him such a passion for her?

When a great earthquake unfastened the prisoners' chains in the Philippian jail, the Philippian jailor was about to kill himself when Paul cried out to let him know that no prisoner had escaped. Listen to the conversation that took place that day:

(30) Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (31) And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." - Acts 16:30-31 ESV

The words of Paul are extraordinary. In Ephesians 2:8, he tells us that we are saved by grace through faith and that it is not our own doing. In Acts 16, however, when the Philippian jailor asked what he could do to be saved, Paul told him to believe. The implication here is that if he did not do this, he could not be saved.

Jesus was asked a similar question in John 6. When the crowd asked Him: *"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* (John 6:28), Jesus answered:

(29) "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." - John 6:28-29 ESV

Jesus told the crowd that day that the work God desired from them was that they believe in Him. If salvation by grace through faith is not our own doing, then why do we have to believe? Can't God save us without us having to believe in Him?

Consider the words of Hebrews 11:6:

Not Your Own Doing

*(6) And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. - Hebrews 11:6
ESV*

Hebrews 11 tells us that the qualification for knowing God is a belief that He exists and rewards those who seek Him. How can you pursue a God you do not believe exists? What is the motivation in petitioning a God you don't think will answer your cries for mercy and pardon? Faith and belief are requirements for salvation and knowing God.

If faith and belief are requirements for salvation and spiritual growth, how do we get the faith to believe? Listen to the words of John:

(35) He who saw it has borne witness— his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth— that you also may believe. - John 19:35 ESV

(30) Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; (31) but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. - John 20:30-31 ESV

John told his readers that he wrote his gospel for one purpose—that they would hear the truth and believe in the One of whom he wrote. Faith comes from hearing the truth. This is also what the apostle Paul said in Romans 10:

(14) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (15) And how are they to preach

unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" (17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. - Romans 10:14-17 ESV

Paul tells us that we cannot call on a God we don't know exists. We cannot know He exists and believe in Him unless we are introduced to Him. We cannot be introduced to Him unless someone is sent to tell us about Him.

Not all who hear, however, will believe. Listen to the conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders of the day:

(43) Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. (44) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. (46) Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? (47) Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." - John 8:43-47 ESV

The religious leaders of Jesus' day could not "bear to hear" His word and refused to believe what He told them. Jesus made it clear that the reason they did not truly hear Him was that they did not belong to God—they were of their father, the devil who was the father of lies. Salvation was impossible for

Not Your Own Doing

these individuals because they did not respond to the Word of Christ in faith and belief.

Jesus told a parable in Luke 16 about a rich man who died and went to Hades. In his suffering, he pleaded with Abraham to send someone to his family to warn them of the dangers to come if they did not repent. Listen to the conversation between the rich man and Abraham:

(29) But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' (30) And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' (31) He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" - Luke 16:29-31 ESV

Abraham told the rich man that his relatives had the word of the prophets as recorded in the Scriptures, and these were sufficient. Even if someone rose from the dead and went to see them, they would not believe him.

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God, but it is more than that. Many hear the words of Christ, but their hearts are not stirred to faith and belief. The ears of others, however, are strangely opened by God, so they truly hear His call. The faith we have is a gift of God. Why should my ears be opened to hear the call of God? Why should my hardened heart respond in faith and belief? I cannot take the credit for this. I must give thanks to Him, who gave me ears to hear and softened my rebellious heart.

If you can hear that call in your heart, consider the immense privilege He has given you to hear Him. Do not resist that call. We are saved by the grace of God through a faith that comes

By Grace Through Faith

from hearing the Word of Truth. This word comes not only through the pages of Scripture but also through the still small voice of His Spirit inviting you to respond in faith. I can only hear that call because the Spirit has opened my ears for that brief moment. I can only respond because He has softened my heart. I can only believe because He has convinced me. All that remains now is for me to surrender.

For Prayer:

Father God, You remind me here that the salvation and forgiveness you offer is not my own doing. One moment I lived in unbelief and apathy; the next thing I knew, I truly believed with all my heart. This was a gift from you. You gave the unbeliever faith. One day I had a hard heart, but you broke that heart and softened it to Your voice in a moment. You opened my ears to hear what I could not hear in the flesh. You opened my eyes to see what I had never been able to see. You broke a hardened sinner and gave him life. As I look back, I recognize that none of this was my own doing. Were it not for what You did, I would remain still in unbelief and rebellion. Thank you for the grace that reached out to me. Thank you for the faith you planted in me.

Chapter 4 - The Gift of God

(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, - Ephesians 2:8 ESV

The apostle tells us in Ephesians 2:8 that salvation by grace through faith is “the gift of God.” While we pay wages for services rendered and reward those who have achieved, a gift is offered freely and for no particular reason apart from love and goodwill. You cannot pay for or earn a gift. When you do, it ceases to be a gift.

Writing to Titus, the apostle said:

(4) But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, (5) he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, (6) whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, - Titus 3:4-6 ESV

Notice what Paul told Titus in these verses. God saved us out of the “goodness,” “loving-kindness,” and “mercy” of His heart. Our salvation had nothing to do with “works done by us in righteousness.” It is the gift of God.

There is something else about a gift we need to understand. Every gift has a price, and the cost is born by the one who gives it. The value of a gift is measured in dollars and cents

or in the sacrifice of time and possessions. The worth of the gift of salvation, however, is seen in the death of what was most precious to God—His Son Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty of sin for us.

The Lord God paid the highest price He could have paid to procure our salvation and forgiveness. The Son of God became man to die. He entered a world filled with sin and rebellion and suffered the pains and sorrows of humankind. For all this, he was rejected and scorned. Ultimately, they beat Him and nailed Him to a cross. As He hung on that cross, they mocked Him and ridiculed what He taught. When He closed His eyes to die with the weight of sin on His shoulders, He cried out with a loud voice:

(34) “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” - Mark 15:34 ESV

The Father turned His head, and Jesus passed into the darkness of death. Such was the love and mercy of God for us. Such was the commitment of the Lord Jesus to restore us to a relationship with the Father. Never was such a gift given. According to Jesus, if a person packaged up the whole world in a gift box and offered it to us, it would not compare with the gift He gave us that day:

(26) For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? - Matthew 16:26 ESV

Let me underline one more thing about this gift. Have you ever received a gift you appreciated but did not need? Some gifts go in a drawer and hardly ever come out, but this is not the case with the sacrifice Jesus offered. It is not an

The Gift of God

unnecessary blessing but our only hope. It is the hand offered to a man about ready to fall off a cliff. It is the arm wrapped around a drowning woman pulling her to shore. It is the shoulder of a fireman rescuing an individual engulfed in flames. These illustrations, however, fall short of the nature of the gift given, for a man can be saved from falling only to face an eternity without God. An individual can be rescued from the flames only to face eternal hell. The gift Jesus offered rescued us not just from trouble in this world but set us free from a torturous eternity separated from God.

To understand the value of the gift, we need to understand the severity of our need. Have you ever turned down an offer because you did not need it? Maybe you were out to lunch with someone who offered to pay your bill. You kindly thanked the individual for the offer but told them that you had the money to pay it yourself. How different it is, however, when you are trapped in a house engulfed in flames and see the hand of a bold fireman who has risked his or her life to reach you. That extended hand is a gift you cannot refuse. Your life depends on it. You reach out boldly and grasp it with all your might. It is your last hope.

The gift of salvation by grace through faith comes to us in a time of desperate need. This is a gift we refuse at our peril. Your life depends on this gift. It is not the time to look in your wallet to see if you have enough to pay for it yourself. It is not the time to summon up that last gram of strength and give it one more try. You have reached the end of the rope. You have nothing left in you to give. If you don't reach out for that hand, you will perish right where you are or plunge to your death.

By Grace Through Faith

There is something else about understanding our need I want to underline. It banishes all sense of pride and unworthiness. The proud aristocrat drowning in the ocean will grasp the filthy hand of the beggar to keep his lungs from filling with water. The beggar trapped in flames will extend his hand to the compassionate king willing to save him.

The gift offered to you today is no ordinary gift. It is worth more than the world itself. You need this gift more than you have ever needed anything. Your eternity depends on this alone. The proud will say, I can do it on my own. Others will say, "I don't feel worthy of such a gift." But those who say this don't understand the extent of their need. To the proud, the Lord says: "You have come to the end of your resources. Even if you owned the whole world, it would be insufficient to pay for what I am offering." To those feeling unworthy, the Lord says: "If I did not want you to have this, I would not have offered it. My great desire is that you know the fullness of this gift. Take it. I have written your name on it. It is yours."

How dreadful it would be to refuse such a gift. Your eternal destiny, forgiveness and hope are all packaged up in this free offer. Your name is written on the package label. Banish your pride and unworthiness and take what He offers so freely to you. Salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus and what He has done is a gift from God. It is yours to receive.

For Prayer:

Lord, I recognize my need today. Knowing that I have reached the end of my resources, I grasp Your hand and receive what You so graciously offer. I choose to place my faith and

The Gift of God

confidence in You alone. I thank you that my salvation is a gift of God, unmerited and undeserved.

Chapter 5 - Not A Result of Works

(9) not a result of works - Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV

In Ephesians 2:9, the apostle Paul tells us that salvation by grace through faith is a gift of God and “not a result of works.” What we need to understand, however, is that while salvation is a free gift, it cost God dearly, for it required the death of His Son. Our salvation demanded the greatest work of all time—the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus to pay our debt of sin. Salvation is only possible because of Christ’s work.

When the apostle Paul tells us that salvation is not the result of works, he tells us that the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross is completely sufficient for our salvation and nothing else is required. Our debt has been completely paid, and there is nothing more to do.

Assurance

The idea that salvation is not a result of our efforts has been troublesome for many. Imagine going to a store, trying on a brand-new shirt and walking out without paying for it. Who among us would not leave that store feeling that something was wrong?

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Many people feel the same way when it comes to their salvation. You see, when I pay for that brand-new shirt and receive the receipt from the cashier, I have the assurance that it is mine. If anyone questions this, I produce the receipt, and all doubt is removed.

What assurance can I have for something I have not paid for personally? Let me ask this question in another way. What confidence could you have if you did pay for your salvation? The cost of redemption was the life of the perfect Son of God. Nothing less was sufficient. If you gave all you had and then laid your life on the altar to die, you could not pay a fraction of the cost required. God would not accept your sinful life. Not one of us can pay the price of salvation.

Assurance of salvation is only possible because the Lord Jesus has paid the price in full. He is our receipt. When our salvation is questioned, we present Christ to our objectors. Nothing less than His death and resurrection can be our guarantee. There can be no assurance of salvation if we depend on our works. Only what Jesus has done can give us this confidence.

Treasuring a Free Gift

During my Bible College years, I went on a short-term mission trip in Mexico. We distributed Christian books from door to door and on the streets. The mission's policy was to tell people that they could pay whatever they could afford for these books. The idea behind this was that while people would take a free gift, they would more likely value and read a book that cost them something.

Not A Result of Works

Can we truly value a salvation that we have not worked hard to achieve? Is it not true that some of the things we love most in life were given to us freely? Those who gave these gifts to us were under no obligation to give them. They did so, however, out of a heart devoted to us in love. We treasure these gifts more than anything we could ever work for or earn ourselves. I would venture to say that there are things in our lives that have such deep emotional and sentimental value that we would not consider parting with them for all the money in the world, even though we paid nothing for them.

Our salvation, freely offered by a God who loved us so much that He gave His Son, is one of those gifts we treasure more than the world itself. We would surrender the world and give our life rather than defame this gift. Though it cost us nothing, it is a gift worth more than life to us.

Seeking, Repenting, and Believing

There is one more detail I want to consider as we examine the phrase “not a result of works.” Listen to the words of the prophet Amos:

(6) Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel - Amos 5:6 ESV

Notice that the prophet called his people to seek the Lord to live. They were under the judgement of God, and unless they turned their heart to seek God, they would perish. Their salvation depended on seeking God.

Consider also the words of Jesus in Luke 13:

(3) No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. (4) Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? (5) No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” - Luke 13:3-5 ESV

The words of Jesus are similar to the words of Amos. He told the Jews that unless they repented, they would perish in their sin.

Finally, notice what Jesus said in John 3:16-18:

(16) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. - John 3:16-18 ESV

If we do not want to perish, we need to believe. Only by believing in Jesus and His work can we be set free from condemnation.

What do all of these passages have in common? They tell us that we must seek Him, repent, and believe to experience the salvation of God. Let me take this a step further. One day a crowd approached Jesus and asked:

(28) Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” - John 6:28 ESV

Listen to the response of Jesus to this crowd:

Not A Result of Works

(29) Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." - John 6:29 ESV

Jesus told the crowd that day that the work God required of them was that they believe in Him. Consider also the response of Paul to the Philippian jailor when he asked what he could do to be saved:

(30) Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (31) And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." - Acts 16:30-31 ESV

The question that needs to be addressed here is this. If salvation is not the result of works, why do we have to seek God, believe, and repent to be saved? Wouldn't seeking, believing and repenting not be considered works?

To answer this question, we need to distinguish between works and our response to the work of Christ. When Paul speaks about works in Ephesians 2:9, he refers to any attempt to merit our salvation by what we do or don't do. Scripture makes it quite clear that there is nothing a sinner can do to deserve or pay for his or her salvation. Jesus Christ has done all that is necessary.

While everything has been done for our salvation, Scripture repeatedly calls us to respond to this work by seeking, repenting and believing. The cross of Jesus demands a response. The only acceptable response is repentance, faith and surrender.

Our repentance is not an attempt to merit salvation but a recognition that we cannot merit it. Our faith is not a confidence in ourselves and our efforts but in the Lord Jesus

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and His work on our behalf. Our surrender is a recognition of His lordship over our lives.

When God opens our eyes to see the sufficiency of His Son's work for our salvation, our response is to seek that salvation and forgiveness with all our hearts. When He opens our minds to understand the nature of what He offers through His Son, our only response is to repent and surrender everything to Him. When He opens our ears to hear the call of the gospel, we respond in faith by trusting what He says. We give up our futile efforts to merit what we can never attain by our works and open our hearts to trust and receive freely by faith what He alone can do.

While salvation by grace through faith is a gift and not the result of works, we are nonetheless called to respond to what He has done for us. The phrase "not of works" is not a call to sit back in indifference but to respond. If our salvation is not about what we do, then we must look past ourselves to Christ. We must seek Him who is alone able to give us this salvation. We must confess our sin and inability and cry out to Him for forgiveness. He is willing to give what you could never earn. Never was such a gift so freely given. May the Lord open our eyes to see it and give us a mind to understand it. May He give us the faith to receive it.

For Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the salvation You so freely offer. Never was such a gift offered to us. We ask that You would give us hearts to receive what You so freely offer. May we surrender all we have to You in gratitude. Thank you that we

Not A Result of Works

can know You have paid our debt in full. Teach us to treasure this gift. May our lives be wholly devoted to You. Thank you for speaking to our hearts, softening our hearts and opening our hearts to such a wonderful gift. We pray for our friends and loved ones who have never yet received this gift of salvation. We ask that You would open their hearts to this free offer of grace.

Chapter 6 - No Boasting

(9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. -
Ephesians 2:9 ESV

Paul reminds us in the second half of verse 9 that because our salvation is not the result of any work on our part, not one of us has any cause for boasting. The theme of boasting is fairly common in Paul's writing. He reminded the Corinthians that God made Himself known to the foolish and weak in this world so that no human would have cause to boast:

(26) For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; (28) God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, (29) so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. - 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 ESV

He told the Romans that all of them fell short of God's glory and were given salvation as a gift through the work of the Lord Jesus. According to Paul, this removed any possibility of boasting, for who can boast of something they neither deserved nor earned?

By Grace Through Faith

(23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (26) It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (27) Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. - Romans 3:21-27 ESV

The word boast means to glory, to exult or to brag. Boasting can be in ourselves or someone else. The apostle encouraged boasting in 1 Corinthians 1:31 when he said:

(31) so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." - 1 Corinthians 1:31 ESV

The boasting Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 1:31 is an exultation of the Lord Jesus and His work. This, however, is not the case in Ephesians 2:9. In Ephesians 2:9, Paul speaks about boasting in ourselves and our efforts to achieve salvation by our merit. This kind of boasting was not only forbidden but false, for our salvation was an undeserved gift we could never merit.

What we need to understand here is the seriousness of this matter of boasting in our merit. Those who boast in their ability to merit God's salvation fail to understand the nature of sin and its impact on their lives. In Ephesians 2:9, Paul tells us that "no one" may boast. He clarified this when he wrote in Romans 3:

No Boasting

(10) as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; (11) no one understands; no one seeks for God. (12) All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." - Romans 3:10-12 ESV

(23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, - Romans 3:23 ESV

It is hard to miss the point Paul is making here. By using the words, "none," "not one," "no one," "all," and "not even one," the apostle is telling us that there is no exception. Every one of us has fallen short of God's standard. All of us were condemned before God. None of us deserved His salvation, and certainly, without His grace, each of us would be eternally separated from Him. If we boast of our efforts to achieve salvation, we deny the teaching of Scripture and fail to see our sinfulness before God.

The boasting Paul speaks about here also devalues the grace of God and the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Jesus offered forgiveness to the undeserving. He brought salvation to those who were lost without hope. Those who boast of their ability to go to heaven by their works deny their need for Jesus and depreciate what He did on the cross. This is a very serious matter.

In reflecting on the phrase "so that no one may boast," I was struck by the little words "so that." These simple words show us the design of God in salvation. In other words, God offers salvation as a gift by grace through faith "so that" no human being could ever boast or take credit. As a result, all glory and praise must go to the Lord Jesus. It is the heart of God that His Son receives all recognition.

By Grace Through Faith

The words “so that” also remind us that because salvation is a gift of God none of us deserved or achieved by our efforts, we are all equally indebted to God. Not one of us is better than the other. All of us have fallen short. I don’t need God’s grace any less than my brother or sister. I cannot boast or claim to be more deserving. Salvation by grace through faith strips us of any opportunity to boast except in the Lord Jesus and His work. This is God’s design for our salvation.

Let me underline one more detail in the phrase “so that no one may boast.” The word “may” in the English Standard Version is translated differently in other Bible versions. Each of these words gives us a slightly different sense of what Paul is saying here. The word “may” in the English Standard Version speaks of permission. Maybe as a child, when you finished your meal, you were required to ask your parent’s permission to leave the table. You would say: “May I leave the table?” They would then permit you to do so. By saying that no one “may” boast, Paul tells us that God has not given us this privilege.

The King James and the New King James Versions of the Bible use the word “should.” “Should” conveys a sense of obligation. When we say that someone should do something, we say that they have an obligation or a duty to perform. Paul is telling the Ephesians that they had an obligation and responsibility not to boast, for in doing so, they would be speaking falsehood and depreciating the work of Christ on their behalf.

Finally, the New International Version uses the word “can” – “no one can boast.” The term “can” speaks about our ability. In other words, none of us has the ability to boast because

No Boasting

our salvation had nothing to do with us. All of these words convey the sense of what Paul is saying here. None of us has the authority or ability to boast. It is our duty not to boast of something we never achieved on our own.

The only way we could ever boast is if God compromised with sin and lowered His standard. But a God who compromises with evil is not holy, nor is He one we could trust. Because God will never compromise with sin, we will always fall short of His standard. For our salvation to be possible, the penalty of death needed to be paid. Jesus took that penalty on Himself and paid what we could never pay. The only boasting we can now do is in what He has done for us.

For Prayer:

Lord God, we confess that we have nothing to boast about when it comes to our salvation. We were living apart from you in sin and rebellion. We did not deserve that You would take notice of us. We are so grateful that you reached out to us in our sin. We recognize that all glory and credit must go to You. You chose us and forgave our sins. You loved us when we did not love you. Your work alone is the reason for our salvation. We take no credit ourselves. Strip away any pride in us and replace it with gratitude and worship for a gift we did not deserve, nor could we ever earn.

Chapter 7 - His Workmanship

(10) For we are his workmanship - Ephesians 2:10 ESV

In the last part of Ephesians 2:9, the apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians that their salvation was not of themselves so that no one could boast. Notice how Ephesians 2:10 begins with the word “for.” This little word connects what Paul has just told the Ephesians in verse 9 with what he will say in verse 10. In other words, no one may boast because we are God’s workmanship. Before examining this in more detail, let’s consider the next word in this phrase.

The word “we” tells us that Paul is speaking about a very particular people in this verse. By using this word, Paul includes himself as part of the workmanship of God. More specifically, however, the context of Ephesians 2:8-9 indicates that the apostle also includes fellow believers in this word. He speaks here about those who have been saved by grace through faith.

While all creation owes its existence to God, He is doing a unique work in His children. That work begins with salvation but continues to maturity. If you belong to the Lord Jesus today, then this verse speaks about you.

Notice next that the apostle writes in the present tense using the word “are”— “we *are* His workmanship.” Many believers live as if all the work of God in their lives will happen when they get to heaven. These believers live on this earth in a sense of defeat. One day they will be like Christ. One day they will be able to overcome the sinfulness of their flesh. At present, however, they feel that it is not possible.

By saying that we “are” His workmanship, Paul is telling us that the work of God has already begun in us. God is perfecting and maturing us at this very moment. His power to overcome sin and the flesh is presently available to us.

Jesus said something very similar in Matthew 5:

(14) “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. (16) In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. - Matthew 5:14-16 ESV

Notice how Jesus also uses the word “are” when He said, “You *are* the light of the world.” In other words, right now, you are a shining light demonstrating the workmanship of God in your character and deeds. Your life points people to God and brings Him glory. Not every life, however, glorifies the Lord. The apostle chastised the Romans, telling them that the Lord’s name was blasphemed because of some among them:

(23) You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. (24) For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” - Romans 2:23-24 ESV

His Workmanship

It is evident that not one of us perfectly reflects the Lord Jesus. It is also true that the day is coming when all that will be changed, and be with Him forever. Consider, however, what Paul is telling us in this passage of Scripture. You are, at this very moment, the workmanship of God. Unsaved loved ones cannot help but notice the changes God is making in your life. What your words have failed to communicate is now being demonstrated in a way that cannot be denied. You are a walking and living example of the transforming workmanship of God.

Notice next that Paul tells us that we are “His” workmanship. The work that is taking place in us is the Lord’s work. This is not to say that we sit back and do nothing. God calls us to obey. He expects us to respond. Paul speaks about “running the race.” Jesus tells us to “go into all the world.” The life of the believer will not be an easy one. We must “take up our cross.” We will be persecuted and ridiculed for the name of Christ. As we look back over our years, however, there is no doubt that the wind behind our sail was the wind of God’s Spirit. The strength to overcome was from a source much greater than ourselves. We cannot take credit for the transformation and the victories we are experiencing. The power is in Him, and to Him belongs the glory.

God has not left us to ourselves. He is working in us and transforming us. No mother would give birth to a baby and abandon it. Neither will God abandon us. He who saw us into the world and gave us new birth through the death of His Son now commits Himself to bring us to maturity. The apostle Paul understood this when he wrote to the Philippians:

(6) And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. -

Philippians 1:6 ESV

We are God's workmanship. Do you realize what these words imply? The sovereign and almighty God created you. Life has not always been easy. It has dealt some harsh blows. Speaking about the Lord Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews says:

(8) Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. - Hebrews 5:8 ESV

There have been some difficult times in life. I want you to know, however, that God has not abandoned you in these times. The heavenly potter has placed you in the furnace for a reason. The celestial coach has pushed you beyond your limit to strengthen you. The master surgeon has cut you open to heal you. He has your interest at heart. He is perfecting you, reorganizing your priorities and removing what will only hurt you in the end.

You are, at this very moment, the workmanship of God. Can you trust what He is doing? Will you surrender to the surgeon's knife, or will you fight it to the end? God continues His work in those He saves. He stretches them, refines them, and trains them through the things they suffer. The heavenly artist takes great pride in His work. Don't resist what He is doing in you. When the waves of life come crashing over you, trust Him? When disappointments overwhelm you, lift your eyes to the one who is continuing to shape you. You came to know Him by grace through faith, now live by faith in what He is doing, and trust that His grace will not only see you through but perfect you and draw you closer to Himself.

His Workmanship

For Prayer:

Father God, what a privilege it is to know that You are committed to completing what You have begun in us. We confess that we have often grumbled and complained when things have been difficult. We have not always appreciated the work You have been doing in us. Forgive us for questioning Your wisdom in refining and shaping us. We also recognize that there have been times when we have seen maturity as our work. We have disciplined ourselves and pushed ourselves in an attempt to be like You. We have also failed in these attempts. Teach us that we are Your workmanship. Show us what it means to let You mature us through Your Holy Spirit who dwells within. Thank you that what You do is truly transformative. Help us to understand our need for your work for our growth and maturity. Just as we have no cause for boasting in our salvation, neither do we have cause to boast in our growth and maturity, for both are Your works. Teach us to surrender to You and this wonderful work of salvation and maturing in faith.

Chapter 8 - Created in Christ Jesus

(10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works - Ephesians 2:10 ESV

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul told the Ephesians that they were God's workmanship. He goes on in the verse to say two things about this work of God in their lives.

Created in Christ Jesus

The apostle begins by telling the Ephesians that they were created in Christ Jesus. The Gospel of John teaches that the Lord Jesus, the Father and the Spirit were involved in creating the world.

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. - John 1:1-3 ESV

From this perspective, the Lord Jesus is our Creator. There is a difference, however, between being created by Christ Jesus and being created "in" Christ Jesus. While every human being owes his or her existence to the Lord Jesus, not everyone is

created “in” Christ Jesus. What does it mean then to be created “in” Christ Jesus?

To answer this, we need not look any further than Ephesians 2:8-9 itself. Paul has been speaking about salvation by grace through faith. Consider this in the context of what he told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

(17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. - 2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV

Paul told the Corinthians that if they were “in Christ,” they were a new creation. This is what he is telling the Ephesians. The great work of God was to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. The word “in” implies a union with Christ.

The apostle often repeats this theme of our union with Christ. In Ephesians 2:12-14, he reminded the Ephesians while they were at one time strangers separated from Christ, but now “in Christ Jesus,” they were brought near:

(12) remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility - Ephesians 2:12-14 ESV

He told the Romans that they had died with Christ to their old selves. In other words, when Christ died, it was as if they had died because He took their penalty on Himself:

(8) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (9) We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. - Romans 6:8-9 ESV

Just as Christ overcame sin and death, so we have experienced that same victory. We rose with Christ and know full pardon and a place in heaven through His work on the cross.

(5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, - Ephesians 2:5-6 ESV

Because of what Jesus has done, we are now children of God and fellow heirs with Christ:

(16) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. - Romans 8:16-17 ESV

We have died and been risen with Christ. In Him, we have overcome the dominion of sin over our lives. Through Him, we now have a heavenly inheritance as children of God. Every spiritual good we have is a result of the work of Jesus Christ for us. Every eternal hope and blessing is through Him. We have been created anew by the work of Christ. Our forgiveness and relationship with the Father are because of Him. Our eternal blessing cannot be found apart from Him. Separated from Him, we would be eternally lost. To be

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created in Christ Jesus is to be created anew into an inseparable union with Christ and His work.

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:10 that this new creation is the workmanship of God. It is a miraculous work, however, that He is willing to do in all who sincerely come to Him by faith and cry out for His grace.

Created for Good Works

Notice in Ephesians 2:10 that we were created in Christ Jesus for a purpose. According to Paul, that purpose is “good works.” The “good works” Paul speaks about here can only be done by those who are created in Christ Jesus. In other words, until we have been created anew, we cannot accomplish the works God has for us.

Consider this for a moment—you were created anew in Christ for good works. If you have been born again and know what it means to become a new creation, your purpose in life is to serve the Lord God who gave Himself for you. He has renewed your mind and given you a new heart. The Holy Spirit now lives in you, and you have been endowed with spiritual gifts and abilities. You have ears to hear and eyes to see what you could not as an unbeliever. All this is for a purpose. The challenge is for us to learn how to walk in that purpose. One day we will stand before our Creator to give an account of our lives. There are many priorities in life, but none so important as the “good works” that God created us to do. Have you been faithful? In the final reflection on these verses, we will speak of this in more detail.

For Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you that You forgave our sin and made us alive in Christ. Thank you for the new birth that makes us Your children. We recognize that all this has a purpose. Forgive us for not always understanding that purpose. Show us the good works You have for us. May we, as faithful servants, live lives that impact the cause of Your kingdom. May we demonstrate our gratitude for Your salvation through our good works.

Chapter 9 - Good Works Prepared Beforehand

(10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:10 ESV

According to Paul, we were created in Christ Jesus for good works. The apostle tells us in the final section of verse 10 that God prepared these good works beforehand so that we should walk in them. Let's break this down and examine what the apostle is telling us.

"God"

Paul told the Ephesians that God prepared these good works for them. There is something so incredibly personal in these words. If you are a believer who has been saved by grace through faith, the Creator God has a purpose for your life. He has created you "in Christ Jesus" for a reason. The Eternal God brought you to Himself and made you His child, but He did more than that. He has chosen you to serve Him in a very special way. Every child of God has a mandate in life.

The call of God will differ from person to person, but the fact remains that God has created you in Christ Jesus so that You can be part of His great purpose in building His kingdom on this earth. There can be no greater honour in life than to be called and equipped to serve the King of kings. At the same time, however, there is no greater obligation. God has chosen you for a task. Yes, you personally. With that call comes responsibility and equipping. God not only calls you for good works but will stand with you and equip you for those works. All that remains is that we accept this calling and step out in faith in His enabling and protection.

“Prepared Beforehand”

The word translated “prepared beforehand” literally means to appoint or predestine. The idea is that before we even came to the Lord, He had work for us to do. Even before we were ready to serve the Lord, He orchestrated events and circumstances to prepare us for the ministry He had for us. The situations we have faced in life have shaped us and uniquely qualified us for this mission. The trials of life have strengthened us. The people He has placed in our lives have equipped us for this purpose.

God did not just start to work in your life the moment you came to know His Son. He was working way before you even knew Him, preparing circumstances and people, events and settings for you and the call He had placed on your life.

Not only has God been preparing you through events and circumstances of life, but He has also been equipping you through the work of His Spirit in you. He has been nurturing

Good Works Prepared Beforehand

the spiritual fruit He has given you through His Spirit's presence in your life. He has also given spiritual gifts to each of His children. Unlike the fruit of the Spirit, these spiritual gifts are different from one believer to another.

I was recently listening to an explanation of spiritual gifts, and the individual who shared how you can discover your gift challenged listeners to take note of their natural inclinations. This, however, has not been my experience. The opposite has been the case for me. I have found myself ministering in uncomfortable areas. I do not naturally seek to be in front of people. Yet God has given me this role. I am not a "people person" by nature, but God pushes me out to people. I am not an intelligent person by nature and do not seem to have the ability to store information in my head for long periods, but God has shown me things from His Word that I would never see myself.

From before I was born, God knew what He had for me to do. He prepared me for that. The Creator did not make me a people person but instead taught me how to follow His leading and find strength in Him. He didn't give me the natural ability to store quantities of information in my head, but He did show me how to listen to Him and His voice.

God does not always prepare us in the way we think. If we only do what we are comfortable doing in our natural strength and abilities, we may very well be missing out on the greater things God has been preparing for us. Many times, the good works God has prepared for us will take us into uncomfortable territory, but we have the assurance that His presence will be with us, for this is why we were created in Christ Jesus.

“We Should Walk in Them”

There is one more detail we need to examine in the final section of verse 10. Notice the phrase, “we should walk in them.” The Greek word Paul uses here in this verse is the word περιπατέω *peripatéō* which comes from two words. The first word, “*peri*,” means “around” or “about.” The second word, “*patéō*” literally means to walk. When we put these words together, we get the sense of walking around or walking about. In other words, Paul is telling us that we should walk about doing the good works that God has prepared for us. This should be our way of life. These good works give us direction and focus in the way we need to walk as believers. It is the believer’s heart to serve the Lord by doing what He has created them to do.

Does this mean that every believer is obedient to the Lord and faithful in what God has created them to do? By no means. Many believers never seem to step out into the purpose of God for their lives. There are many reasons for this, and we don’t have the time to get into this here. What is important for us to note is that God has a purpose for our lives. You have a God-given role to play in the expansion of His kingdom on this earth. He has gone to great lengths to prepare you for this role. You were created in Christ Jesus at the cost of His life for the good works that God prepared personally for you. What a shame it would be for us to go through life never having understood that call of God. What potential is forfeited because believers have never made it their priority in life to walk in those good works.

Walking in the good works that God has prepared for you will demand sacrifice. You will be stretched beyond what you

Good Works Prepared Beforehand

think possible. You will often have to look to God for strength and wisdom. You will be asked to step out into unknown territory, but that is the nature of spiritual warfare and kingdom building. As you take up this challenge, however, you will know the wind of His Spirit in your sails and the strength of the Father pushing you through the waves. You will know Him and His presence as you have never known Him before. The grace of God saved you through faith and not by any works you have done. It is that same grace that will sustain you in the work you have been called to do.

Our salvation is a wonderful gift given by God to the undeserving. The God who saves us, however, does not leave us to fend for ourselves. He has chosen to work in each of us, maturing and equipping up as His servants. He has good work for us to do. This good work is certainly for the expansion of His kingdom on this earth. Remember, however, that it is God's purpose to expand His kingdom in You. One of the means by which He does this is through the good works He has prepared for us.

The Lord matures us through these good works. As we step out into them, we will need to trust Him for the boldness and wisdom necessary. We will find ourselves going to Him often for the provision required to accomplish the task He has given us. The obstacles hindering these good works will strengthen us. Our failures will instruct us. Our successes will explode into praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for what He has done. If you want to mature in your salvation, then step out into the good works God has prepared for you. As you do, He will reveal His presence in ways you have never before experienced. What began as a free gift is matured as we walk faithfully in His purpose.

By Grace Through Faith

For Prayer:

Lord God, You saved us from sin to be Your servants. While You could do the work without us, you have determined that these good works should be the means by which You mature and transform us into Your image. We will experience You and come to know you best as we walk in these good works you have prepared for us. Give us an understanding of your purpose for our lives. We ask for boldness and faith to step out into that call. Draw near and mature us as we step out into these good works.

Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path Book Distribution (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne MacLeod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them freely or at cost price to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

Tens of thousands of these books have been distributed and are being used in preaching, teaching, evangelism and encouragement of local believers in over sixty countries. Books are now being translated into a variety of languages. The goal is to make them available to as many believers as possible.

The ministry of LTMP is a faith-based ministry and we trust the Lord for the resources necessary to distribute the books for the encouragement and strengthening of believers around

the world. Would you pray that the Lord would open doors for the translation and further distribution of these books?

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