

*Ephesians 2:4-10.*

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

**You Have Been Saved!**

**1. By Grace**

**2. Through Faith**

**3. For New Life in Christ**

There's an old saying that articulates a thoughtful piece of advice, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." There's certainly something to that. If you love farming, if you love working on cars, baking, teaching, working with kids, helping the sick, teaching God's Word, whatever it might be; if you love what you do, work is not so much work as it is just who you are and what you get to do as you live your life.

Keep that in mind as we jump ahead to the last few words of our text. These words from Ephesians chapter 2 remind us what good works really are. They are not really just works; as Christians good works are more than that. They are a part of who we are and what we get to do as we live our lives of faith. Paul puts it this way, "***We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***"

The original language paints a picture that one could compare to the Garden of Eden. God in his goodness prepares an environment where his children might live in love and service to him. In the garden of Eden God surrounded Adam and Eve with blessings and asked them to serve him in love. Here in Ephesians 2 verse 10, the final word in the Greek is more than just the

word to do, but it implies how we behave and conduct our lives. God has called us to faith so that we may walk in his ways and conduct our lives in a way that gives God the glory. Our LORD has surrounded us with his love and his mercy and his grace and now he has called us to live for him. This is our wonderful purpose as Christians now that we have been saved by grace through faith. We have been saved for a new life in Christ. In Christ Jesus we have been changed into new creations that are made to give glory to God.

Paul is quick to point out that this wasn't always the case, nor was it something that we just one day chose to do. But all of this is because of God and his love. Paul writes, "***But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.***" Since mankind fell into sin in the Garden of Eden we have all been born dead in sin. That is our awful inheritance as human beings. Flesh gives birth to flesh. By nature we are sinful from birth. By nature we had no redeeming qualities of our own. We are reminded with these words that we were dead in our transgressions. We had neither the ability nor the desire to do what is good. We had neither the desire nor the ability to serve the Lord in love, and yet God still found it in himself to love us. We deserved nothing but God's wrath but instead we received mercy. Even when we were dead in his transgressions and sins God saw us and in his mercy had pity on us. There was no good reason that originated from us that God would save us. But it is only because of God's mercy and the kindness that comes from his Fatherly heart. It is by God's undeserved love that we are saved. This is love that comes from the only true God and it is demonstrated clearly for us in Christ.

Our God is rich in mercy. His grace is beyond compare. Paul describes his grace as a fortune of wealth that is immeasurable. In his underserved love for us God would send his son to live and die and rise again to save us. In his love and mercy he would connect us to Christ through baptism and faith in him and we would be raised with Christ. Dead in unbelief and sin, we have been made alive. Saved from a worthless life of sin and death that would end in eternal condemnation we have been called and chosen to live a life of service to God. This is a life of meaning, this is of life that is fulfilling and satisfying. We serve our God in his kingdom of grace as we live in his love now. We will serve our loving God in his kingdom of glory that will last forever.

Paul tells the Ephesians, he tells us, that this is a truth that is so sure and certain that we have been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. It is so sure and certain that it is as if we are ruling next to the Almighty God right now, in Christ Jesus. We have been connected to Christ and brought into this new life of

faith. We have been brought from death to life and have been given a life that is filled with purpose and meaning.

What God has done for us in Christ Jesus will never be forgotten. This is a story of kindness that is unmatched throughout history. The bloodied cross and the empty tomb, the saving font of Baptism and the strengthening supper of communion: these are memorials that will stand the test of time as his word continues to go out into the world. And that's why we gladly gather together to celebrate and rejoice in the goodness of our God. ***6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*** The undeserved love of our God, the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus, will be known and on display for all generations, for all eternity. As so this is the story that believers will gladly go back to every day, and every week, and every year. Believers will look with reverent joy and with holy awe at the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was sent by the Father to save us undeserving sinners. With both sorrow over sin and joy in our forgiveness we will gladly look to the cross where Christ suffered for our sins and paid for our debt in full. This is where he purchased us for himself. This is where he set us free.

So what's the catch? After hearing a section of Scripture like this, after hearing John 3:16 read once again, there is a part of us that probably still wonders, "What's the catch?" This seems to be an offer that is just too good to be true. ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*** Why would God do that for me? Why would he give his only Son for me? Why would God be so merciful to someone so undeserving? ***"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."*** I don't have to do anything. Salvation is a gift. Why would God let me off the hook that easily? That sounds too easy; too free.

This doesn't register, this doesn't compute. In this world we are so trained, so used to having to earn something that this concept that salvation is free is a difficult one for us to grasp. It is so difficult that many twist God's word to include some sort of payment option, some sort of works-righteousness, and in doing so they make this more complicated than it should be. Even those who have heard clear doctrine taught all their lives we can mix this all up in our own minds. We begin to focus less on God's great love and we focus on our works. There must be some requirements that we must meet. There must be some

payments that I must make; some work that I must do in order to make things right with God; in order that he would love me and save me. When this happens confidence turns to doubt, joy turns to guilt, and a life lived for God is not a life lived in love and thankfulness but it turns into a life of forced labor compelled by a heavy obligation.

But remember how we started our meditation on these words. We started with these words that come at the end of this beautiful section. These words that remind us that good works are really not works at all. We were reminded that as Christians good works are simply a part of who we are now. They are opportunities to serve our God who surrounded us with his generous grace and his wealth of mercy. Good works are what we get to do as we simply live our lives of faith. ***We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

It might all sound too good to be true. Our sinful nature looks for the catch, the clause, that hidden stipulation that changes this from grace to works, but there is none. And day after day God assures us that this is the case. And so in his love he grants us another blessing, the blessing of faith so that we may receive this good news with believing hearts. ***8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*** We are saved by grace; and by the power of His word and his Spirit we believe in this wonderful truth. God has spared us from eternal death and has given us eternal life. He called us to faith so that we may walk in his ways and live for him. He has surrounded us with his love and his mercy and his grace and now he has called us to live for him in love. This is our wonderful purpose as Christians now that we have been saved by grace through faith. We have been saved for a new life in Christ.

In love God has chosen you. He has called you to faith. He has saved you and called you to a life of service, a life of good works. But because of this good news in Jesus you will really never have to 'work' for God a day in your life; instead your service to God will come thankfully when you live in the grace and joy of Jesus. Amen.