

“God’s workmanship”: Ephesians 2:8-10

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Ephesians 2:1-10: “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in 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— ³among 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. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Introduction

1. What are you? What kind of being are you?
2. In Ephesians, chapter two vv. 1-3, Paul gives us the truly horrible news that we were far away from him. Then, beginning in v. 4, he pivots to the extraordinarily great news: “But God”, because of his inexplicable love and mercy toward us, made us alive in Christ, seating us in the place of highest authority at the Father’s right hand.
3. Having made this point, Paul now wants his hearers to be clear on the fact that God has done all of this on his own initiative, out of his love for us.

Exposition

- We begin with the big picture. Paul’s overall argument in vv.8-10:

⁸ **“For by grace you have been saved through faith.”** (Central claim consisting of three key ideas: “saved”, “by grace”, “through faith”)

“And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (This statement—four explanatory phrases—builds on the central claim, that God is the source of our salvation)

¹⁰ **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** (Advances the central claim by explaining the larger context: we are made new by God in Christ through the Spirit to live the life he intended)

⁸ **“For by grace you have been saved through faith.”**

- This central claim consists of three key ideas:
 1. “saved” – The verb σώζω has a broad semantic range of meanings: to rescue, deliver, protect, heal, preserve, restore, make whole: 123x in NT.
 2. “by grace” – Grace is χάρις (159x in NT) and refers to God’s undeserved, gratuitous favor and help for those in need. When you add the preposition “by”, it tells us that grace is the objective source of our salvation. Salvation doesn’t come from ourselves, our good works or someone or something else.
 3. “through faith” – explains the subjective means of our salvation. We are saved by God’s grace alone. Faith connects us to what saves us: the grace of God. Faith, πίστις, is relational trust. It is the sure confidence in the Father and in Jesus to save us.
- So how are these three ideas related? (Illustration of swimmers in danger of being swept over a waterfall).
- God is the one who saves us by his grace. Our faith doesn’t save us. Our faith in Him is simply the means of connecting us to his saving action.

“And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

- This sentence underscores the free, undeserved nature of our salvation. It contrasts God’s grace with human works; i.e., anything that we do to gain status or privilege before God.
- We don’t earn our right standing with God. It is given to us as a “gift”, a δῶρον, that was made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- When we understand the fact that we are saved solely by the gift of God, it humbles us and subverts any basis for boasting. It also assures us that, because we didn’t earn our salvation, we can’t “unearn” it. Our role is to merely keep believing, “clinging” to God and his salvation by our faith.

¹⁰ “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

- We are God’s “workmanship”, ποίημα (*poema*): his artistic masterpiece, made to reflect his glory and character. He created (κτίζω) us “in Christ” by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in us. The implications of this are simply breathtaking! This is our new identity “in Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Titus 3:5-6; Eph 4:23; 1 John 3:9).
- He re-created to do “good works” which he had planned in eternity past, long before we were born (cf. Eph 1:4). Paul will discuss these “good works” in detail in chapters four through six. They consist of all the ways we speak, act and react in all areas of life (family, work, relationships, etc.). Paul’s point in vv.9-10 is that we are not saved BY good works, but we are saved FOR good works.
- “walk in them” - Notice Paul comes full circle. We once walked in our sins (v.2). We now walk in good works (v.10).

Take away

· Through the work of the Son and the Spirit, the Father has re-made us in the image of Christ so that we can be born of God as his children and live a whole new quality of existence. No longer sinners by nature, we are made “righteous and holy” in Christ, restoring the image of God in us so we might image him to the rest of the world through our good works.