

## **Saved For More**

Ephesians 2:10

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

We're coming back again to Ephesians after the New Year's break so let me quickly remind you of where we're up to and where we're moving in the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a book which is all about God's work of grace to us in Jesus, and how the gospel is to shape not just our personal lives, but our lives as a church community, our mission as a church, our families, our working relationships, and our personal lives.

**In chapters 1-3 Paul unpacks God's work of grace in Jesus.** He unpacks the saving work of Jesus for us, and as he does that he shows us that God's love and commitment to us began before the creation of the world in ch.1. He then moves forward in time showing us how God's love and grace towards us comes in Jesus who died for our sin to bring us to himself and to each other in ch.2. Paul then reveals to us the purpose of God in saving us – God is in the business of gathering, saving a people who will not just live to praise him, but a people who will make known his grace to the world in ch.3. This then climaxes in Paul's Prayer (1:15-23; 3:14-21) that the gospel, God's love for you in Jesus, his work of grace in saving you, his commitment to you in Jesus might take root in you and fill you.

**In chapters 4-6 Paul unpacks how God's work of grace plays out in our lives.** He unpacks how the gospel is to transform our church, our ministry, and our personal lives - what it means for us to be people living to praise the Father, making known his grace in the world – and it's going to be seen in the way you church, in the way you serve each other, in all your relationships, in your families and in your personal lives. The gospel shapes our church and ministry in ch.4. The gospel brings radical personal changes and transformation to our personal lives from the inside out in chs.4-5. The gospel shapes our relationship as husbands/wives, our family life, and our working relationships in chs.5-6.

The book of Ephesians unpacks practically our vision as GracePoint – showing us how to magnify Jesus, and how to make much of Jesus in our lives, in our church, in our city and in our world.

We're picking up from chapter 2:10. And this is where we're up to – where Paul continues to explain the saving work of God in our lives. Vv.1-9 is all about why we need saving, why we need Jesus, and how God saves. If you're a believer vv.1-9 is familiar to you. But most people stop short and miss out on v.10. V.10 continues explaining the saving work of Jesus in terms of what God saves us to. V.10 is the contrast to vv.1-3 that tells you how you used to walk and what you were freed from. V.10 tells you that the sovereign work of God's grace in saving us continues in our lives. You were saved for something more, something greater, to a new life, to a new walk with new passions, desires, affections, pursuits, values and ways of thinking.

And I want to unpack that 'something more' in v.10, because God's work of grace in your life did not end when he saved you, or when he forgave you. His work of saving grace

extends itself into a new way of life, which Paul calls a life of good works, and I want to spend some time unpacking that for us.

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

### **1) Good works in the Christian life is not the means to our salvation**

The first thing I want you to see and understand is that good works in the Christian life is NOT the means to our salvation. This cannot be overstated and we need to hear it again and again and again, because the propensity of the heart is to always gravitate towards good works as a form of redemption, or as a means to earn God's favor, or as a payment to make up for wrongs or to pay for our guilt. That is where the heart always moves when it comes to good works. Notice what Paul has repeatedly said - *8 For by grace you have been saved 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.*

And so when you get to v.10, notice the sequence. Paul says if you're a believer – if you're saved – it's because he's worked a new creation in you. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.*

Good works follow God's work of creating you, making you part of his family, forgiving you, saving you, resurrecting you, bringing you to life, bringing about the new birth in you. That's the whole point of ch.2:1-3: there was no good work in you, you were dead, enslaved, powerless with no desire for God, with no affection for God, and God worked a resurrection in your life, he worked a new creation in you, and put in you a heart of flesh where previously there was a heart of stone.

He didn't say it was because of your good works he created you in Christ Jesus. Vv.8-9 tells us that it was ***not your own doing, not a result of works*** ... is God's work alone.

And so good works is not the grounds of your salvation. It's not the means to our salvation. God's grace is and his sovereign work of bringing about a new creation in you is the means to your salvation.

If you're someone who's trying to understand what Christians believe, and what the Bible says about good works, let me say this. The Bible has lots of things to say about good works, but it never says that you are saved by doing good works, or that you can earn God's favor through a life of good works, or that you can pay for your guilt and wrongs in life by accumulating good works.

If you're a believer get this truth clear in your head because where you anchor your faith will shape the trajectory of your Christian life. If you build your faith on your works, if that is the rock that you are building on or standing on, it's no surprise that you'll live a performance based faith. By that I mean – your feeling of whether God is close to you or far from you, your feeling of whether God loves you or doesn't love, your feeling of whether God accept or doesn't accept you depends on your performance in the Christian life. Once you start depending on your works, once you start praising the works of your hands, once you start building your Christian life on your works, it'll lead to one of two outcomes. It will either lead to moralistic pride because you're a star performer, where

you end up living like a pharisee or it'll lead to fear and despair because you just can't perform and you'll live like a slave.

It's for this reason Paul says as he begins this letter to the Ephesian believers and to us – leave your works at the door when you enter God's house because they are of no value in his economy – his currency is grace – he chose you and set his love upon you before the creation of the world before you did any work (1:4). He adopted you notice through Jesus Christ (1:5), not through your works, but through the work of Jesus. We're told repeatedly in chapter 1 that every blessing that you have comes in Him, in Him, in Him.

In God's economy the currency is undeserved and unconditional grace, and the only work that counts is the work of Jesus for you – paid in his blood (2:5 reminds us that we have been made alive with Jesus; 1:7 reminds us that we have been redeemed by his blood, forgiven because he paid for your sins). And so you're told to anchor your life not on your good works or performance, but on God's grace in Jesus as God's workmanship, as God's new creation in Jesus.

**Application:** preach it to your soul, bury it in your heart, fill your mind with this truth – so that when you hear the words of the accuser (the flaming arrows of the evil one in ch.6) telling you that you are a failure, a disappointment to God, weak and easily tempted, you'll respond by saying, "you're right, I am a failure, a disappointment to God, weak and easily tempted and much more, but praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for all that he has done for me in Jesus!". Go to Eph.1 and 2. Read it out, preach it to your soul and say, "Jesus has paid for it all ... I am all that I am accused of and more, but God who is rich in mercy has saved me, it's done and completed in Jesus". Read it out, preach it to your soul: Jesus has paid for it all. Luther in facing the accuser said, *"It's the supreme art of the devil that he can make a work out of the gospel. If I can hold on to the distinction between law or works and the gospel, I can say to him any and every time that he should kiss my backside. Once I debate about what I have done and left undone, I am finished. But if I reply on the basis of the gospel, 'The forgiveness of sins covers it all,' I have won."* It's done and Jesus has done it. It's not about what I do, but what Jesus has completed. It's all about what he's done.

## 2) **Good works in the Christian life is the overflow of God's work of sovereign grace in our lives**

So if good works is not the foundation or the means of my salvation, the question to now ask is: **what then is the place of good works in the life of the Christian?** What then is the place of good works in the life of the believer? So here is my second point that I want you to understand from this verse: good works in the Christian life is the overflow of God's work of sovereign grace in our lives.

Notice the way v.10 works – *for we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Notice where the arrow points – it points towards a new creation, a new heart with new desires, new affections, new passions towards the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to walk in, to step into, to immerse ourselves in.

Now here is the beauty of God's work of sovereign grace that excites me. God in his grace has not done a half-baked incomplete work. He has not saved me out of darkness to nothing. Too many believers in thinking of God's work of saving grace think that

getting saved, getting their sins forgiven is it, as it there was nothing more God could give you and bring you to in the Christian life. I've got my passport to heaven stamped and that's it. But there's more. Ch.2:7 reminds us that God's ultimate goal is the praise of God in the display of his grace to us in showing us ever expanding kindness that grows and goes on forever. V.10 tells me that there's more here and now, because v.10 is the trajectory of the new life that God gives us which leads to the greatest joy and delight we can possible experience. It is a life that is the very opposite to the life we've been saved from in vv.1-3.

Notice ch.2:1-3 where we've been told that *this is how you once walked* versus ch.2:10 where we're told that *this is now where you should walk*. Paul says look at the road you were on, where you were destined for destruction, and now look at the road God has placed you on. Notice the trajectory of your life outside of Jesus, before God's work of sovereign grace in you, before he worked a new creation in your heart. This is how you walked. You were spiritually dead, a slave to the world, the devil, and the flesh/self. The direction of your affections and desires and life were set on that darkness in its every form and in everything you were dead to God, walking in it, stepping into it, immersed in it.

But notice what God's work of sovereign grace does. In saving you, he worked in you a new creation in Christ Jesus to now walk in the good works that God has now prepared for you.

What this verse tells me is that where saving grace has worked, where a new creation has taken place, where a resurrection has taken place, where a new heart now beats – there you will see new affections, new passions, new desires, new pursuits that move towards God and the new life he gives me (because previously my life was moving in that direction, now it is moving in this direction, previously on that path in vv.1-3, now on this path in v.10). Or as we saw last week – where God's saving grace has worked there you will see a change in what we value and what we pursue and hold up as the supreme treasure in our lives. Previously I loved, worshipped and devoted my life to these things – things I should have enjoyed and given thanks for but made objects of worship in my life. But now that my eyes and heart have been opened to God, now that I see him as a treasure of infinite worth in all his beauty, perfection, majesty, power – my life then moves in that direction.

Paul tells us in v.10 that this life of new passions, new desires, new pursuits, new affections in the good works that God has prepared for us is the fruit of saving grace in our lives. When he saves you he doesn't just empty out the junk in your heart, he fills it or replaces it, and it overflows out into everything in our lives.

Jesus said in John 7:37-38, *if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*

Jesus also said in Matthew 15:18-20 - *18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person.*

Saving grace always bears fruit. Saving grace always overflows out into everything in our lives. That's the whole point of John 7:37. When Jesus fills you, out of your heart will flow not trickles, not drops, but rivers, torrents of living water.

**NOTE:** that was the point of Jesus' parable when spoke of the 4 soils (Matthew 13). The word of the gospel comes to men and women, and they are received equally by all. The point of the parable of the 4 soils is that only in the good soil does the seed of the gospel grow, take root and bear fruit. What kind of soil are you? Has the word of the gospel truly taken root and grown deep in your soul? The difference Jesus says between all the soils is whether that which has been received and planted in your life bears fruit.

We must hear these words of Jesus with great seriousness, because the Scriptures call us to examine our hearts for the benefit of our souls and eternity. 2 Tim.3:15 reminds us that scriptures are here to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus. If you've been a believer all these years, but the direction of your passions/desires/affections in life have not moved towards Him, if your patterns of ungodliness remain unchanged, then you're living with a false assurance (Read Matt.7:13ff)

Lamentations 3:40 *Let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord!*

2 Cor.13:5 *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.*

The NT constantly challenges us, calls us, reminds us, teaches us that those who are saved, those who know saving grace, those who have been born again, those who have experienced God's redemption, those who have new hearts are to bear fruit in the good works that God has prepared for us.

- *Col. 1:10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*
- *2Cor. 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency\* in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*
- *2Th. 2:16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.*
- *Titus 3:3-7 – what we were, what Jesus does, and how it works out in Titus 3:8 parallels Eph.2:10*

**Good works in the Christian life is the overflow of God's work of sovereign grace in your life.**

### **3) The good works God has prepared for us is summed up in becoming more like Him**

Now the most obvious question most people will now ask is this one: what is the good works that God has prepared for us? What is the fruit of God's work of saving grace in our lives? What does this new life that we are to walk in, step into, and immerse ourselves into look like? (You read v.10 that tells you that you're now on this new path, taking steps, moving forward, but what does it look like?) It's an important question because if you don't have an understanding and grasp of what this looks like, you won't know what to pursue, you won't know what you should be look for, you won't know what to walk after, you won't know what to foster in your life, you won't know what to examine in your life.

So let me say to you that the good works God has prepared for us, the fruit that he wants to bear in our lives, the new life that he has given us is summed up in us becoming more like him. **The good works God has prepared for you is summed up in being put on a path where you are becoming more like Him, where the trajectory of the life of good works or the new life that we are to walk in, step in, immerse ourselves in is a movement towards becoming more like God.**

Paul shows us this in the chapters that follow.

Eph. 4:1 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* This is followed by vv.2-3 in good works! This is the good works we are to pursue where our lives as a community marked by saving grace overflows in the fruit of humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with each other in love, and working to be united and at peace with each other.

But as you come down to vv.17, notice what Paul says. He says the same thing that he's said in ch.2:1-10. Eph. 4:17 *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer **walk** as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.* They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because they remain ignorant in the hardness of their hearts and this is how they live in v.19, with callous hearts, given to sensuality, greedy in the pursuit of every impurity. It's a description of the very life of those who are spiritually dead walking as slaves to the devil, world and self in ch.2:1-3.

Instead Paul spells out the kind of **walk** we are to pursue in v.24. Here is the walk we are to immerse ourselves in. We are to pursue '*the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*'. **That is the shape of the life of good works that God has prepared for us: it's a life of good works after His likeness!** (and vv.25-32 unpacks what that practically looks like in our relationships)

But it's v.24 that's the key to understanding and grasping the good works that God has planned for us to walk in and immerse our lives in. It is to be immersed and to walk on a path where you are becoming more like God himself, because in bringing about the new birth in your life, in putting a new heart in you, in bringing you from death to live, he makes you alive to himself, and is putting you on a trajectory to himself where you are not just going towards him, but becoming more like him. Understand the goal of the gospel and the saving work of Jesus. For what greater thing could God do for you or give you in saving you, but to give you himself (1 Pet.3:18). If God is a being who is perfect in every way, then his perfect love for you demands that he gives you what is of infinite and supreme worth and value, which is himself. For to give you anything less would either make what he gives you greater than he is or it would make him and his love less than perfect. So it's no surprise that the Bible tells us that 1) he is giving you himself into eternity (2:7 as trophies of his grace experiencing his kindness in ever expanding measure), and 2) he is working to make you more like himself (which is the reason why in ch.3:19ff Paul's prayer is that we might know the love of Jesus in his saving work that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God i.e. that God fills you with himself who is of infinite and supreme beauty, worth, power, majesty, love, kindness, joy, that we might be filled with God in all his perfections.

God's good and supreme pursuit in our lives is to put us on a path where we move towards him and become like him and are filled with him. That is the trajectory of the life

God has prepared us for: to live for every good work that you find in Him, becoming more like Him in all his perfections – *to love what he loves, to desire what he desires, to pursue what he pursues, to delight in what he delights, to be angry about what angers him, to speak his words, to obey his words, to display his character ...*

Let me explain why this isn't a strange thing for God to do by making a general observation in life. In life we are drawn to greatness, and in becoming more like those we consider great the more our joy and delight in life – that's generally how we work in life. Have you ever noticed that in life we're always looking to be like someone else.

If you're into cycling, Duncan Armstrong might be your hero. So what do you do, you check out his exercise routine, you buy the same gear he uses. No one wants to ride like me or comes to me to work out how to excel in cycling. But greatness and great people appeals to us, it draws us, it brings us delight because the more we are like our heroes in life whom we consider great, the more delight and joy and satisfaction that gives us, because in some measure we are sharing their greatness.

Some of you watch NBA on HD tv, and you have players that you look up to. You know their names, their numbers, their signature moves, the shoes they wear. And when you go to a sports store to buy basketball gear you gravitate always towards those whom you consider great – in your choice of shoes, jersey, whatever will bring you just a bit closer to those whom you consider great – and the more you are like them the more delight and joy it gives you because in some measure you share in their greatness.

It doesn't matter whether you're young or old – we're all drawn to greatness and we delight in greatness in our lives. Greatness all around us appeals to us, draws us, and brings us delight - which is the reason why great people have their own perfume or clothes line or accessories – because people want to share in their greatness by becoming like them. It's the reason why we spend or work to be like those whom we consider great – because the more we are like our heroes in life, the closer we resemble them, the more delight and joy and satisfaction we get because in some measure we are sharing in their greatness.

In fact the greater someone of something is, and the closer we get to it or become like it, the greater our delight/joy in life isn't it. The more something or someone is a treasure in our lives, the more joy and delight it brings us.

**The same holds true when it comes to God, because in saving you he is saving you to an incomparable greatness in himself that is of supreme worth, so the more you become like him, the greater your delight and joy.** And so God's good goal and pursuit in your life and my life is to fill you with himself, because there is no greater thing he could give you. And so to be put on the path where you are becoming more like him (the one who is infinitely great – who is of supreme worth, valuable above all things), will actually bring you the greatest delight and joy because there is nothing greater he can give you than himself. God shares who he is with you in his infinite greatness and worth, and makes you like him in all his beauty, majesty, power, and love for your joy. That is supreme kindness. When we encounter greatness we seek to be like it and we are drawn to it because it brings us joy and delight. And so here in ch.2:10, Paul is saying that God's saving grace continues, his kindness continues, because he is giving you a life of supreme joy and delight by now putting you on a path that moves towards him, where

you are becoming more like him who is of infinite greatness and worth. He has saved you and put you on a new path in life where you are moving in the pursuit of good works after his likeness, and as you begin to share in God's greatness in all his perfection, as it flows and touches every area of your life you experience supreme joy and delight. For isn't that what we do in life anyway when it comes to all that we consider great ... only now the direction has changed. Instead of pursuing and walking and immersing ourselves in the idolatrous greatness of our enslaved lives to the devil/world/flesh (ch.2:1-3), we are now pursuing and walking and immersing ourselves in the greatness of the God who has saved us, made us trophies of his grace and fill us with Himself in all his perfections (ch.2:10; 3:19ff; 4:24).

But in our lives that's not what we pursue is it. Because when it comes to the one being in the universe whom we should consider great, when it comes the one being in the universe we should recognize as supreme in worth, value, power, majesty, love we instead turn and elevate everything else in our lives as great. We and move towards the lesser, giving them worth and value over God, letting the trajectory of our lives move towards them, looking to become like them or be shaped by them, finding our delight and joy in them becoming like them. That is the heart of sin in Romans 1. In the darkness of their hearts and mind, they exchanged glory of God for created things (that we saw last week are not lasting and bring only fleeting joy). In all of life we are drawn to greatness – great people, great things – but when it comes to the one being in the universe who is great beyond measure in every perfection of his being, we turn and walk the other way, and because of that God is rightly angry ... and we are damned under His wrath or as Paul says in ch.2:1-3 objects of God's wrath.

But now Paul says that you've not just been forgiven, but you've been freed from that way of thinking, with a new heart, with new affections, given a new life – and the new life that he has brought about in you is now on a different path, where you're alive to God (awakened, freed, no longer enslaved). You're alive to God where Paul says you're now seeing God for who he is in his supreme and infinite greatness and worth in all his beauty, value, power, majesty, love, kindness, and grace such that we now run after him: seeking to be like him, seeking to do what he does, to pursue what he pursues, to enjoy what he enjoys, because in pursuing He who is supremely great and becoming like him we are brought into the greatest joy and delight we can ever experience sharing in his greatness. (note: we are people who always delight in greatness, that's why we always gravitate towards that which we consider great in our lives. In fact that which we consider great is really our treasure in life, but only in being made alive to God and in becoming more like Him who is infinitely great we experience the greatest joy and delight, in the one true treasure of supreme greatness and value.)

And so here in Eph.2:10, when Paul says he has worked in you, bringing about a new creation in you for the good work that he has prepared for you, he's saying that he's bringing about a new creation in you for the purpose of making you like himself: bringing about a new creation in you after the likeness of God expressed in true righteousness and holiness, expressed in good works that reflect God's likeness, that express God's likeness. Which is why in ch.5:1-2, Paul says of this new life God has saved us to, given us, made us for, *'therefore – because you're now alive to God .. **be imitators of God as beloved children, and WALK in love as Jesus loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God...** walk in good works as Jesus did'*. It's to a

life of love shaped and defined and becoming more like Jesus, which is then unpacked (Eph.5:8ff).

Eph. 5:8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk** as children of light – what does light do – it shines – not your light but the Lord's light!

**NOTE:** Every good work worth pursuing is a good work that reflects the likeness of God – that reflects the likeness of Jesus who is the reflection of God's supreme greatness and worth (2 Cor.4:6)

To pursue good works in the Christian life is to live your life in the pursuit of God (a life after His true righteousness and holiness, v.24) - that comes from seeing the supremacy of God in his greatness and worth, in all his beauty, majesty, power, perfection above all things such that you move towards him and are drawn to him, seeking to become like him **in your life's practices and pursuits and thoughts and desires and affections.** Because in doing so it will bring you the greatest delight and joy knowing that in becoming like him, you are sharing in his greatness – in all his works and in all his character.

When God saves you – he saves you for more, much more that you can possibly imagine – because the good works he has prepared for you is a life after his likeness, after his image, where you are moving towards him and becoming more like him who is of infinite greatness in his worth, beauty, majesty, power, perfection, love, kindness, mercy, peace, security, hope above any thing in your life and my life. There is no limits to the infinite greatness and worth of God which he has saved you to and now shares with you.

Ephesians 2:10 completes what began in 2:1-3 because it's meant to help us see the extent and breadth of God's sovereign grace, which extends to the life he gives us and has prepared for us. You were saved for more, for the Father and to be like the Father sharing his supreme greatness and worth into eternity. For in the pursuit of the good works in His likeness that God has prepared for us, we are being given the greatest possible gift in being saved – God himself, which will bring us the greatest joy and delight as we begin to share more and more His greatness, as we pursue good works in his likeness. There's much more to experience and discover in the Christian life for your joy and delight – that's the whole point of ch.2:10. Saving grace doesn't stop with forgiveness of sin, but kindness experienced from God and in God that goes on into eternity (ch.2:7).

You were saved to share in the likeness of God, to walk in the likeness of God, to share in the greatness of God in all his glory – to be filled in your life with the full measure of his infinite worth, beauty, majesty, power, perfection – to his ever expanding glory and praise and for your growing joy and delight forever.