

## Sermon 20, I Was Made for This!, Ephesians 2:10

The whole point of salvation is good works, and therefore salvation must be by grace. If you could have done some good works without being saved, then there would have been no need for salvation. You exist to do good works

You exist to do good works.

Unsaved people cannot do good works.

Salvation is for the purpose of doing good works.

Therefore, salvation is necessary for you to fulfill your purpose, for you to do good works.

Scripture reading: Luke 7:36-50. This passage describes what happens to people when they forget that everything they have in Christ is a gift from God.

**Proposition:** Salvation means being re-created by God for the purpose of walking in God's preset good works.

- I. Two Reasons Why Salvation Is by Grace
  - A. The Nature of Salvation: New Creation
  - B. The Goal of Salvation: Good Works
- II. Three Implications of Salvation by Grace
  - A. You Didn't Make Yourself a Christian, v. 10a
  - B. God Preset Good Works for You, v. 10c
  - C. You Were Made to Walk in God's Way, v. 10d

### Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come today to Paul's description of what we were made to do. We were not made to consume, to be shoppers. We were not made to simply enjoy physical pleasure. We exist for something much bigger than that — to walk with God, in His ways. The apostle reminds us that we were made to do good works, to walk in those good works which God planned before we were ever born. He rounds off this section of the letter by repeating the reference to "walking" found in v. 2 of this chapter, and also summarizes the whole purpose of the salvation he has just so plentifully described. Why were all of verses 1-9 necessary? Because God is supremely and fundamentally interested in good behavior! If you've read the Bible at all, you are aware that this is one of its most obvious teachings. God does indeed want you to be good. In all the theological subtleties perpetrated on the church by people like me, sometimes that point gets overlooked. But it never got overlooked by the apostle Paul! He has summarized the majestic and beautiful and life-changing truth of salvation by grace, and repeated in several creative ways the truth that it is indeed by grace and not because of anything

we've done. But lest we begin to think that salvation has nothing to do with works, Paul provides a clincher here. Salvation cannot be the result of works for two major reasons, which together imply three major truths about the nature of salvation. What I will show you from this text with God's help this morning is that that salvation is by grace because it means that God is new-creating you and that His goal is for you to begin to do good works. This further implies that you didn't make yourself a Christian, that God preset good works for you, and that you were made to walk in God's way. In short, salvation means being recreated by God for the purpose of walking in God's preset good works.

### **I. Two Reasons Why Salvation Is by Grace**

Paul begins with a little word, "for." This "for," of course, is a connector to the previous verse(s), and it means that this verse provides a reason why those verses are correct. Here's an example: I know that the sound system in this room is switched on, for when I put my face close to the mic, my voice suddenly sounds much louder. Did you notice how that sentence worked? I made a statement, and then supported it by a piece of evidence. "For" means "what I'm about to say is evidence for what I just said."

Well, what did Paul just say? He just said one of the clearest things about salvation in the entire New Testament, viz. that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works. Now, he says, he's going to provide a piece of evidence for the truth of that teaching. In fact, he provides two pieces of evidence for it. So, as you read Ephesians 2:10, think to yourself, "This is evidence for the truth that salvation is by grace through faith."

#### **A. The Nature of Salvation: New Creation**

The first piece of evidence we can summarize under the heading "new creation." This is an important theme in Paul's letters; it's one that he took directly from the prophecies of Isaiah, who foretold a coming new creation in which the wolf would lie down with the lamb, in which pain and destruction would be forever banished. Paul took this concept of new creation and related it to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (as Isaiah had before him, of course). In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul declared that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. And here, he repeats that truth using two different words. We are God's "made thing" — "we are what He has made us," as one translation has it. The New Living probably overtranslates by saying "We are His masterpiece," but that does capture something of the idea here. Every believer is someone who has been remade by God. Paul then uses the word "created" to repeat what he just said. In addition to being God's *poiema*, we are also His *ktisis*, His creation. We are what He has made us, and He has created us for good works!

Now, how does this fit with the apostle's argument here? Remember, he is saying "You are saved by grace through faith, for you are God's workmanship." Paraphrased, he is saying, "Here is some evidence that salvation is entirely of grace and totally excludes works: You are new-created by God; in your present form, as a saved person, you are entirely and exclusively what God has made you." In other words, he's saying, you did nothing to make yourself what you are. You are a saved person, but you didn't save yourself. To become "saved" is not a change

that you can make in yourself. It is a change that cannot be described by any word weaker than “created.” And of course, what God creates is something made out of nothing. Creation is the total production of some entity. Creation doesn’t take pre-existing material and shuffle it around; creation produces something where before there was nothing.

So how do we know that salvation is by grace? Because it is quite literally something that only God can do. Only God can create. Think about it. To create is to have the power of bringing into existence, which by definition is something that no creature can have. Even God cannot give the power of bringing into existence to a creature, because only something whose being is underived can have such a power. You cannot give what you do not possess. And you do not possess the ability to hold yourself in being if you are a creature. You are dependent on your Creator. And if you lack the ability to hold yourself in being, then you lack the ability to hold anything else in being.

So how do we know that salvation is purely and entirely something God did for us, and therefore not something we did for ourselves? Because salvation means becoming a new creation. When God saves you, He remakes you so thoroughly that it can only be accurately described as a resurrection from the dead and as a new creation. In Paul’s concept of salvation, God is not a lifeguard rescuing a rather weak swimmer. Rather, God is the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth who sees a dead skeleton and says to it, “Live.” He brings into being things that don’t exist. He recreates everyone who is in Christ into a new creature.

That is a pretty solid piece of evidence for the truth that salvation is 100% the result of God’s grace. We all know how completely ridiculous the idea of resurrecting ourselves is, never mind the idea of becoming new creations on our own. But before we move on to the second piece of evidence, let’s talk briefly about how we ought to live as new creations.

If you are a new creation, that means you need to think differently and interact with the world differently than you used to. You don’t regard people after the flesh. You don’t even think of Jesus after the flesh. What does that mean? Well, it means that you no longer regard people as tools you manipulate to get something for yourself. You no longer just look at the outside; you see the heart within, and you care about it. Your flesh enjoys lusting, overeating, indulging in bitterness and clamor, and generally being selfish. But when you are a new creation, you are created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness (as Paul will say later in this letter). Basically, playing off the four different sections of exhortation at the end of this letter, we can say that if you are a new creation, then you need to walk in unity, purity, harmony, and victory.

Do you get it, brothers and sisters? God saved you by His grace, and we know that He did so because we are His workmanship and His new creation. He has remade us to be like His Son — and therefore we need to live like He has called us to live!

### **B. The Goal of Salvation: Good Works**

That means, to be brutally honest, that you need to do good works. God saved you to do good works. That is the direction in which salvation moves: it moves toward doing good deeds.

Now, again, this is a piece of evidence that Paul uses to prove to us that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works. How do we know that? We know that because we were saved to do good works.

Let me put it like this. I live here in Gillette. I spent last night in my own bed right here within city limits. So let me ask you this question: Do you think it's likely that I got up this morning and got on an airplane so I could fly to Gillette?

Of course it's not likely! The whole idea is absolutely absurd. If I'm already in Gillette, I have no reason at all to go to the airport and catch a flight to Gillette! Even saying the sentence makes me feel more stupid. Why? Because the goal of flying someplace is to get there. If you're already there, you wouldn't take the trouble to try to fly there! Well, that's how Paul's argument here works, except the other direction. He says "The destination of salvation is good works. In order to get to good works, you have to get saved first!" If you were already at good works, of course, you would have no need to get on that salvation plane and fly to good works. You would already be doing the good works, and have no need to be saved first. But Paul notes that by nature, you and I and every human being are far from good works. We are born walking in bad works! That's the clear statement of the first paragraph of this chapter.

So how do we know that God didn't save us because of our good works? Because salvation is a prerequisite for good works. You can't do any good works until you've already been saved! The whole point of salvation is good works — so if good works were possible without salvation, there would be no need for salvation. If I'm already in Gillette, I'm not going to take a plane to Gillette. If I'm already in good works-land, I'm not going to need salvation to get there!

Do you see how this verse kills with one stone the twin birds of nomism and antinomianism? Nomism is the teaching that if you keep certain laws, fulfill certain conditions, then God will accept you. Antinomianism is the teaching that if you are saved, then you can do whatever evil thing you want and it won't even be evil anymore because the law no longer applies to you! Paul says, "You didn't keep any laws or fulfill any conditions, because those are good works and you can't do those until after you've been saved. But now that you have been saved, you need to recognize and respond to the purpose of that salvation, which was to help you do good works."

And do you know what, brothers and sisters? This message really does produce good works. The message that good works are a product of salvation, rather than a precondition for it, really changes people's lives!

## **II. Three Implications of Salvation by Grace**

Well, in one sense, of course, all of v. 10 gives reasons why we need to understand that salvation is by grace through faith. But it is also profitable to look at it in terms of the implications of those reasons.

### **A. You Didn't Make Yourself a Christian, v. 10a**

The first such implication is that you didn't make yourself a Christian. Making Christians is something only God Almighty can do. You were made in Christ for good works — that is, in union with Christ by faith, you were recreated, renewed, converted, renovated, made over, born again. However you want to describe it, the reality is that to be a Christian is to experience a supernatural change.

So long as you think of the Christian life primarily as something you produce, you will find it burdensome. If Christianity is mostly a list of do's and don'ts, then it will get hard! But Christianity is not mostly a list of do's and don'ts. It is mostly the good news that God saves, that God changes those who believe in Him from wicked people into good people.

Yes, you and I have to respond; yes, we have to believe; yes, we have to embrace God's work in our lives. But the basic reality of Christianity is that it's something God does for you. God saves; it is purely an act of His favor. The message here is not that God will help you save yourself, but that if you are in Christ you have already been saved.

### **B. God Preset Good Works for You, v. 10c**

Once you're saved, then, Paul wants you to know that God preset good works for you. God placed you in the particular circumstances you're in every day. If you see someone who's hurt and needy, one of the good works God has prepared for you is the opportunity to comfort that person. If you see your daily jobs in front of you, know that one of the good works God has prepared for you is doing that job as well as you possibly can to the glory of God. If you see an opportunity to honor your parents, to be chaste and faithful to your spouse, to tell the truth and to worship the true God, those are good works God has prepared for you! He knew from all eternity where your daily path would take you, and He prepared all along that path bazillions of good works. If you're really looking, you'll see that there are opportunities for good works everywhere you turn. God has provided you with opportunity after opportunity to please Him, to obey Him, to delight in Him. All you have to do is take them! Think of these good works as being like coins in a video game — they are there, along your path, and all you have to do is blunder into them.

Good works are not far off and difficult to do. They are not far away from your daily life and the places you routinely go. They are preset, ready and waiting. All you need to do is notice them and do them.

This is all possible because God has saved you. You have His salvation — and therefore you have the ability to do good works.

### **C. You Were Made to Walk in God's Way, v. 10d**

Paul describes our doing of good works not as something rare or occasional, but as a daily walk. By using this word, he is harking back to the Old Testament concept of God's way, the way God wants His people to walk in. By the time of the flood, human beings had corrupted God's way. They had turned aside out of His way, wandered off, gone astray. But God started over with Noah and declared later that everyone who was undefiled in the way would be blessed! We

looked at length at the concept in Psalms 1 & 119. God blesses those whose way is blameless. He blesses those who flee the way of wickedness and delight in His law instead.

Ultimately, though, we must not forget that doing good is not just a good thing — it is what we were created for. You exist for good works!

When you do something particularly exhilarating, you might declare, “I was made for this!” Well, according to the Bible you were made for good works. You will get no greater thrill than the thrill that comes from accomplishing your purpose. You will never enjoy anything more than you enjoy doing what God created you to do.

If you’re not a believer, of course, this means that you’re cut off from the ultimate enjoyment. You self-sabotage; you continually frustrate your own purpose. Repent! Turn to God, and He will save you.

What if you are a believer, but say, “I like my disobedient lifestyle and I don’t want to change”? Well, God’s word to you is also “repent.” Turn away from such folly. Pursue God for His own sake; obey Him because you’re a new creature. If you do, the feelings of joy and exhilaration will follow. I promise — more importantly, God promises. Listen to Him! Amen.