

EPHESIANS 2:9-10
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 10
Sept.
Words: 11/28/2012 5304 - 685

INTRO: In Ephesians 2, we have learned so far about the great death that passed upon all mankind and how God, by grace through faith delivers us from so great a death. And in verses 7-10, we learn why God paid such a horrific price to release man from this terrible death, and that is for His own glory. So Paul says in verse 7, "...that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." God wants to demonstrate the exceeding riches of His grace by those very individuals that He delivers from this great death.

And so Paul says in verses 8-9, "For, by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." If God had chosen that man should be saved by works, if such a means could even justly be found, then He, God, would not get the glory. Man would be able to boast and get the glory for himself. So, when God saves man by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ, man can claim no credit at all for his salvation, and God gets all the glory. And when we get to heaven, the glory that will be ascribed to God will be boundless, as Revelation 4-5 indicate.

So our task this morning is to show that salvation is not of works. Here is one of the clearest distinguishing marks between true Christianity and all false teachings about salvation which claim to be biblical. And salvation taught that it is even partly of works is unbiblical. So that cuts out all cults, all non-biblical faiths, and many faiths that claim to be biblical.

But, if teaching salvation by any kind of works at all is unbiblical, so is any teaching that says works are not important to Christianity. We have plenty of that within the ranks of so called evangelical Christianity. There is a very delicate balance to be held here, and it is the task of the preacher to clearly set this out. Such a clear balance is precisely what we have in Ephesians 2:8-10. Verse 8 stresses that salvation is ONLY by grace through faith. Verse 9 stresses that salvation is ENTIRELY apart

from works. And verse 10 stresses very CLEARLY the importance of good works in Christianity.

So our task tonight is to show both that works play no part in our attaining to salvation, and that works play a very important part in the lives of those who have attained to salvation. Here it is in a nutshell: Good works do not bring about salvation, but salvation brings about good works. So, we shall look at this great subject.

(2) Why God released us from this death - that He might show (7-10) cont'd

The point we are dealing with in Ephesians 2:7-10, as I outline this book, is to answer the question why God has released us from so great a death. We were doomed to hell. And the answer is that He saved us for His own glory. It is, according to our verses, so that in the ages to come He might show of the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us. We have covered the verses where we learned that salvation is by grace through faith. And then in verse 9 we are told that salvation is not by works. So in verse 8 we have first the positive, salvation is by grace through faith and now in verse 9 we have the negative, salvation is not by works.

Now these two matters of receiving something by works, or by grace through faith are entirely exclusive one of the other. Consider Romans 11 for a moment (read 5-6). If something is by grace, it cannot be of works. And if it is of works, it cannot be by grace. We must make no mistake about that.

So, let us define what is meant by works. Some claim that repentance is a work and thus not necessary for salvation since salvation is not by works. A mental action like believing or repenting could be considered a work in some respects. So Funk and Wagnall's dictionary says of a work, that it is, and I quote, "Continued exertion or activity, whether physical or mental, directed to some purpose or end; labor." Under number 2 they give this definition: "The acts, obligations, etc., that one does or undertakes in return for something of value, as money; especially the activities by which one earns a livelihood." When we speak of salvation not being by works, we are talking about not being able to do anything to EARN salvation. Repentance and faith do not EARN our salvation, they qualify us to receive salvation.

In an earlier message I said this: "I believe that grace, as used in our verse describes the means by which we get salvation. This salvation comes as a gift" end quote. So when someone offers you something and you reach out your hand to take it, you are doing something, but you are not earning anything. When we repent and believe, we are doing something, but we are not earning anything.

So, receiving something by works is the exact opposite of receiving something by grace or as a gift. When you do something

and you earn something by doing that thing, you can rightfully boast about it later. When someone gives you a gift, all boasting is excluded. So, verse nine says, "...not of works lest any man should boast."

Now I want us to remember something right here. God saved us from sin in order that in the ages to come He might show or demonstrate the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. So, if we get our salvation as a gift from Him, that demonstrates the exceeding riches of His grace. Salvation is received entirely as a gift.

But, let us say He saved us by His grace, and then because we are saved by grace, He let us live in sin by following the dictates and desires of the flesh, would that still demonstrate the exceeding riches of His grace? That is a contradiction so vast as to defy consideration. He would cease to be holy and just and righteous etc... He would cease to be Jehovah God.

So, Almighty God, in His great wisdom found a way to save us entirely by grace, and then make us godly and righteous in life, also entirely by His grace! So, He justifies us by grace, and He sanctifies us by grace. And so in Ephesians 2:8-9 we have justification by grace through faith, and thus He will be able to demonstrate the exceeding riches of His grace into the ages

to come. But then in 2:10, we have sanctification by grace through faith, and now the exceeding riches of His grace are demonstrated through saved man becoming ever increasingly more godly.

So we go now to verse 10 (read). Let me liken this verse to a workshop. Here we have first of all the reason why this item is in the workshop. That is given to us by the little word 'for'. Then we are told what item is being worked on in this workshop. It is 'we'. It is the Christian, the one who has been saved by grace through faith. Then we are told who the worker is in this workshop. It says 'we' are 'His', that is God's workmanship. It is God who is at work in us. Then we are told where this work is being done. It is 'in Christ Jesus'. Then we are given the purpose why the Christian is being worked on in this workplace. It is that when God is at work in him in Christ Jesus, he will 'learn to produce good works'. And then we are told why God planned all of this in the first place. It was because He had planned before that the Christian should learn to do good works.

So, we will look at this verse piece by piece and start with the reason why this work is being done. It is given to us in the little preposition 'for'. What we have is a reason for our salvation by grace through faith, and not by works. You see, the context is salvation. And it is from sin that we are saved (Matt.

1:21). The angel told Joseph he was to call Mary's Son Jesus, which means Jehovah saves. And the reason He was to be given this name is because He would save His people from their sins. And God would first have to save His people from sin before He could begin to produce good works in them. So, good works can never produce salvation. They come as a result of salvation. Good works do not bring about salvation, salvation brings about good works. So the word 'for' has given us the reason why we are not saved by works.

Now let us consider who it is that is being worked on in the shop. The verse says it is 'we', referring to all Christians. It is you. It is I. It is everyone who has been saved or born again or redeemed. If you and I have truly become a Christian, we are in this workshop. I can tell you that sometimes it is like sitting in a dentist chair. There is pain involved in this workshop. It is a tremendous task to produce what God is seeking to produce in this workshop.

So next we are told who the worker is in this workshop. The verse says we, the Christian, are 'His' workmanship, referring to God. Our verse says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Let us consider for a moment that we, that is Christians, are God's workmanship. God is the One that is performing this work in us.

You see, you can know the worker by His workmanship. Let us say a farmer has trouble with his tractor. He has just had it fixed in a shop and it is causing the same trouble again. And you ask, "Where did you get it fixed?" And he says, "Well, in such and such a place." And you say, "Well, that sounds like their workmanship all right."

By the workmanship you generally can know the one who did the work. By the life of the one who claims to be a Christian you can generally tell which shop has worked on him. When those who call themselves Christians divorce and remarry, or marry someone of their own gender, you know they are not the workmanship of God. But, when so called Christians gamble or play cards or drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, or follow the fads and fashions of the world, you tell me, does it speak of the workmanship of God? Now I am not talking about a new believer. We understand a new believer may have many of those kinds of struggles to work through and it takes some time. But let us say this person has been in the shop 2 or 3 or 4 years. You expect some kind of godliness to start taking shape.

Turn to Matthew 7 (read 15-20). "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every

good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them." Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Well, what kind of works does God's workmanship produce?

D Martyn Lloyd Jones says that in these verses we have Paul's definitions of what it means to be a Christian. When God is at work on a born again believer, visible changes will take place. And you will be able to tell it is the workmanship of Almighty God by the changes that are happening.

Now notice in our verse the place in which God is working on the believer. It is in Christ Jesus. Our verse says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ..."

Now I want to ask you, how does God do His work in His shop? How does He create out of us the kind of person who lives right, the kind of person who does good works? Well, God's work in us is in Christ Jesus is to make us like His Son Jesus Christ. And to explain this work, let me change illustrations for a moment. Let me try to use an illustration I have used some years ago, and do it without boring you. It is the illustration of the rock polisher. So, for the moment, our

workshop will be the rock polisher.

Having lived the Christian life a good number of years, I see several major things God uses to conform us to the image of His Son. They are so well illustrated by the rock tumbler that I want to use. You see, when you want to polish rocks, you must use special rocks. Not just any old rock will do. And God also chooses a certain kind of person to make like His Son. He cannot make just anyone like His son. When you polish rocks they need to be semi-precious at least. Now let me tell you what kind of person God puts in His workshop, or in our illustration, the rock tumbler. He chooses that kind of person who has chosen Him. This, in a nutshell, in such great contrast to Calvinism, is the true doctrine of election. It is this kind of person we have described in Ephesians 2:1-10.

And when God puts this person in the rock tumbler, He must put in a few other things too. They are grit, water and other rocks. You cannot polish one rock by itself in a rock tumbler. And I have likened the grit to circumstances. And when God has put us in the rock tumbler with these other ingredients, he begins to turn the crank. And it turns, and it turns, and it turns. You see, the first grit that is put in is very coarse. In a short time big lumps are worn off of the rocks. Jagged edges are rounded. In the Christian life, bigger sins should soon

disappear. Consumption of alcohol, drunkenness; fornication; lying; stealing; cheating etc... These should very soon be gone. They are big ugly lumps.

And so this rock tumbler turns and turns and turns. And the believer experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the grit of the circumstances might even begin to beg to be let out of the polisher. Some even do go back. This was more than they bargained for. But this is only the very beginning.

You see, the biggest part in that rock tumbler is not grit, but water. When we are in God's shop, no work happens without the water of the Word of God. Christians who do not come under the sound of the Word of God do not become like Christ either. And this believer must be immersed in the water all the time. If you take him out, all progress stops. If he begs to get out and jumps out, the workmanship cannot continue. That means reading the Word and hearing the Word being taught and heeding the Word.

But there is one more item in that rock tumbler. It is other rocks. As I said, you cannot polish one rock by itself in a rock tumbler. And I liken these other rocks to other believers. They too are being polished, but it happens as they rub against each other. Sometimes we as believers wish there were just a few believers that were not in the same church as we are. And

yet, that other believer may just be what God needs to wear some sharp edge or ugly lump off of us.

And, you see, polishing rocks takes a lot of time. It takes thousands upon thousands of revolutions in grit and water and other rocks. And when we think we have been all beautified, the Lord opens the tumbler, and washes us off, and sure enough, we do look a lot better. And so He takes a grit not quite as rough and back in the tumbler we go. Now smaller things are happening. We notice hardly any change. It is easier to put up with the other rocks because we're all a little smoother. But after a while, Oh, if only we could get out. But on and on the tumbler goes. By now, Oh it gets so tiring rubbing against one another.

And then, after what seems an endless amount of time, once more the tumbler is opened and we are rinsed off and oh my, we think we are really starting to look perfect. But no, the master puts finer grit in and more water and the other rocks and there we go again. Round and round and round and round. Will this never end?

And when that tumbler is opened the last time, your breath is caught away when the rocks are rinsed off. Beautiful! Absolutely beautiful! Like the master! Such is the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus!

Well, we have seen why the workshop. Who is being worked on. Who is doing the work. Where He is doing the work. And now we want to consider the purpose for this work. In the midst of all that tumbling and grinding and rinsing, or the Christian's time in God's workshop in Christ Jesus, what is the purpose? We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto or for good works! God's final design here on earth is to bring about a Christian who will be a person who does good and lives right!

When we are born again, we are God's workmanship in His workplace, created in Christ Jesus for good works. And so I ask, if we are God's workmanship, would we go on sinning? God forbid! That is the devil's workmanship. If we are God's workmanship, what will we be doing? Our text tells us the purpose, the design of this shop. It is 'for' or 'unto' good works. How can we be God's workmanship and continue to live in sin? Then we cease to be His workmanship. Then we are the devil's workmanship.

I ask you, does playing cards or sipping alcohol or smoking cigarettes, or follow the fads and fashions of the world, does it look like something God's workmanship did? Does it look like something created in Christ Jesus? How can we be created anew at the new birth in Christ Jesus and go on living like the unsaved world? That is a horrible contradiction. How can anyone

created in Christ Jesus go on living in sin? It is unthinkable!

So, how do we get out of living such a selfish life that only thinks of ourselves? Well, it is in this process of sanctification which I have tried to picture for us, that God accomplishes this. In the process of sanctification we are delivered from the very power of sin. So, let me tell you something that I have told you in earlier messages. The word salvation is generally given in the Greek feminine form. But in our text it is described in the neuter form. And in my view when the word salvation is in the neuter form, it refers to the whole of salvation. And when God re-creates us in Christ Jesus at the point of justification, it is with the purpose of beginning the process of sanctification, and in this process He delivers us from the power of sin. And this salvation, that is this entire salvation including sanctification is by grace through faith.

So, Paul, writing in 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." So, how can a church be a grace church, if deep sins like homosexuality are welcomed as legitimate Christian practice? It is so abominably wrong as to defy explanation.

So in Ephesians 2:10 Paul says that we, that is Christians, are

God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. Now there is only one way we can truly live a life of good works, and that is by grace through faith. The grace is the provision of strength and courage, the faith gives us access to it.

So, on the subject of good works, let me ask a question here. If works earn something, and we are not saved by works, what is the reason for good works after salvation, and what is the value of good works after salvation? Why does God save us so that we will produce good works. Why should we do good works?

Anne Sullivan was born at Feeding Hills, Massachusetts. She was born in a poor home and born half blind. When her mother died, she went to the poor house. Then at Perkins Institute, an institute for the blind, through an operation, her sight was restored. She thereafter devoted her life to serving the blind. Why did she work serving the blind? To make money? No! Out of gratitude for her sight! Well, she became the woman who served the very famous blind and deaf woman, Helen Keller.

Now I ask, if a person whose vision is restored, served blind people for the rest of her life until she too became blind, and did it out of gratitude, how much more should every Christian not work day and night out of gratitude for being delivered from sin and death and hell! The works we do as Christians should

be motivated by gratitude for so great a salvation.

But to answer the second question, what is the value of good works after salvation? What good are they to God if they do not earn anything? Listen to Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Good works, done in the power of the Holy Spirit causes others to glorify God.

Listen to John 17:4. Jesus, just before He was crucified said to God, "I have glorified You on the earth." And how was it that He glorified God? Well, here is His answer, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."

Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." All we do is to be to the glory of God. And one of the major ways of glorifying God is by good works.

Let me read for you many of the NT verses that speak about good works. One could generate a doctrine of good works. Not good works to earn salvation. Good works done as a result of salvation.

Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

John 10:32, "Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you

from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

2 Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work."

Colossians 1:9-10, "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..."

1 Timothy 2:9-10, "...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works."

1 Timothy 5:10, "Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work."

1 Timothy 5:25, "Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden."

1 Timothy 6:18, Paul, giving instruction to the wealthy says, "*Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

2 Timothy 2:21, "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Titus 1:16, "They profess to know God, but in works they deny *Him*, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work."

Titus 2:6-7, "Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,

Titus 2:13-14, "...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and

Savior Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

Titus 3:1, "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work..."

Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men."

Titus 3:14, "And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."

Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works..."

Hebrews 13:20-21, "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 2:11-12, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak

against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Now let us go back to Ephesians 2:10 once more. It says, "For we are His (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has ordained before that we should walk in them."

D Martyn Lloyd Jones says that in these verses we have Paul's definitions of what it means to be a Christian. When Anne Sullivan was saved from her blindness, she served blind people for the rest of her able life. Such gratitude did she have for her vision that she lost herself in caring for others. She did not then go and seek her own welfare.

And now we come to the last part of the verse. We have seen the reason why we are saved by grace through faith. The little preposition 'for' alerted us to that. We have seen who is being worked on in the workshop. We have seen who is doing this divine work. It is God Himself. We have seen where He does this work. It is in Christ Jesus. We have seen the purpose of this workshop. It is to make of Christians those who live doing good works. That is the contrast to living in sin. And now we will see that God had a plan long before He began this work for our verse closes like this, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works..."

and here it is, "which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

The word for 'prepared beforehand' or 'ordained before' is 'proeetoimazo'. It simply means to prepare beforehand. What I take from this word is that God planned beforehand that we should walk in good works. God saves us to live right! He delivers us from our sin, not only so that we would be without sin, but that we would do the exact opposite; live right, do good.

And the question now is, when was this 'beforehand'? It is beyond doubt that before God created man, He planned that man would walk in good works. God made man for God's glory, and that requires holy and right living. So without question, when God created man, He created him to live right, or do good works.

In Genesis 1:31, when God had completed all of creation, Scripture says He saw all that He had made, and indeed it was very good. It was God's original plan that man, who was created good, should also do good. Now it is without question that God knew man would fall into sin, and so, before the foundation of the earth, before He even created man, God planned that He would send His only Son to die for mankind. Scripture tells us Jesus was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

So, no doubt, before ever creation took place, God had all

of this planned. And throughout history, God has sought to bring about people who would obey Him and follow Him. And when Jesus died for mankind, and when the Church was born, God began to create in Christ Jesus those who would walk in good works.

So Ephesians 2:1 and says that even those of us who were dead in trespasses and sins He made alive. And then the apostle lists those things we lived in. And then he goes on to teach how that he saved us by grace through faith in order that God, in the ages to come, might display the wonder of the works of His grace in sinners like us. And that begins right here on earth. Those who live right display to this present wicked world what God can do in sinful people.

So God planned beforehand that we should walk in good works. We should live a life of good works. That is God's plan for us. And for this we need salvation by grace through faith. We do not do good works to get saved. We do them because we are saved. Anne Sullivan served the blind out of gratitude. How much more should those of us who have been saved from sin and death and hell serve God out of gratitude!

CONCL: Well, I took too long for a long normal length conclusion. But with the completion of verse 10, we are ready to begin a slightly new section and we will do that in the new year, Lord willing, and then I will take time to show you just exactly where we are in this book.

So in the last three messages we have looked at what it means to be saved by grace through faith, and what part

works play in our salvation. Good works do not bring about salvation, but salvation produces good works. God produces this in us in His workshop.