

Christ's Masterpiece: Redeemed Sinners

Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

A similar illustration of God's workmanship is found in Isaiah 64:8, “But now, O LORD, thou art our father; **we are the clay, and thou our potter**; and we all are the work of thy hand.”

The children of Israel were unable to mould themselves in the right way. Therefore, Isaiah beseeches the Lord to mould them as a potter moulds clay.

When we become alive in Jesus Christ, we become like softened clay to a potter, pliable and yielding to the work of the potter's hands.

A preacher once observed, “Have you ever watched a potter spin his work on a potter's wheel? It is precise work that takes a great deal of kneading and pressing to shape the formless lump of clay into the shape the potter intends. It is hard work. It takes a lot of force, especially in the beginning. So it is with our potter, God, and His clay, us. When we become God's workmanship, we are subjecting ourselves to sometimes uncomfortable molding and shaping, especially as God begins His work.

But as we continue to yield to the guidance of His hands, we will become more and more the useful implement He intends for us to be. Think about it - a lump of clay is of no use in it's original form. But after the lump is formed, glazed, fired, and finished it is a vase, a bowl, a cup, it is a beautiful, purposeful piece.”

What are some examples of God’s workmanship?

When we look at a little baby, we should marvel at God's workmanship, how He can put together tiny little fingers and toes, bright eyes and precious smiles. A baby is beautifully and wonderfully made by God indeed. It is a miracle!

I was recently reminded of this when my wife had her first ultrasound done this week. I could see the baby's heart beating at only 6.5 weeks old. Now that's God's workmanship!

Psalm 139:13-14 declares, "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

When we enjoy this beautiful creation, we should marvel at God's workmanship, how He put together the universe, with its galaxies, solar systems, stars, and planets in perfect alignment and motion.

And who created this vast and complex universe? The Apostle Paul answers that question in Colossians 1:15-17, "Who is (referring to Christ) the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

When we look at redemption, we should marvel at God's workmanship, how he made sinners into new creatures in Jesus Christ.

Jonathan Edwards wrote that the "spiritual life which is reached in the work of conversion, is a far greater and more glorious effect than mere being and life."

When God created the universe he simply spoke it into existence by his Word. Redemption, however, was not so easy. God couldn't just speak and sinners be saved. God had to come down to earth and become a creature.

The Apostle John tells us in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

In order for God to redeem sinners, Christ had to take upon himself human flesh, live a perfect life according to the law of God, make an atonement on the cross for the sins of his people, and rise again from the dead on the third day.

You could say that redeeming sinners was harder for God to accomplish than the creating the cosmos. The wonder of redemption! Until you are born again, you will never know what it is to be God's workmanship.

Therefore, It is the work of redemption that Paul has in view here in Ephesians 2:10, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" The title of my message is, **Christ's Masterpiece: Redeemed Sinners.** There are three points I would like to consider.

1. First, let us look at the Work of the Master's hands.

"For we are his workmanship"

The word **for** renders the reason for the statement in the previous two verses. The fact that we are His workmanship serves to prove that salvation is not of works. *8For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

We are **His** workmanship. This pronoun is emphasized in the Greek sentence = "*His for we are workmanship*" is the literal word order. The point is that we are not our own masterpiece. We are a masterpiece only because we are **His** masterpiece totally unrelated to any effort or merit of our own.

God's most stupendous creation is spiritually dead men made alive in Jesus Christ! Created in God's image, yet born in sin, believers are re-created in the image of His Son.

Dear believer, don't ever forget that you are the subject of Christ's two creations, the natural and spiritual birth, and as the result of His second creation we are His ultimate workmanship, His masterwork!

1 Cor. 1:31 says, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

We have nothing to boast other than Jesus Christ our Lord. We must be humble when God blessed us and should not forget that we are saved by God's grace alone. Isaac Watts wrote, "Was it for crimes that I have done he groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree!"

What have you done to save yourself? What have I done to save myself? We did not do anything. We only complained and hated others and followed our sinful desires to please our flesh. But God, while we were sinners, demonstrated his love for us by giving His son Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for our sins.

Children of God are God's workmanship "created" ...not a workmanship in progress...but a workmanship that is created by God through faith in Jesus Christ. This workmanship is a complete work that creates something new in Christ.

Now if we consider man as not completed, unfinished, half made, like what we read about in Hosea 7:8, "Ephraim is a cake not turned"-then we shall be able to understand the true condition of being complete in Christ and being God's workmanship.

The believer is thoroughly and absolutely God's workmanship. "If any man be in Christ he is a *new creature*."

We are God's husbandry (farm) ye are God's building." 1 Cor. 3:9. Surely man cannot *recreate* himself any more than he could create himself when he was born.

Spiritual birth is the point of Ephesians 2:10. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, God creates him in CHRIST. Apostle Paul makes it clear we are not saved by works that we do, we are saved by grace through faith alone and faith is the gift of God and the work of God. So we are altogether from start to finish as Christians. We are His created work, His wonderful new spiritual creation. The Holy Spirit is transforming us into the image of Christ.

We are made by God, created by Him. However, we are not created simply to be in display. Unlike paintings that adorn museums, we are designed for action. God's plan for our lives extends beyond salvation to sanctification, beyond standing in grace to walking in good works.

2. Let us look secondly at the Works of the Master's people.

“...*created in Christ Jesus unto good works...*”

How do works relate to regeneration by grace through faith?

A commentator writes, "Works are to salvation, what thunder is to lightning, an inevitable result. Just as thunder does not generate lightning, our good deeds will not generate salvation. But on the other hand, just as you can't have lightning without the following thunderclap, you can't experience the transformation of salvation without a change in your attitudes and behaviors. And those changes are a gradual process called sanctification, that can be likened to an endurance race.”

The word for *created* points to saved sinners as new creations in Christ, having formerly been dead in trespasses and sins (Ep 2:1-note) and by His Spirit now called into an existence of eternal life (today, now)! The result is that believers are no longer their own (1Co 6:19-note, 1Co 6:20-note) but now are doubly His, created first in His image (Ge 1:26, 27), and then recreated based on His work of redemption.

Hallelujah! Let us live out this truth before a dying world!

Unto good works is a reference to a holy life. The primary object of Christ saving sinners was not to bring us to heaven. It was that we should be holy. Paul held perhaps more firmly than any other man to the position, that men are saved by the mere grace of God, and by a Divine agency on the soul; but it is certain that no man ever held more firmly that men must lead holy lives, or they could have no evidence that they were the children of God.

Paul again emphasizes the believer's **new creation** in Christ exhorting his readers to... “put on the new man, which after God is *created* in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:24).

In a parallel passage in Colossians Paul reminded the saints that they... “have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that **created** him.” (Colossians 3:10).

Martin Luther said, “It’s not against works that we contend, it’s against trust in works that we contend.”

John Calvin had a similar saying, “It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.”

It is not only by words that we give testimony to the greatness of God, but also by our works. Our good works in fact pave the way for witness with good words.

If our walk contradicts our words, we lose our testimony. Our “walk” and our “talk” must agree. Good works and good words must come from the same yielded heart.

Too many believers today emphasize guarding the truth, but downplay living the truth. One of the best ways to guard the truth is to put it into practice. It is good to be defenders of the faith, but we must not forget to be demonstrators of the faith by letting the world see our **good works!**

An unknown author wrote:

You are writing a Gospel,
A chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do
And the words that you say.
Men read what you write,
Whether faithful or true:
Just what is the Gospel
According to you?

Evangelist **D. L. Moody** often said, “Every Bible should be bound in shoe-leather.”

We’ve considered the Work of the Master’s hands, and the works of the Master’s people.

3. This leads to consider thirdly and finally the Way of the Master’s Plan.

“...which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Before He created us in Christ by our conversion, God had predestined that we walk in these good works and made them ready for us in His purpose and decree. This is the unseen source from which they spring, and this is the final explanation.

The only two times this verb *ordained* is used in the NT, it is used of God's foreordaining for good, referring to glory and to good works.

In the only other use Paul explains that... “he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had *afore prepared* unto glory.” (Romans 9:23).

Here in Romans it is expressly affirmed that God himself had prepared His people for glory.

In regard to the wicked, it is simply affirmed that they were fitted for destruction, without affirming anything of the agency by which it was done. It is God who prepares his people for glory, and commences, and continues the work of their redemption.

Albert Barnes writes, “No man could complain of a course of dealings designed to make men better; and as this is the sole design of the electing love of God, his dealings with this class of men are easily vindicated. No Christian can complain that God has chosen him, renewed him, and made him pure and happy.”

Furthermore, God’s ordaining purposes are seen in the life of prophets and preachers. We read that Jeremiah’s good works were assigned before his birth, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5).

Paul records God preparing beforehand writing that...
“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” (Galatians 1:15-16).

The true way to look at our life is to regard it as the exercising-ground which God has prepared for us in Christ. He cuts the channels that the stream may flow. That is the way to look at tasks, at difficulties.

Alexander Maclaren writes, “Difficulty is the parent of power, and God arranges our circumstances in order that, by wrestling with obstacles, we may gain His amazing grace and in order that in sorrows and in joys, in the rough places and the smooth, we may find occasions for the exercise of the goodness which is lodged potentially in us, when He creates us in Christ Jesus. So be sure that the path and the power will always correspond. God does not lead us on roads that are too steep for our weakness, and too long for our strength. What He bids us do He fits us for; what He fits us for He thereby bids us do.

And so, brethren, take heed that you are fulfilling the purpose for which you receive this new life. And let us all remember the order in which being and doing come. We must have Christ for us first, our sacrifice and our means of receiving that new life, and then, Christ in us, the soul of our souls, the Life of our lives, the source of all our goodness.”

The way of the Master’s plan is explained by the Apostle Paul, *God hath before ordained that we should walk in good works.*”

In closing, we learn from Ephesians 2:10 that Christ’s masterpiece is Redeemed Sinners. We have considered the work of the Master’s hands, the works of the Master’s people, and the will of the Master’s plan. Are you Christ’s masterpiece? Have you been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb of God? May the Lord write His word on our hearts. Let us pray!