

Never Forget – Eph 2:1-10 (Part 5)

Let's turn in our Bibles to Eph 2:1-10 (Title Slide). We've been working our way through this amazing passage for 4 weeks, and this is the last.

[1] And you were *dead* in the trespasses and sins [2] in 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—[3] among 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.

[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were *dead* in our trespasses, made us *alive* together with Christ—by *grace* you have been *saved*—[6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

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

- For those who are saved, those *in Christ*, those 10 verses are our *story*. And he writes it so we don't forget it. That's the point. Never forget.
Otherwise, you'll end up exalting *yourself* and diminishing God.
You'll end up low on gratitude and high on pride. (Review)

Never forget that apart from Chris we were dead, sinful, doomed, and still are.
**Apart from Christ we were dead (v1a). Apart from Christ we were sinful (v1b-3a).
Apart from Christ we were doomed (v3b). Apart from Christ you still are.**
But *in* Christ, God gave us life, God saved us, and God exalted us.
**In Christ, God gave us life (v4-5a). In Christ, God saved us (5b).
In Christ, God exalted us (v6-7)**

And from v8-9, never forget that it's all a gift. By grace, through faith, apart from works.
Our salvation is a gift (v8-9)

- **By grace. Through faith. Apart from works. So no one can boast.**

- Which brings us to v10 and two *more* thoughts we ought never forget. The first is this:
God made us who we are (v10a)
We are his workmanship it says in v10.
Which means, just like there's no such thing as a self-made athlete or self-made genius; there's no such thing as a self-made person. A self-made creation.
We are *God*-made. *God's* handiwork.

And not just physically, but spiritually. In fact, that's the focus here. God made us who we are *spiritually*. *We are . . . created in Christ Jesus*.
So Paul is speaking of our *spiritual* formation.

- But before we go there, let's make sure we understand the flow of thought. Otherwise this verse doesn't make much sense in the context of the passage.

After saying there's no room for boasting at the end of v9, because we're saved by grace;

Paul starts v10 with *for*. *For we are his workmanship*.

The word *for*, indicating that what follows, is the reason or basis for what he just said. Namely, that there's no room for boasting.

(A) Because *God* made us alive and saved us, v4-9; and

(B) We are his workmanship; v10. That's the flow of thought.

There's no room for boasting because we've been given new life as a *gift*, and we've been *shaped* to live it.

And the first aspect of that shaping, is that . . .

- **We are his workmanship**

Crafted according to his artistry and design. Like ice sculptors carve amazing figures out of frozen blocks. Or stone cutters carve various monuments.

It's workmanship. And so are we.

- When Becky and I visited **Mount Rushmore** a few years ago, I was *amazed* by the workmanship. Each face is 60 feet high, carved in solid granite . . .
And was completed over 14 years. The painstaking work of a sculptor named **Gutzon Borglum**, and 400 others with him.
Every day, they climbed the mountain, hung from ropes, and rendered near perfect likenesses of Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln.
Unbelievable workmanship.

And yet it *pales* in comparison to the workmanship of *God*. To make *us*. Living, breathing *people*.*****
And not just a few, but close to 10 *billion* so far. Each and every one unique.

And for those who put their *faith* in him, he gives them even more life. New life. Eternal life. Adopting us into his family as children. Commissioning us as disciples.
Appointing us ambassadors. And giving us certain gifts and giftedness to fulfill our *purpose*.

Talk about workmanship. We're it. And he did it. Molding and shaping us to *receive* his gift, and live it. *Live* the life he's given us. What a blessing. Never forget.

And never forget that he made us new.

- **We are new creations**

Creations, because we are *created*. That's what it says – we are *created* in Christ Jesus.
Formed, fashioned, and brought into existence *spiritually* . . .
Just like we're brought into existence physically.
Created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:24)

And by definition, we're new. If something is made out of nothing, created, it's new. Something Paul says explicitly in **2 Cor 5:17**. *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
When God saves us, he does a *new* thing. A *new* work.

Including the *process* by which he creates us. By uniting us with Jesus.*****
We are *created in Christ Jesus* it says. In union with him.

He doesn't just *speak* us into existence, like he did the universe, he unites us with Jesus, spirit to spirit. So we're not only new creations, we're created by a new process.

If that doesn't change the way you think about yourself, I don't know what will.
We are new creations, via a new work. What a privilege. What an identity.
Never forget.

And never forget that it's an *ongoing* process.

- **We are works in progress**

It's not found in *this* verse, but it is elsewhere. And I don't want you to miss it.
It's not as though God saves us and moves on, leaving us to fend for ourselves.
But that he *completes* his work. He finishes what he starts.
Which makes us a work in progress

Phil 1:6 – *I am sure of this* [Paul said], *that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ* [the day of his return].
And **1 Thess 5:24** says – *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

God *will* finish what he started. In us as a *church*, and in us as individuals. Both/and.
Implying, that we are works in progress.

➤ Progress first of all, in **sanctification**. We are works in progress when it comes to our sanctification. Sanctification meaning, the work of God and us together . . .
That sets us increasingly free from sin, and makes us more like Christ.
We are works in progress in that respect.

Second, we are works of progress in **perseverance**.
The effort we make to *keep* the faith, in the strength that God provides.
By God's power Peter says, *we are being guarded through faith* [preserved through our perseverance, our belief], *for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
We are works of progress in perseverance. (1 Pet 1:5)

And last, we are works of progress in **discipleship**.
The lifelong process by which a child of God grows and matures in Christ.
We are to grow up in every way the Bible says (Eph 4:15), *into him who is the head.*
Every aspect of our lives should conform more and more to the Lordship of Christ.

Which once again, means we are a work in progress. A work God will finish, because he's faithful. Just like Gutzon Borglum's *son* finished Mount Rushmore.
God made us, and God will complete us. By grace, through faith. Never forget.

That's the first thought we find in v10. The second is this. Never forget that . . .
God saved us to serve (v10)

God made us who we are, and God saved us to serve.
We are created in Christ Jesus, v10, *for good works*. God saved us and shaped us, to do the things he *wants* us to do, in the way he wants us to *do* them.
Which makes us servants. Because that's what servants do – they do good works.

But we're not just any old servant. Paul says later on, in chapter 6, that we are *bondservants*. People who are *compelled* to serve. (Eph 6:6)

Not because we're coerced, like slaves, but because we *want* to, like free men.
We *want* to help. We *want* to bless. We *want* to do the work of ministry.
So much so, we have to. We're compelled.

That's especially true as bondservants of *Christ*.
We're not just any old *servant*, and we're not just any old *bondservant*.
We're bondservants of *Christ* it says. Saved to serve on *his* behalf. Saved to be *his* hands and feet. Saved to glorify *him*, by being a good steward.
A good steward of the time, talent, and treasure he's given us.

➤ Is that you? Are you compelled to not only *follow* Jesus, but *serve* him? Serve his people, the church? Serve the least of these? Serve your neighbor?
I hope so. Because we weren't saved to sit. We weren't saved to coast. We weren't saved to let somebody *else* do all the work.
God saved us to serve. All of us.

First of all . . .

- **By doing good works**

God saved us to serve, by doing good works. Things that bless others, and glorify God.
That's a *good* work. Something that makes God *look* good, and others *feel* good. Or be good. Something that *improves* a situation, instead of detracts from it.
Have you ever thought of good works that way? Something that improves a situation?

➤ There's a saying in *volleyball*, that you should always try to "better the ball."
"Better the ball." When our girls were playing, we use to say it fairly often.
"Did you better the ball? You need to better the ball."
Meaning, you need to improve on the pass or set that comes your way. (Ball)

In volleyball, you get three contacts with the ball before it has to go back over the net.
So when the ball is served, the first player on the receiving team endeavors to *pass* the ball. That's the first contact.
Then, the setter, to whom it was passed, sets it to one of the hitters near the net. That's the second contact. Then, the hitter swings as hard as they can, to hit it over the net.

But it doesn't always work that way.
Sometimes the pass isn't very good, and the setter has to "better the ball." As in compensate for the poor pass, and make the set better.
Or sometimes the set isn't very good, and the *hitter* has to better the ball.

Which is *exactly* what we ought to be doing in *life*. God saved us to "better the ball."
To disciple *our* kids, better than *we* were disciplined.
To love our neighbors more *tomorrow* than we do today.
To make someone's day better than *yesterday*.
God saved us to serve, by doing good works that "better the ball." (Ball)

➤ And one of the amazing things about it, is that all the works we have the opportunity to do, have been prepared for us beforehand.
For we are his workmanship [v10], *created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand.*

When I was in college, I worked on a framing crew one summer that built houses.
And the builder would always be at the job site before us, preparing things ahead of time. Making sure materials were delivered, equipment was working . . .
Permits were pulled, supplies available, you name it.
He prepared the work beforehand, so we could get at it and stay at it.

So too God. Having made the worksite, the world, he's gone before us and given us a checklist, a work order.
For you, that might mean serving others in our church. In fact, it does. *Everyone* should serve in ministry. *Everyone* should do good to the family of God. Gal 6:10.

Or maybe he's prepared the work of *missions* for you. To spread the Word in a low-reached or unreached people group somewhere in the world.
Or perhaps it's a vocation right here that he's prepared for you; in your workplace.
Where he wants you to be a godly influence by serving your co-workers.

Whatever the case, we're saved to serve by doing good works. Works as bondservants, who better the ball, and fulfill the ministry God has prepared for them.

And last, God saved us to serve . . .

- **As a way of life**

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

That we should conduct our lives accordingly. That's what "walk in them" means.

Do good works as a way of life. As a matter of course.

It's one of the reasons he saved us.

➤ Now, at this point, with all this talk of doing good works, you might be thinking,
"Okay, but what about grace? I thought we were saved by grace *apart* from works."
"Now you're telling me we *should* work." And you're right. On all fronts.

Here's the difference. We're not saved *by* works, we're saved *for* works. V8.

[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing

[this saving]; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

[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 not saved *by* works, but *for* works.

Which means there's no contradiction between the grace that saves us, and the works prepared for us. The works we're saved to *do*.

Because grace is not opposed to effort, just earning. Thank you, Dallas Willard.

The *grace* by which God saves us, does not exclude the *work* God for which God saves us. As long as that work is intended to glorify him and not get to him . . .

It's the life he wants us to live.

➤ So *whatever* you do, make sure your motives are right, and serve. Work. Help.
No matter *how* old you are. *How* busy. How outside your comfort zone it is.
Find something you're able to do, and do it. As a way of life.
Because God *saved* us to serve, and God *made* you to serve. Never forget.

Prayer – Lord, forgive us for thinking we're self-made and self-sufficient. And forgive us for *living* for ourselves. Spur us on to greater love and good deeds, and thank you for the work you did on the cross to make it all possible. In Jesus' name, amen.