

EPHESIANS
BEING A MASTERPIECE

Saturday, September 12
Reading: Ephesians 2:8-10

Ephesians 2:8 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—*
9 *not by works, so that no one can boast. 10* *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which*
God prepared in advance for us to do.

Charles Burnham “Bud” Wilkinson served as the head football coach at the University of Oklahoma from 1947 to 1963, compiling a record of 145–29–4. In one newspaper quote, he described a football game as “40,000 people in the stands who need exercise watching 22 boys down on the field who need rest.”¹ Sadly, this is an apt description of many churches today.

Ephesians 2:8-9 are among the most important verses in the New Testament. They fly in the face of every other religion. Those religions teach that you must earn your way to salvation through good deeds. But Paul tells us in these verses that salvation is not by works. It is the free gift of God's grace.

Having established that we are not saved BY good works, Paul reminds us that we were saved FOR good works. God created us to serve Him and has prepared good works for each of us to do. Christians who do not serve the Lord with their lives are failing to do what God created them to do.

LESSON ONE: “Not From Yourselves.” When I teach children, I often hold out a dollar bill and ask them what they think they have to do to get the dollar. I get all kinds of answers from “be good” to “go to church and read my Bible.” It usually takes some prodding to get the right answer. All they have to do is come up and take it! The world doesn't think in terms of a “free gift.” They believe you must DO something to earn it! The problem with a works-based salvation is that you never know if you have done enough! Followers of every other religion can only hope that they have done enough to earn their way. We who have faith in Christ have the wonderful assurance that God has done it all. We don't – we can't – earn salvation. It is God's free gift! Have you been trying to earn favor with God by doing good works? Thank the Lord today that He has already provided everything we need for salvation. All we have to do is by faith take it!

LESSON TWO: “We are God's Handiwork.” The Greek word the Apostle Paul uses here is *poiēma* which comes from a word meaning ‘to create.’ It was used of an artist creating a masterpiece or a poet writing a poem. We are God's masterpiece created to do good works. Some Christians like to say, “I'm not saved by what I do, so it's OK if I don't do anything after I'm saved.” Ephesians 2:10 says just the opposite. Reformer John Calvin once said, “It is faith alone that justifies; but faith that justifies can never be alone.”² The presence of good works in our lives is the proof that we are truly saved. God has specially prepared these works for us to do. He has “appointments” for us if we are open to His leading and obedient to His call. How many times do we miss opportunities God has placed before us simply because we are not looking for them? Keep your eyes open for God's appointments to do good today.

¹ http://www.barrypopik.com/index.php/new_york_city/entry/football_is_22_people_on_the_field

² <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/845462>