
Living Faithfully in the Riches of God's Grace

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ... (Ephesians 3:8)

“The Goal of Grace”

Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as 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 so that we would walk in them.

What comes into your mind when you hear the word “grace”? Some might think of something said before a meal. Some might think of a characteristic of God whereby He gives good things to those who do not deserve it. Some might simply ponder for a moment and say, “What is grace?” Grace, even though we know it in part, is also a deep mystery. Being an attribute of God, grace is also infinite, unending, and unlimited – something far more marvelous than we can fully comprehend. Ephesians 1-2 has much to say about grace and yet the more we study it, the more we are to come to realize the utter profundity of grace. We ought to come to the conclusion of the hymn-writer:

*Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;
Wonderful grace, all sufficient for me, for even me.
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
Greater far than all my sin and shame,
O magnify the precious Name of Jesus.
Praise His Name!*

Consider with me just a few reminders of what we have discovered about God's grace here in Ephesians 1-2:

- By grace alone God has given us every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3)
- By grace alone we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)
- By grace alone it is determined that some future date we will be like Jesus, and with Jesus (Ephesians 1:5, 11-12)
- By grace alone we have been adopted into God's family (Ephesians 1:5)
- By grace alone we have been accepted and received as belonging to God in Jesus (Ephesians 1:6)
- By grace alone we have been forgiven our sins by the shed blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7)
- By grace and grace alone, God reached down to us even while we were dead in our sins and deserved only God's wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3)
- By grace alone, God determined to love us who were unlovable by any other standard (Ephesians 2:4)
- By grace alone we who were dead in our sins were made alive in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:5)
- By grace alone our future with God is assured (Ephesians 2:6-7)
- By grace alone our salvation is secure (Ephesians 2:8-9)

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There is nothing that we have; there is nothing that we are that is not ours apart from the grace of God. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:7, ***“What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”***

Everything we possess as believers is ours through and by the grace of God. We earned nothing we have received. We deserved nothing we have received. We purchased nothing we have received. Everything we have in Christ Jesus has been given to us by the free grace of the almighty, benevolent God of the universe.

God has given us the gifts of His grace without asking from us for a single thing in return. He does not expect us repay Him for grace. While God does not expect any return payments from us; He does expect a return on His investment. The work of the grace of God in us always results in real, tangible and increasing changes in our lives. These changes allow us to live for God. In fact, grace, when understood as an ongoing process in our lives, is simply *God's power enabling us to live for Him; to please Him in every respect, in every way possible*. Our living for Him, according to His will, brings glory to His name, and that is what His grace does in us!

When grace comes to a lost, dead sinner, that sinner is born again as a ***“new creature”*** in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old appetites and desires of the flesh are increasingly put off and put aside for the purpose of living a new way according to the way of Jesus. Again, let me be clear, when the grace of God is at work in us; that grace will always work its way out in our lives. The grace of God not only saves us; the grace of God changes us. And the faithful believer is one who is under constant change by the grace of God. When God is at work in a believer's life, that work reveals itself in our works; in our “walk” – the very way we live our lives.

Last week we noted from verses 8-9 that human works, human ingenuity, human creativity plays not one single part in our salvation from sin. If we can say that we are saved, it is not because of what we have done, for these verses indicate, we are saved by grace alone through faith in alone in Christ alone. But a question arises; how can we know that we are saved? What is the evidence that I have the hope of eternal life? The evidence that God's grace has worked, is working and will continue to work in us is what that grace produces, what God's grace reveals in our lives after we are saved. I believe it was Martin Luther who said, *“We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.”*

What he meant by this is that while our human works do not save us, we are yet saved to work to the glory of God. In James 2:18 we read, ***“But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works [impossible], and I will show you my faith by my works.”*** The works here are not what brings about the faith - but rather it is our faith that brings about the works. And this “faith” – according to Ephesians 2:8 - is not of ourselves but is the gift of God.

This brings us to Ephesians 2:10. In a nutshell, Ephesians 2:10 speaks of the grace of God at work in our lives. Before us is the explanation of what God does in and through those He saves. Before us is yet again, an expectation of grace – that those whom God saves; these will perform His “good works” – works which serve as evidence of God's grace at work in us. Here then is what I hope for you to take away from this verse: As a believer in Christ, I am to be a living example of God's grace at work. To do this, we will break verse 10 into two parts; the workmanship of God's grace; and, the walk in God's grace.

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I. The Workmanship of God's Grace (2:10a)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...

Our text begins with a statement of fact. This is what we are, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus..."* I would have you note with me the theology being presented to us as Paul reveals here four truths:

A. We are God's exclusive possession...

Very simply, Paul begins by saying, *"we are His..."* We are God's possession. We who were dead (v.1); deluded (v.2); disobedient (v. 2); depraved (v.3) and doomed (v.3); we who have believed have been made alive together with Christ (v.5); raised up with Christ (v. 6); seat in the heavenly places with Christ (v. 6); and saved by Christ (v.8); this makes us His. In the words of 1 Peter 2:9, *"But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."*

Ephesians chapter 1 tells us that God chose us, God predestine us, God adopted us, God redeemed us, God has forgiven us; and God has sealed us; secured us by His own Holy Spirit. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price; the blood of Christ. And in the words of 2 Corinthians 5:15, it is Christ who died, *"so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."*

When newlyweds wake up in the mornings shortly after their wedding, there is often a sense of, "I belong to her/him and she/he belongs to me." There is a sense of delightful duty that I get to serve this one whom God as joined me to. Beloved, if you are in Christ, then you have been joined to Christ; you belong to Him and you get to live for Him; you get to change your name, your attitude and your actions to reflect Him. We are God's exclusive possession. But there is more...

B. We are God's executive project...

Moving on further in verse 10 we read, *"we are His workmanship..."* We are God's executive project. We are His work project. The word *"workmanship"* is a term that speaks of *"that which is made, a great work, a work of art"*. The Greek word is *poemia* from which we get our *"poem"*. Yet it speaks of a great work, *"piece of literary craftsmanship."* It speaks of a person's *"magnum opus,"* his greatest literary achievement. In short, the word speaks of being God's *"masterpiece."*

We may not always feel like it, but we are reminded here about the theology of the redeemed. Those who are redeemed are God's masterpieces. The redemption of sinners and the conforming them to the image of His Son is God's greatest achievement. If we are the redeemed, we are the showcase of the Master Potter. We are the greatest living letter ever written by the hand of the Master Author. We are the crowning work of the Master painter who is carefully bushing the paint of our lives with each of His strokes. By God's grace, He is taking the empty and tattered canvases of our lives and turning them into divine tapestries. By God's grace God takes formless, lifeless lumps of clay and with His loving, powerful and creative hands, He forms us into something new for His glory. God has fashioned us into what brings Him glory. We are His executive, chief project. We are His workmanship and He is still working on this. Remember this when you wake up! Remember this when things seem to be going all wrong.

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Remember this when things are going well. For when you look back at the raw materials God began with from verses 1-3, dead, deluded, disobedient, depraved and doomed sinners, isn't it a wonder that He is turning us into such masterpieces?

And what is a masterpiece? It is a work of art that people look at and through which they gain inspiration and insight from the one who created it. Beloved, if you are saved, then you are God's monument of grace. Every day you have the opportunity to advertise the greatness of your God. Your life becomes a living billboard through which God proclaims to this world that He loves sinners; that His Son died to rescue the lost; that there is life-changing power in the grace of God; that the Gospel is real, and that Jesus Christ makes a substantial difference in every life He redeems through the power of His blood. If you are saved, you are God's masterpiece and masterpieces are made to display! You are God's work project so that the world might see the power of what God can do through one who believes.

Our songs of praise, our proclamations of God's goodness, our conversations concerning the nature, the character and the working of God was never intended to be veiled within the confines of a church's meeting place or to be limited to an hour here or there throughout the week. We have been saved to be a constant testimony to the world that He saves sinners and has saved a sinner like yourself. Will you allow the world see what God has done in you, what God has with you and what God has done for you! Michelangelo was once asked what he was doing as he chipped away at a shapeless rock. He replied, ***'I'm liberating an angel from this stone.'*** Beloved, this is what God is doing in us, liberating us from the stone so as to display His mighty power and grace. We are God's executive project. But there is more...

C. We are God's expression of power...

For we are His workmanship, created...

The very God who spoke all things into existence by the mere power of His word, this same powerfully creative God has ***"created"*** us; and if we are in Christ, we have actually been re-created. For again, we who were dead, deluded, disobedient, depraved and doomed have been made alive and now ***"created"*** – demonstrating God's power. The word ***"created"*** means, ***"to form or to shape"*** and speaks of ***"making something out of nothing; of making something new."*** Here is more theology for you; that a believer in Christ is actually someone newly created. For at one moment a person is dead in his trespasses and sins and the next he is alive, reanimated in Jesus. At that moment, the sinner instantaneously becomes a child of God and is forever changed by the power of God.

We must never forget that when God saves a sinner, it is truly the greatest of all miracles and thus becomes the greatest demonstration of God's creative power. We have already read 2 Corinthians 5:17 which confirms again what I say to you now, namely that, ***"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature..."*** That means that the sinner has become something that had never existed before; a redeemed, a transformed, a regenerated believer.

It is indeed true what we read in Psalm 19:1, that, ***"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."*** To be sure, to look to the heavens, to see the sun, the moon and the stars is to see a testimony of the power of God. And yet, as I look upon you, many of whom I know to be believers, the redeemed, you are an even greater testimony of the power of God. The redeemed are living trophies of the grace of the God who

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saves. If you are saved, then nothing else in all the universe is a greater expression of His power. For the redeemed are those whose behavior, whose conversation, whose actions, whose attitudes and whose lives are all very different from before because the power of the grace of God that has transformed them into bold, unrelenting witnesses of God's saving power.

The French general and dictator Napoleon once found himself sailing across the Mediterranean one clear, crisp and starry night. While strolling on deck, he overheard a group of officers who were mocking the concept and all-powerful Being and who declared, "**God of creation? what a joke!**" Napoleon stopped and stared at them for a moment. Then, with a sweeping motion of his hands across the stars of the sky, he said, "**Gentlemen, you must get rid of those first!**"

For those who would like to mock the concept of a God who saves sinners and a God who has the power to change lives, they must first rid the world of those He has changed. Every church pew must be emptied and the very streets and mansions of glory must be destroyed. The very testimony of transforming, saving grace just be silenced and every song of praise to God must be squealed. If the unsaved wish to rid the world of God, they must first eliminate from the world every redeemed soul. As I look upon you all, I see living, verifiable testimonies of the live-changing power of God. You are God's workmanship, His project, expressions of His power. You are to me, tangible evidence that God makes something new when He saves a soul! We are God's possession, God's project, and expressions of God's power; but there is more...

D. We are in God's extravagant position....

Everything we have considered is true and is available to all who are in right position, in right standing with God. As we have noted throughout this study, the position in which every person must be found if he or she is to truly be a believer is "**in Christ Jesus.**" To be found "in Christ" is to be in right position with God. To be "in Christ" is the very ground upon which our salvation rests. If you are a new creature "in Christ" it is because Christ has done everything necessary for you to become that new creature. How do we know if we are "in Christ Jesus"? Let me ask you, do you believe the Gospel; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners by dying for their sins on the cross and that by believing their lives become His and He changes them?

To say that you are "**in Christ Jesus**" is just another way of saying that you are saved. And if this is not your position, then you lost and headed toward eternal damnation! How can I say that? I can say that because Scripture said it. In 1 John 5:12 we read, "**He who has the Son has the life [he is in Christ]; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.**" How can you gain this position of being "in Christ Jesus"? You must take God at His word, that you are a sinner, that you are dead in your trespasses and sins, doomed for the wrath of God; yet "in Christ", by faith, you are made alive together with Christ, saved by Christ; changed by Christ. This is what it means to be "born again" – something that happens as you come to Jesus by faith and trust Him and Him alone for your soul's salvation. Have you done this? Have you, by faith; have you, by taking God at His word; have you, by calling upon the name of the Lord, recognized the grace of God to save you?

The theology of being God's workmanship then is that we are God's possession, we are God's project, expressions of His saving power who places us in the position of being "in Christ."

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But let us move from theology to biology; from what we believe to what we do. This brings us to our second key point...

II. The Walk by God's Grace (2:10b)

...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them

There is a subtle yet real shift in the middle of this verse from what God has done for us (His workmanship) to what we are to expect to see in our lives as a result of His working (our walk). This speaks of our "walk" our manner of life that flows out of the truth of being God's workmanship. Let us consider two aspects of what this means:

A. A premeditated product

created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand...

Here we are given the reason why God created us in Christ Jesus. It was **"for good works."** Let me be clear...the believer's life must evidence "good works." And let me be clearer... no believer is saved by his good works; rather good works are simply the premeditated, the preplanned product of what it means to be saved. In other words, if you are genuinely saved, then genuine "good works" will be the outcome. The word **"good"** means, **"that which excels above others; that which is most useful; or that which is of the best quality."** The word **"works"** speaks of **"employment; or that with which one occupies himself."** We might say it this way of a person or how a person spends his or her time.

The one who is saved by grace will give ample evidence that his or her life is occupied with things that reflect well on the person and character of Jesus Christ. By using the phrase "good works"; Paul is setting up a contrast between how you used to live and think before being saved by grace; to how you now live and think having been saved by grace. Both you and others should see such a distinction. Do you?

The bible is clear that whatever is on the inside of a person will always work its way to the outside (Matthew 12:33-37). When God saves a soul and changes a life, He moves into that life; His Spirit takes up residence (John 14:17). If God is in your life, the you will know it, you will see Him changing your heart; changing your attitude, changing your actions. And if you do not see God doing this, then you know you have a problem. In Matthew 7:16-20 Jesus said, **"16 You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits."** What are your fruits?

Beloved, there are many who profess to be saved. They can tell you that they prayed a prayer; walked an aisle. They will tell you they go to church; try to live a good life; try to be kind to people. That is all well and good except for one thing; it totally misses and forgets Jesus. And if you miss Jesus, your life never really changes and you will never "walk" in the "good works" God intended for you. The Word of God says that God desires every one of His children to bear fruit that bring Him glory. In Colossians 1:9-10 we read, **"9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of**

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God... Beloved, this is why God saved you, so that you will do the “good works” of God. This is the return God expects on His investment on grace. This is the product God expects having implanted His Word in you. If you truly have repented of your sins; if you have truly believed upon Christ, the “**good works**” of God will mark your life. Not some vain efforts of the work of the flesh, but rather the works of a new creature, one who walks by faith, taking God as His word.

But I said this is a premeditated product. We see this as Paul wrote, *created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand...* Ephesians 2:8-10 reminds us of two things; one, that salvation was no accident but was planned out by God; and two, that not only was it God's plan to save us by His grace, but then to also have us live for Him by His grace. Before any one of us believed on Jesus Christ, God the Father had already prepared, put together, premeditated the very path we would walk on this earth. Is this a Biblical thought? Of course. Ephesians 1 has already laid out God's choosing of us; His predetermining that we would be what? Holy and blameless and to be adopted as His children. But consider as well what was said of the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 1:5 the LORD God said to Jeremiah, **“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”** John the Baptist's life was predetermined; Judas Iscariot and others. And the same is true of us. The Lord has planned our path through this world. In Psalm 37:23 we read, **“The steps of a man are established by the Lord, And He delights in his way.”** We do indeed make our plans and do indeed set ourselves to do the things we want to do, but in the end, it is God's will that determines the final outcome. In Proverbs 16:9 we read, **“The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.”**

Beloved, God's will for His people is that they would engage themselves in “good work” – those very things that point to Him; that bring glory to Him. And each of these good works have been preplanned; premeditated for us. What is to be our response to such a truth? We must respond with sweet surrender; with delightful duty knowing that God, who knows best; who plans best; who promises our good; has laid out for us those things that bring Him glory and our good. This is why this Book is to govern our lives for it is God's will for us! This is our good works and saving faith will always – always – always seek to manifest itself in such good works as planned by God. How are you doing? For according to James 1:17-26, if such good works are missing from your life; if you are not preoccupied with those things that bring God glory, then saving faith is also missing from your life. God premeditated the product of good works in the believer's life. Not just that you would believe, but that you would believe unto the performing of His good works. But there is one more thing...

B. A positive purpose

...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them

Reading the rest of verse 10 makes one thing explicitly clear; those who have been saved by grace; those who possess the gift of faith – upon these there is just one expectation; one thing we need to ask ourselves if such is true of ourselves. That expectation is **“that we would walk in them”** – we would walk in “good works.”

The word **“walk”** speaks not of the manner or gate of a person's stride, but rather speaks of one's behavior; the way on regulates his or her life. The verb tense of “walk” also makes it clear that this is to be a **“once for all decision to have one's life conducted in good works.”** This is not

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some fickle decision that one floats in and out of. The one who is saved by grace does "walk" with God for six months and then for himself for the next ten years. That is not a biblical walk by the grace of God. The expectation here speaks of a person who has determined to live by a fixed standard of living that is committed to act according to the way God has expressed in His Word. And what is that standard? Let me give to you just a few things to consider as you seek to practically live out Ephesians 2:10. God, by the power of His grace, defines "good works" and walking in "good works" as:

- Walking in love [seeking the highest good for others] (John 13:35; Romans 5:5)
John 13:35 – "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
- Walking in obedience to God and His Word [living by God's Word] (John 3:36; 14:15, 21)
John 3:36 – "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
- Walking in faithfulness [can be counted on to follow God] (1 Corinthians 4:2)
1 Corinthians 4:2 – "In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy [faithful]."
- Walking in holiness [striving to become more like Christ daily] (1 Peter 1:15-16)
1 Peter 1:15-16 – "15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

That is quite the list and it is not even complete. If we seek to live up to even this list on our own, we will surely fail. We need the grace of God and then we determine that we will strive after these things. Then we have the promise of God as found in Philippians 1:6 – ***"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."*** Beloved, if you are in Christ, then God is still working on you.

Consider with me something the great reformer, Martin Luther said concerning what is faith. He wrote, ***"Faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing; it is impossible for it not to do us good continually. It never asks whether good works are to be done, but has done them before there is time to ask the question, and it is always doing them."***

Saving faith always strives for to do; to work for things that please God. It is God who saves sinners from being dead, deluded, disobedient, depraved and doomed. He does not do so in order that such a person might now live however they like; rather...

- God brings us out of death so that we might live a new life through Christ.
- God brings us out of delusion that we might know the truth.
- God brings us out of disobedience so that we become obedient.
- God brings us out of our doom so that we might experience the delight of salvation.
- God brings us out of living for self, which leads to death, so that we might live for Him, which is life.

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Let me close by asking you a few questions:

1. **Do you know that you have been saved and are being changed by God's grace?** If you cannot answer that question, it is time to call upon the name of Jesus, asking Him to save you and change you.
2. **Can you say that your life is characterized by a profound change in attitude and in actions that increasingly bring glory to God?** If you can say yes, then praise God for His grace at work in you. If you cannot say yes, then call upon the name of Jesus and confess that your lack of evidence of God's grace means you are lost in sin and you need to be saved.
3. **Are you striving, by God's grace to do everything God has called you to do?** How is that for a loaded question? Beloved, every day we must surrender afresh to the will and purpose of God that we might walk not according to our ways, but according to God's ways.
4. **Have you given thanks to God for His works of grace in your life?** The first sure sign of an atheistic heart is not giving thanks to God (Romans 1:21). Every day, multiple times a day, give thanks to the God of grace who has enabled you to know Him, to serve Him, to live for Him.

Soli Deo Gloria

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