

Ephesians 2:8–10 | “Saved BY and FOR God”  
*Preached on May 4, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 2:8–10 today, as we will be looking at one of the most well-known passages in all of the Bible. *[pauseeee]*

“In one of his sermons, A.C. Dixon told of an incident that took place in Brooklyn, N.Y. *[pause]*

A detective who had been looking for a local citizen finally tracked him down in a drugstore. *[pause]*

As the man began to make his purchase, the officer laid his hand on the citizen's shoulder and said, ‘You're under arrest; come with me!’ *[pause]*

Stunned, the man demanded, ‘What did I do?’ *[pause]*

The detective calmly replied, ‘You know what you did. You escaped from the Albany penitentiary several years ago.

You went west, got married, and then came back here to live. We've been watching for you since you returned.’ *[pause]*

Quietly the man admitted, ‘That's true, but I was sure you'd never find me. Before you take me in, could we stop by my house so I can talk to my family?’ *[pause]*

The officer agreed. *[pause]*

When they got to his home, the man looked at his wife and asked, ‘Haven't I been a kind husband and a good father? Haven't I worked hard to make a living?’ *[pause]*

His wife answered, ‘Of course you have, but why are you asking me these questions?’

Her husband then proceeded to explain what had happened and that he was now under arrest. *[pause]*

He apparently had hoped that his record as an exemplary husband and father would impress the officer.

Even so, he was still an escaped criminal. *[pause]*

Though he was ‘right’ with his family, he was all wrong with the state of New York.”<sup>1</sup> *[pauseeee]*

There are many in our day who think like that man...

They think that all of the good things that they did in this life will make up for their sin against God.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/w/works\\_righteousness.htm](https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/w/works_righteousness.htm).

But Scripture is clear that our sin can't just be let go, or written over by our good deeds, no, those things will not save us from the wrath and judgment of God. *[pause]*

Instead, we need Christ, and His work on our behalf, and His righteousness.

And the passage before us helps us to see the basics of that salvation and how it works. *[pauseeee]*

Before we jump in, I want to give just a brief recap of where we are in Ephesians...

Paul has just been explaining what happened in the Ephesians' salvation, and ours, too. *[pause]*

We once were dead in our sins, following the world, the flesh, and the devil, and by nature children of wrath. *[pause]*

Pretty bleak picture, right? *[pause]*

But that's not the end of the story, but only half of it, for God has made us alive together with Christ.

That is, God took us from the worst situation of being dead and condemned to face wrath, and made us alive and no longer condemned. *[pause]*

So our salvation is God rescuing us out of the worst situation and placing us into the best situation there is, all through Jesus Christ.

And in the midst of recounting this miracle of grace, Paul can't help but explain it further so that it is ultra-clear to all. *[pauseeee]*

Just listen to what Paul says about our salvation. *[READ]*

*The first thing that we see in this well-known passage is that...*

# **I. We have been saved by God's grace, not by our works.**

What is salvation and how do you get it? *[pauseeee]*

Those questions are faced by every single person that exists, and the truth is there are many different thoughts about these things. *[pause]*

In Eastern religions like Buddhism, salvation is escaping the birth and rebirth cycle, and the way out is through "nirvana." *[pause]*

Others see salvation in the liberation of oppressed or marginalized groups, and the way to this salvation is social justice. *[pause]*

Some see salvation as simply some sort of personal transformation, healing from trauma, and self-actualization, and that's it. *[pause]*

Still others may see salvation as being able to go to Heaven, but they think that the way there is their good works...

They say, “My good outweighs my bad, so I must be good to go.” *[pauseeee]*

But are these the ideas that the Bible talks about when it talks of salvation and the way to be saved?

Certainly not. *[pause]*

So then what *does* the Bible say about salvation and the way to receive it?

Just listen to verse 8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” *[pauseeeee]*

There are some people out and about that you talk to and they will wonder, “Saved? What do I need to be saved from?”

They don’t understand the problem, so they do not understand the solution. *[pause]*

What would you say to them? What do they need to be saved from?

Well just consider the context of this verse. *[pause]*

Paul just described how we were dead in our sins, enslaved to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and were by nature children of wrath, but now we have been made alive. *[pauseeee]*

We once were dead, but now we are alive—we have been saved! *[pause]*

We once were enslaved by sin, but now we are free—we have been saved! *[pause]*

We once stood under the wrath of God, but now we stand no longer condemned—saved! *[pauseeee]*

So our salvation is not reaching some state of “nirvana,” it’s not reaching some personal goals, or bettering society—it’s being saved from the wrath of God for our sins. *[pauseeeee]*

That is our amazing salvation, but Paul here shows us specifically *how* we were saved—it was “by grace.” *[pause]*

To emphasize this grace, Paul goes on to say, “And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” *[pause]*

That’s pretty clear, isn’t it?

You have not been saved by your own doing, but by grace. *[pauseeee]*

Grace is undeserved kindness, so inherent to grace is that it is not merited. *[pause]*

If I give you a gift simply out of the kindness of my heart, and not because you did anything, that's grace.

So also, out of the gracious heart of God, God has given us the gift of salvation. *[pauseeee]*

Your salvation is not from you or because of you in any way—you must realize that...

It's not where God does 50% of the work, and you do the other 50%—no.

Nor is it even that God does 99%, and you do 1%—salvation is fully of and because of God. *[pauseeee]*

It is “not your own doing,” it is “not a result of works.” *[pauseeeee]*

You were dead in your sins, unable to make yourself alive, and God brought you life. *[pause]*

You were enslaved in your sins, unable to free yourself, and God rescued. *[pause]*

You were under the wrath of God, unable to pay the immense debt of your sin, and God delivered. *[pauseeee]*

Salvation is a work of God, not a work of man.

That's why Paul was so passionate about battling distortions of the gospel because they were marring that wonderful truth. *[pauseeee]*

Our natural tendency is to try to merit things.

We want to be able to say, “I did that.” *[pause]*

We want to do something, take a step back, and then pat ourselves on the back, so that we can feel good about ourselves and boast about what we did.

But the Gospel is antithetical to that mentality! *[pause]*

The Gospel says, “You cannot merit this, you cannot do it, you must simply receive it.”

And that humbles us because it makes us fully dependent people. *[pauseeee]*

We as Americans don't like that—we want to be those independent, self-sufficient people, who do everything for ourselves.

And that's why something that's lifted up highly in our culture is the “self-made man.” *[pause]*

We want people to say, “Wow, through their knowledge, work, and sheer willpower, they have overcome all of the obstacles and accomplished amazing things!”

But the Gospel says to us, “You are not saved that way.” *[pauseeeee]*

So what does the Gospel do to us?

It humbles us in our sinfulness and absolute need, so that we get to the point of saying like that great hymn says...

“Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling—naked, come to Thee for dress, helpless, look to Thee for grace—foul, I to the fountain fly, wash me, Savior, or I die.”<sup>2</sup>  
[pauseeeee]

Salvation is by grace, and therefore, you cannot earn it, work for it, or merit it—it’s a gift you simply receive.

That’s why Paul says that it’s by grace *through faith*. [pause]

Faith is simply a believing and receiving, so that faith is sort of like the channel through which you receive the gift.

It’s trusting in Jesus’ work, not ours. [pauseeee]

We must understand that faith is *not* a work, for even our faith is grace. [pauseeee]

Paul has just emphasized that salvation is not of our own doing, and not by works, so faith is not a work.

Faith is simply looking, believing, receiving. [pauseeeee]

I think of that story in Numbers 21, where the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents, and what was the way that the Lord made it, so that they could live? [pause]

They didn’t have to do a certain amount of good works. [pause]

They didn’t have to put in crazy amounts of effort to live. [pause]

God didn’t give a 5-step instructional manual that they had to accomplish first.

They simply had to look at the bronze serpent on the pole and they lived!<sup>3</sup> [pauseeee]

So also, what does Jesus say in John 3?...

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”<sup>4</sup> [pause]

We look and live!

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<sup>2</sup> “Rock of Ages” by Augustus Toplady, 1776.

<sup>3</sup> See Numbers 21:4–9.

<sup>4</sup> John 3:14–15.

That's what faith is, it's looking to Jesus and what He did, and simply trusting in what He did on your behalf on the cross. *[pauseeee]*

God gifts salvation to people, and faith is like the receiving of that gift, so that we can have it personally. *[pauseeeee]*

By mentioning that salvation is by grace *through faith*, Paul is showing us something vitally important...

Being saved is not automatic for everyone born in this world. *[pause]*

You are not physically born a Christian, nor does it come to you based on your parents or grandparents godliness. *[pause]*

You don't gain salvation by having a certain amount of knowledge about the Bible.

Those saved are *only* those who receive it through faith in Jesus Christ. *[pause]*

Therefore, if you don't believe in Christ, you are not saved. *[pauseeee]*

As we learned, you don't do this by your effort or by trying hard enough, but by grace.

So if you have never trusted in Jesus Christ to be saved, look and live today! *[pause]*

Look at what *He* has done for you, not what *you* have done.

Trust that His work was perfect, as He lived the perfect life for you, and died the death that you deserved, satisfying the wrath of God for your sin. *[pause]*

Trust in Him, and receive the gift of salvation today. *[pauseeeee]*

Now *why* did God set up salvation to be by grace through faith?

We are told here that it's "so that no one may boast." *[pauseeee]*

God has set up salvation in such a way that no human can boast in what they did, but only in what Christ did. *[pause]*

Paul says something similar in 1 Corinthians 1, where he talks about the cross, and how God chose something considered foolish in this world to shame the wise...

And then he mentions that God did this, "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."<sup>5</sup> *[pauseeeee]*

Salvation and human boasting do not mix, like oil and water. *[pause]*

We can only boast and glory in Jesus, for He did the work, not us! *[pauseeeee]*

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:29.

As you look back on your salvation is there any boasting at all, even just a hint of it? *[pause]*

Do you think, “Well look at how *easily* I grasped the truth”? *[pause]*

Do you contemplate, “Look at how *quickly* I responded”? *[pause]*

Do you think, “Look at how *much* faith that I had”? *[pause]*

Discard that boastful thinking into the eternal trash bin, and once again remember the nature of saving faith—it’s by grace!

You have absolutely no room to boast, for you didn’t save yourself, but God did! *[pauseee]*

You didn’t add anything to the equation, for the only thing that you added was your sinfulness that put you in need of being saved. *[pauseeee]*

God provided the way, Christ did the effort, the Spirit worked in your heart, and you simply received the gift by faith.

So rejoice in the grace of God, and lay yourself down in humble gratefulness once again. *[pauseeee]*

What a God, what a Lord, what a Savior! *[pauseeeee]*

In the *Daily Bread*, a person writes,<sup>6</sup> “I read about an instant cake mix that was a big flop. *[pause]*

The instructions said all you had to do was add water and bake.

[But] the company couldn’t understand why it didn’t sell—until their research discovered that the buying public felt uneasy about a mix that required only water. *[pause]*

Apparently people thought it was too easy.

So the company altered the formula and changed the directions to call for adding an egg to the mix in addition to the water. *[pause]*

The idea worked and sales jumped dramatically.” *[pauseeee]*

That’s often how people respond to the simple message of salvation—it sounds too easy and simple to be true. *[pause]*

They feel like they must add something to what God has already laid out.

But the Bible is clear—we are saved simply by grace through faith. *[pauseeeee]*

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<sup>6</sup> *Daily Bread*, June 2, 1992. [https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/w/works\\_righteousness.htm](https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/w/works_righteousness.htm).

*So far we have seen that we have been saved by God's grace, not by our works, but that's not all that we discover in this passage, for we also see that...*

## **II. We have been created by God for good works.**

When it comes to good works, people often go to one of two extremes. *[pause]*

One extreme is, of course, the “works-righteousness” idea. *[pause]*

These people believe that our good works are needed in order to be saved, but as we have just seen, that is clearly wrong...

No good works can save you, or else salvation wouldn't be a gift. *[pauseeee]*

So that's the one extreme, but the other extreme is likewise wrong. *[pause]*

Typically this extreme is a *reaction* to the works-righteousness teaching, but it swings the pendulum too far. *[pause]*

This extreme diminishes the importance of good works in the Christian's life...

It's almost like they have pushed away from good works too far, that they make it sound like good works are simply optional for a Christian. *[pause]*

Like, if you want to, that's great, but if not, it's all good, it's voluntary.

That's not the teaching of Scripture, either. *[pauseeee]*

So one extreme lifts up good works to the level of being necessary for salvation, but the other extreme pushes down good works to the level of being of little to no importance. *[pause]*

Both extremes must be rejected by us as unbiblical and dangerous. *[pauseeeee]*

Consider what our passage shows us about those two extremes...

Verses 8–9 just showed us that we must not put good works on the level of being needed for salvation, for salvation is not a result of works. *[pause]*

Those verses shatter works-righteousness to pieces, and show it to be a man-made invention. *[pause]*

Yet verse 10 refutes the idea that good works are not important at all, for it says...

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

To understand the place of good works in our lives, a helpful illustration for me is an apple tree. *[pause]*



By grace we are saved through faith, that's like an apple tree being firmly planted, and having its roots down deep.

But what's the result or outcome of that apple tree being firmly planted and rooted? Fruit! *[pause]*

The apples on the tree are like the good works that flow out of being firmly planted.

Therefore, the fruit is the beautiful outcome of a rooted, healthy tree. *[pause]*

The fruit doesn't cause the tree to be planted nor healthy, but is the result of a planted, healthy tree.

So good works are the fruit, not the root of our salvation. *[pauseeee]*

That's why throughout the New Testament, 'fruit' is often used as a term for good works, for fruit grows due to something already being there and being healthy.

So good works do not save, but they naturally flow out of a born again person. *[pauseeee]*

Here in our passage this morning, Paul tells us that God has saved us *for* good works! *[pause]*

Paul is telling us that God's goal and purpose of saving a people by grace is that they would be regularly doing good works. *[pauseeee]*

Do we think that way at all? Like what is your view of good works? *[pause]*

Are they something good to do, but voluntary, like if you are one of those people who are *really* into Christianity, then you do them, but if not, it's fine? *[pause]*

Are good works just a little snippet of your walk with the Lord, but the rest of your life, you live for yourself? *[pause]*

The Bible is showing us that if we think in those ways, we are dead wrong when it comes to good works.

God "created [us] in Christ Jesus *for* good works." *[pauseeee]*

Paul starts out by saying, "we are his workmanship," which really means that we are His creation. *[pause]*

You know how in the beginning, God created Adam, and it's this wonderful picture of God as the Creator, making a wonderful creation? *[pause]*

Well Paul is telling us that actually those who believe in Christ are new creations of God.

It's like He has done another act of creation, the creation of Christ-followers, His church. *[pause]*

And so what are we? We are God's wonderful creation!

We are His workmanship, we are something that God has fashioned and shaped to create a masterpiece that He delights in. *[pause]*

We are products of His handiwork. *[pauseeeee]*

But *how* were we created?

We were created "in Christ Jesus," that is, the "we" here are those "in Christ".

It is only those who have been saved "by grace through faith" in Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

God has done His work of creating a people in and through His Son, and He has created us "for good works." *[pause]*

So God's purpose is that we, as His creations in Christ, would do good works.

We must remember that, and never lose sight of that. *[pauseeee]*

Since God is our Creator, then we need to live out the purpose for why we were created.

We are God's creations, meant to live for Him and display His greatness. *[pauseeeee]*

If you are a Christian, and you aren't really pursuing good works, then you aren't living out a purpose for which God saved you. *[pause]*

Titus 2:14 talks of how "[He] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." *[pauseee]*

The Lord wanted a people, who would be "zealous for good works."

That's His purpose and goal for us! That's what He wants! *[pauseee]*

Do you think that way?!

Do you view good works as a part of your purpose for being His? *[pauseeeee]*

So many Christians are wondering, "What's my purpose?" all the while God has laid out our purpose—to glorify Him by walking in good works. *[pauseeeee]*

Often we know and rejoice in the fact that God has purposed to save us, but how often do we know and rejoice in the fact that God has also purposed for us to live out of a life of good works? *[pauseeee]*

Do we walk in them?

Do we live out *that* purpose? *[pauseeeee]*

Do you ever wake up and think, “The Lord wants me to do good works today”? *[pause]*

Not in the way of gaining God’s favor or keeping it.

No, but in an attitude of simply loving the Lord, and from a heart impacted by grace, desiring to glorify Him with your life. *[pauseeee]*

You see, the Lord worked to save us, so that we would do good works for Him, and so reflect His loving mercy to the world. *[pause]*

Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

So our good works are *for* the Lord, and reflect back *to* the Lord—it’s ultimately all because and for Him. *[pauseeeee]*

Verse 10 says, “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” *[pause]*

When you prepare something beforehand, you make something ready in advance.

It’s like you are getting things ready, straightening them, preparing them for what’s to come. *[pause]*

So what’s it mean then that God prepared these good works beforehand that we should walk in them?...

It’s like God has marked out the path for us to walk beforehand, preparing it. *[pauseeeee]*

When you are about to walk on a hiking trail, the path is already prepared beforehand for you to walk, and so you can walk it, knowing where to go.

So also, God has prepared the path for us to walk—to walk in good works. *[pause]*

He has planned, prepared, and set in advance that His people would habitually be doing good deeds. *[pauseeeee]*

The path has been marked out for you, Christian! *[pause]*

God has prepared it for you, now walk in it!

You were created for this, purposed for this, prepared for this.

And that means that you have exactly what you need to do, to do what God has called you to do. *[pause]*

He has prepared the way, now will you walk down it? *[pauseeee]*

Sometimes what holds people back from doing more good works is that they think that they aren't ready, prepared, or equipped enough for it.

But God gives you what you need! *[pause]*

If God has purposed for you to do something, then He will equip you to do it. *[pauseeee]*

Now what does it mean that we are to “walk” in good works?

It means that doing good works should be our way of life, our lifestyle. *[pause]*

Remember back in verse 2, where Paul talked about our old way of life?

He said, “you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.” *[pause]*

So we once walked in sin, that was our way of life, but now that we have been saved, we have been called to a new way of life—to walk in good works. *[pauseeee]*

Our life trajectory should look different now because the path that we are on is different.

So reflect upon your own life—could your life be characterized by walking in good works?  
*[pause]*

If you want examples of good works, just look throughout the Scriptures, but also think about the fruit of the Spirit...

“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control.”<sup>7</sup>  
*[pause]*

Good works are actions that come out of and show those qualities.

And good works could probably be summarized by a life demonstrating a love for God and a love for others.<sup>8</sup> *[pauseeee]*

How are you doing when it comes to good works? *[pause]*

Could someone characterize your life as one of “walking” in good works? *[pause]*

What about as a church—how are we doing? *[pause]*

When people in our community think of us, can they say, “They are full of good works”?  
*[pause]*

We shouldn't just be known for our knowledge and doctrinal stances, though those are extremely important—we should be known for our way of life, too. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>7</sup> Galatians 5:22–23.

<sup>8</sup> See Matthew 22:36–40.

We must remember that God has “created us in Christ Jesus for good works.”

We have a purpose, church! Let’s walk in it! *[pause]*

Let’s be thinking about how we can abound even more in good works. *[pause]*

Think about it, be creative, and purposefully consider how we as a church, and you as an individual, could practically do this more. *[pauseeee]*

*This passage shows us such a foundational truth...*

**We have not been saved *by* works, but by grace *for* good works!**

Aren’t you thankful for the grace of God? *[pause]*

God’s glorious plan is that by grace He would save a people, and then those people impacted by grace would impact the world with good works.

And all of this would reflect back on Him and His glory, and the gracious salvation that has been secured for us by His Son, Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

If you have never placed your faith in Jesus, then the call for you today is to do that.

See His love and grace for you, and simply believe in what Jesus did for you on the cross. *[pauseeee]*

If you are saved, remember and cherish your salvation, and how it was all of grace. *[pause]*

Remember Jesus, and how He did the work that you could never do, so that you could experience forgiveness and Heaven someday.

And then let that propel you on in good works, remembering the great, eternal good that the Lord has done for you.