

# Sermon Outline

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## THE GOSPEL WORKS

EPHESIANS 2:10

### I. The Question of Purpose

### II. The Gospel! (Eph 2:1-9)

- A. Ephesians 2 tells us what we once were before we came to Christ. Prior to coming to Christ, we were...
1. dead in our sins.
  2. mindlessly and uncritically following the beliefs, values, ideologies, and fashions of this present world.
  3. enslaved to “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (v 2).
- B. But something happened. An even greater Power stepped in to break the chains of our slavery.
- Eph 2:4-7: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
- C. God set us free from our sins and the prince of the air by joining our lives to the one perfect life of his Son, Jesus Christ.
- D. The Gospel is good news, not good advice. God has graciously and unilaterally saved us from our sins by joining us to the one perfect life of Jesus Christ, the obedient Son of God.
- E. Why would God do all of this?
1. “...*because* of the great love with which he loved us.” (v 4)
  2. “*so that* in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (v 7).
- F. God’s glory and our blessing are not mutually exclusive (Eph 2). God has chosen to glorify himself by glorifying undeserving sinners like us *in* Jesus Christ, *with* Jesus Christ.

- G. All of this is purely by God’s grace.
  - Eph 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God”
  
- H. Before we even talk about what our purpose in life is, we must first understand this Gospel and let it soak into our system.
  
- I. Only when we understand this foundational truth, which is the Gospel, are we in a position to talk about the next big thing, which is what our lives are for.
  1. If you are a believer, everything flows out of this Good News.
  2. The entire Christian life is a response to this Gospel event.
  3. The entire Christian life is a *re-orientation* of our lives to this great Historical Fact that has happened.
  
- J. When you hear people use terms like “the Gospel-driven life,” or “grace-based holiness,” or older terms like “evangelical obedience” or “evangelical repentance,” this is what they are referring to—the reality that is described for us here in Ephesians 2:1-10.

### III. We Are God’s Workmanship (Eph 2:9-10)

- A. Having understood the Gospel, we are ready for verse 10.
  - Eph 2:10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
  
- B. Notice how the idea of work runs between verse 9 and verse 10.
  1. We are not saved by our good works (because we had none).
  2. Instead, we were saved by God. Consequently, we “are *his* workmanship.”
  
- C. Since “workmanship” is a translation of *poiēma*, from which we get our English word, “poem,” there might be an artistic right to the word.
  1. We are God’s works of fine art/craftsmanship (see N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*, 24).
  2. We are the poems and songs that God sings into the world, bringing his truth, his beauty, his light, his love, and his peace into the ugliness, violence, and hatefulness in the world.
  
- D. Being called God’s workmanship dignifies us.
  1. It nullifies the world’s accusations and feeds the sense of purpose which we all crave.
  2. We are the workmanship of God—God’s songs, God’s poetry, God’s works of art, God’s special creations; dear and precious to God.

3. No matter what others say about us, we must fight to hold on to this truth about ourselves and hide it deep in our hearts. This is who God says we are.
- E. In order to know what our purpose in life is, we must accept *that we are God's fine craftsmanship, his workmanship*.

#### IV. We Were Created in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:10)

- A. Next, Paul tells us where we were created: We were “created in Christ Jesus.”
- B. Paul describes Christ in “larger than life” terms. Christ is a place, a new realm of existence.
1. Paul can speak like that because Christ is the Representative King/Federal Head who represents and embodies his people.
  2. If this present world is where we were born physically, Christ is the new world where we are re-born spiritually.
- C. In order to know what our purpose in life is, we must accept *that we were re-created in Jesus Christ*.
1. Jesus Christ is now the new world in which we function; the new realm, the new sphere of existence in which live as God's children.
  2. If we are followers of Jesus, we need to take our reference from the new world that God is making, the new world whose head is Jesus Christ.

#### V. We Were Created for Good Works (Eph 2:10)

- A. Why were we re-created by God in Christ Jesus? *We were re-created by God in Christ Jesus “for good works”* (v 10).  
—We were re-created in Christ Jesus to be a force for good; to be agents of God, wherever God has placed us, in whatever season of life God has us in.
- B. The Scripture further tells us that these are works “which God prepared beforehand...”
- C. In fact, Paul goes so far as to say “that we should walk in them.”
1. There is no retiring from good works, because the Spirit of Jesus in us will form them in and through us.
    - WCF XVI: Of Good Works:
      - XVI:III: Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will, and to do, of His good pleasure: yet are they not hereupon to

grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

- XVI:V: We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom, by them, we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because, as they are good, they proceed from His Spirit, and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.
  
- XVI:VI: Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in Him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreproveable in God's sight; but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

## **VI. A Sampling of Good Works**

- A. What are the good works that God calls us to do? They include:
- walking in a manner worthy of our calling (4:1)
  - conducting ourselves with humility, gentleness, and patience (4:2)
  - bearing with one another with love (4:2)
  - maintaining the peace of the church (4:3)
  - speaking the truth in love (4:15)
  - building up the Body of Christ in love (4:16)
  - putting of our old selves (4:22)
  - putting on the new self, which is created in the image of God (4:24)
  - putting away falsehood and speaking truth to one another (4:25)
  - not allowing our anger to cause us to sin (4:26)
  - doing honest work (4:28)
  - speaking words that give grace to people (4:29)
  - not grieving the Holy Spirit (4:30)
  - putting away all bitterness and wrath and anger (4:31)
  - being kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving (4:32)
  - being imitators of God as beloved children (5:1)
  - walking in love (5:2)
  - rejecting sexual immorality, impurity, and greed (5:3)

- (for wives) submitting to husbands (5:22)
- (for husbands) loving our wives as their own bodies (5:25, 28)
- (for children) obeying parents (6:1)
- (for employees) obeying bosses (6:5)

B. God does not leave us clueless as to the works he wants us to attempt.

C. If we are loved by God, we can expect that works of love will flow from us to benefit others. Yes, we will not get to every single work God has written in his book. But we will get to some.

## VII. To Live Out of Christ

**What is my purpose in life? Is it to succeed at every endeavor we set our hand to? No. Is it to be well-liked by many people? No. Is it to be respected by many people? Not at all. Is it to be wealthy and own many things? No. Our purpose in life—as forgiven, justified, adopted, beloved children of the Father, who cannot be disowned—is very simply to live out of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in doing so, function as God’s instruments in this world; projecting works of goodness and love into the world. There is nothing in Scripture about pursuing success in academics, sports, or professional life. These are good things to be sure. But God cares far more for how we treat one another. God cares far more that we love one another. Everything we do in life is done to serve that purpose to the glory of God (cf. Eph 5:2). This is what Gospel-centered living looks like—it is a life abounding with truth, love, goodness, wholesomeness, encouragement, and holiness.**

## Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Was there anything with which you disagree or found difficult to accept?
3. According to Eph 2, what were we prior to our salvation in Christ?
4. Who is the prince of the power of the air and what does he do?
5. Read Eph 2:4-7. What did God do for us? How did God save us?
6. "The Gospel is good news, not good advice." Discuss.
7. What was God's motivation in saving us (vv 4, 7)?
8. The entire Christian life is a *re-orientation* of our lives to this great Historical Fact that has happened. Reflect on this. How does the Gospel event—Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification for us—impact the way we view our marriages, our careers, our studies?
9. You are God's workmanship, his *poiēma* (2:10). How does this shape (or re-shape) your view of yourself?
10. We were "created in Christ Jesus" (2:10). Christ is the new world in which believers live. How would this shape your view of life, your sense of purpose in life?
11. According to v 10, why were we re-created by God in Christ Jesus?
12. When did God prepare our respective good works? What does this tell us about the certainty of our good works?
13. Read Westminster Confession of Faith XVI on good works.
14. Look at the list of good works that was given above. What are the good works God holds out to us to do? What values is this list urging on us to adopt?