

The Gift That Keeps on Giving
God's Grace Frees us to Live on Purpose
Connecting with God Series - part 16
May 2-3
Ephesians 2:8-10

Introduction

- **Do you know why you and I are saved?** Is it just protection from the end? Is it just to get us next to God for eternity? Yes, but not JUST...
- **Eternal Life is Quality & Depth** - Remember how I say that 'Eternal Life' is not so much a duration and quantity, but more of a quality of life and depth?
- **Salvation and Connection is for NOW** – the Church has things to do. Christians have things to do. Our connection with God starts our relationship with Him now, not when we die. We start doing things with Him in partnership the moment we become born-again.

Connection Means EFFECTIVENESS

Lesson

- **Where we left off last time** – The Great news that while we were sinners and spiritually dead, God rescued us and did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. Let's continue that discussion today...
- **Getting the Context (our Passage for today)**
 - **Ephesians 2:8-10** – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 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.”*
- **Rescue Me**
 - **Saved by Grace Through Faith**
 - **Ephesians 2:8a** – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith...”*
 - **Reminder what Grace is** – Grace is 'unearned favor.' It means that God is so loving that out of His goodness, He came up with the idea to bless us with something as a gift.
 - **The flip side of Mercy** – Mercy means someone deserves a punishment or penalty, but out of kindness they are released from it. In other words, you deserve it, but love stops it from happening.
 - **We were rescued because of God's grace** – While we didn't have God in mind or a heart to follow Him, while we were caught up in our own little worlds of selfishness, Because God's so loving, He initiated a plan to rescue us from our sin and the penalty that comes from it. Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world and made it possible for people to be saved. God set up the system by GRACE. He didn't have to. He wanted to.

- **But it was ACTIVATED by our FAITH** – what does that mean? Jesus died for the sins of the world, but the whole world isn't going to heaven. Why? Because they aren't activating it. Faith means trust. It means living as if what you believe is so real that you alter your life because of it.
 - **Faith in What?** – that Jesus is who He said He is and did what He said He did.
 - **Faith Illustration A** – fake video of Roger Federer hitting the bottle off the guy's head with a tennis ball for Gillette commercial in 2010 got me thinking, other people do trick shots. James Cordon did one facing Andy Murray (tennis pro).
 - **Little Kids jumping into their parent's arms** – fully trusting the nature of the parent.
 - *"The more we know of God, the more unreservedly we will trust him; the greater our progress in theology, the simpler and more childlike will be our faith."* J.G.Machen (Presbyterian NT scholar in early 1900's)
 - **Noah's Faith to build an ark** – I think sometimes that we read the story of Noah being called to build an ark and we think of it as a story of tenacity. God clearly told him to build a boat and he fought through and built it despite people making fun of him. But, I don't think that's true. I think it's a story of faith, to believe God when circumstances don't always back it up:
 - **Did I hear that right?** - I think that any time we hear God speaking to us there's always a doubt that we just made it up in our own head. Even if it was clear at the beginning, doubt comes in and makes it all fuzzy.
 - **A Boat in a Land of no rain** – The call to build a boat in a land that never had rain, took some serious obedience and faith. There is no indicator that Noah was next to a water source that could hold a boat that big, so it must have looked stupid sitting there when it had NEVER rained.
 - **75 Years to build it** – The whole time he's building it, approximately 75 years, people are poking holes in his theory and making fun of him for doing it. Yet, he keeps going.
 - **7 Days being locked in with no rain yet** – Finally everyone is locked in and there they sit...for 7 days and no rain yet. At what day did the family say, 'dad, you are wrong, face it, let's get out of here?' they didn't know it was going to be a week later.
 - **360 days on the Ark** – From locking in to walking out is approximately 360 days (some say 364, some 370, etc.). That's a long time to wonder if you are going to survive this trip. You don't know it's only a year (which is already a long time). You wonder if you will ever get out.
 - **Starting over** – when you finally get out of the ark and look at your wife, your three boys and their wives and realize, well, it's us or nothing. Here we go. Can we really repopulate the whole earth? It's only 8 of us.
 - **Grace is an ANTI-RELIGION system** – religion is man's effort to reach God. Christianity says that's impossible, we were dead and non-responsive to spiritual stimulus. So, God had to do it all.

- **Totally Dependent**
 - **Salvation is a Gift, not a Reward**
 - **Ephesians 2:8b-9** – *“And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, a not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*
 - **This is not your doing** – let’s get that clear right off the bat. I love when Paul gets practical. It’s NOT YOU, it’s God!
 - **It’s a gift not a reward** – We must always remember that salvation is a gift, not a reward. What is the different? One is earned, the other is gifted. That’s important for two reasons: 1.) removes pride; 2.) if we didn’t earn it, we aren’t trying to do good stuff to keep it.
 - **It can’t be achieved through good works** – We cannot do enough good things to get to heaven. The standard is absolute perfection. That’s why religion can’t work. Our good stuff isn’t good enough.
 - **What ‘good works’ are** – Good works are anything good that we do. It’s being nice to other people, being unselfish, being kind, it’s praying for people, it’s sharing our resources with them, it’s loving people through action and behavior.
 - **What we do versus He does in Salvation** – When I talked about activating our salvation by faith and when I preach about believing God and trusting Him, I want to be clear: those are not ‘good works’, those are responses. In other words, yes, we need to believe Christ and accept Him as our Lord and Savior, which sounds like ‘good things to do’, but really they are simply agreeing with reality. When it comes to our salvation God does all the truly good works of the rescue. We are simply lifting up our arms and letting Him pick us up from drowning.
 - **There’s no room for boasting** – you didn’t do it. Paul says it again. Why is he so insistent on this point? It’s because human nature is so quick to get prideful about things and create classifications of people: have’s and have not’s. We are always looking for something that gets us a pat on the back, something we can feel important about. We are also looking to grasp for control of our lives. But when we realize that Jesus initiated the plan for our salvation before we showed up in this world, it puts all the value on Him and takes the responsibility from us.
 - **Works start after Salvation** – Don’t get me wrong. We are called to do good works, that’s what the rest of the message today is about, I just want to make sure that we don’t mix up how we interact with salvation versus the good ministry we are called to do.
- **Made by God**
 - **We are God’s Masterpiece**
 - **Ephesians 2:10a** – *“For we are his workmanship,…”*
 - **What’s a workmanship?** – poima – made by God Himself. If an object is made by a master, we call it a masterpiece.

- **Identity: Self-God-Confidence (confident humility)** – the proper perspective and demeanor of a Christian.
- **Made for Victory**
 - **Understanding God’s Plan for Us to be Effective**
 - **Ephesians 2:10b** – “...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
 - **Created in Christ Jesus** – born again by what Jesus Christ did and fused together with Him in our new life...
 - **For Good Works: We were built to be effective for the kingdom (fruit-bearing)** – Good works that are really good works (fruit).
 - **God designed us for doing stuff before we got here** – God has eternal plans and when we become Christians we get in on that action. We partner with things that are way over our head. We engage in a process that started before mankind began. And God has a lot of things He wants to do and wants us to join him in those things.
 - **The whole point is fruitfulness** – We tend to think, and we can tell by the way that we pray, that God is stingy from wanting to empower us to get stuff done. WE think that we need to convince Him. It was His idea in the first place! This means that He really, really wants us to do the things that partner with Him. He wants us to advance His kingdom. He’s eager for us to pray and partner and strive and be victorious.

Conclusion

- **Are you as excited about what God wants to accomplish in you as He is?**
- **You were built for great things!**
- **Don’t let your insecurity hold you back.**
- **Some of us need to read the Bible through an Identity lens and start to grasp how amazing God made us and consider the great things He will do.**