

Ephesians 2:8-10

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[0:00] I invite you to take your copy of God's Word and turn to the book of Ephesians chapter 2. For the Christian, when we sin, we are functionally forgetting the gospel that has set us free from sin.

You see, walking in the gospel is like walking a tightrope. There are always two ways to fall off. On the one hand, we can err when we think that because we are accepted by God in Christ Jesus, then we can live however we would like.

On the other hand, we can err when we think that having been accepted by God in Christ Jesus, we must now continually earn his favor.

Both are errors and both are egregious misunderstandings of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Amongst our congregation, people who generally take the commands of God seriously, we are more likely to err in that second way.

To think that we have to continually earn God's favor. And we are all susceptible to this. In Galatians chapter 3, Paul calls the Galatian believers fools because they were being tempted in this very way.

[1:43] We all need to be reminded that the gospel makes us new. It changes our very nature. We don't differ in degree, but we differ in kind.

And we have been set free from the power of sin. Not because of any intrinsic worth of our own, but because God desires to express loving kindness to a people for the praise of his name.

If you are in Christ this morning, then it is because God has saved you. Any obedience that follows ought to be the outflow of a thankful heart to that salvation.

And we all need to hear this. I think that moms especially need to hear this. So today's sermon is for us all. Don't check out.

Oh, it's a mom's day sermon. I'm going to check out. It's for every single one of us. But I want to try to give some particular application to our moms this morning. So Ephesians chapter 2.

[2:46] I'll read verses 8, 9, and 10. Before I do, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good. And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

Ephesians 2, verse 8 and following. 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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now, this is an incredibly rich text. It is a text that deserves weeks of deep exploration and meditation. But for today, in the limited time that we have, quite sure there are lunches planned for today, and specifically for the good of our mothers, I want to begin by drawing our attention to two phrases in the first half of verse 10.

First phrase, for we are his workmanship. Second, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

[4:07] If you are in Christ Jesus, then you are God's workmanship. But what does that mean? Workmanship is a noun which communicates artistry or handiwork or skillfulness.

It is from this Greek word that we get our English word, poem. So to write with artistry or handiwork or skillfulness.

David expresses the idea of workmanship in Psalm 139 and verse 14, where he says, I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works.

There's the workmanship. My soul knows it very well. So, all people are fearfully and wonderfully made.

All people, regardless of age or stage or position of development, are image bearers of the one who made them. But, Paul does not have all people in mind in this text.

[5:16] He is referring specifically to those created in Christ Jesus. So there is a creation being expressed in Psalm 139.

A workmanship of God making each and every one of us as image bearers. But there's a special and a particular workmanship happening for those created in Christ Jesus.

There is a change in kind as God makes us new in Christ.

The implications of being created in Christ Jesus are massive. What a glorious truth this is. And I think it's a truth that we too readily forget.

We have identity crises all the time. If we're in Christ, we've been set free from the power of sin.

[6:16] We've been accepted by God. And therefore, we ought to thankfully obey. Thankfully worship. But we forget this constantly. So let's consider this idea briefly in a simple two-point outline.

It'll go as follows. Number one, you did not and cannot save yourself. And number two, you will not and cannot keep yourself.

Number one, you did not and cannot save yourself. Paul says it, and he says it clearly here.

For by grace, the gift of God, you have been saved through faith. And this, referring to the faith, is not your own doing.

It, referring to the faith, is the gift of God. There are those out there who want to do hermeneutical acrobatics to say that that's not what he's referring to.

[7:23] But I will tell you, with a massive amount of study and leaning on people much wiser, smarter than myself, There is no way around the grammatical structure of this sentence.

We have been saved by grace through faith. And that faith is a gift. It's given to us by God.

Because, verse 9 says, it's not a result of works.

That faith itself, a gift to us, not a result of works. So that no one may boast. It is impossible for me to say that I contributed anything to my salvation.

God saved me. Notice at the beginning of verse 8, there's a 4. And we do well when there's a 4 to look previous to that. What has Paul communicated up to this point to help us understand what he means in verse 8 and verse 9?

So he begins in verse 1 of chapter 2. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Following the course of this world.

[8:35] Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. You were actively dead.

You were living in contradiction. You were running against God. Verse 3 goes on. And among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. And were by nature. By kind. Children of wrath. Like the rest. Of mankind.

Verse 4 says. But. God. But God. Being rich in mercy. Because of the great love with which he loved us.

Even when we were dead in our trespasses. Made us alive together. With Christ. By grace. You have been saved.

[9:35] And if you're using the ESV version. They use em dashes there. And it's actually this verse that makes me love em dashes. You probably never have seen my notes. Unless you've asked for them. But I em dash things all the time.

And it's because of Ephesians chapter 2. Verse 5. I love a good em dash. By grace. You have been saved. It's inserted in there. Even when we were dead. Like we were dead.

And no life in and of ourselves. God made us alive. Together. With Christ. By grace. By grace. Free gift of God to us. You have been saved.

And raised us up with him. And seated us with him in the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages. He might show the immeasurable riches. Of his grace and kindness toward us.

In Christ Jesus. Right? God wanting to show himself merciful. Us deserving eternal damnation. To be clear. God wanting to show himself.

[10:33] Kind and merciful. And loving toward us. Did this wonderful work. On our behalf. We are saved monergistically.

He does it. And this might rub you the wrong way. But it is what the scripture teaches. And I will tell you. That it teaches this for your good. For you to know.

This is the way. That you came. Into Christ. You added nothing. To the equation. It was God's doing. On your behalf. Praise him.

For his extended. Loving kindness. Toward us. A kindness that we. Did not. Deserve. You may be sitting here. And think.

Well. But that's Paul. As some people will do. Let me tell you. That Jesus says. In John chapter 6. In verse. 44. No one can come to me.

[11:27] Unless the father. Who sent me. Draws him. And there's. There's. Controversy. About what is it. That Jesus is saying. Here at this. Point.

And so. I want to read to you. In a. Extended. Quotation. From. R.C. Sproul. That explains this.

Well. If you have the time. I'd encourage you to. Look this up. Type in a couple key phrases.

And you'll find him. Actually saying it. Because it's. More enjoyable. To hear him say it. But I'll. Do my best to read it. Well. For you. Speaking about this text. R.C. Sproul. Said.

The dispute about that passage. Has to do with the meaning. Of the word translated. To draw. What does it mean? There are those biblical scholars. And Christians.

Who believe that it means. To entice. To woo. Or to seek. To persuade. For them then. What Jesus is saying is. People. If left to themselves.

[12:22] Are not going to seek me out. There has to be something. Added. To their normal. Inclinations. Before they would be moved. To come. In my direction. Jesus is saying.

That God has to do. Something. Some people. Hold the strong opinion. That wooing. Is the very opposite. Of compulsion. That God doesn't compel people. To come to Jesus.

But he does entice them. And encourage them. And try to woo them. And show them. How attractive Jesus is. So that they will incline. Themselves. To respond. To Jesus. I once had a debate.

This is still. Spruel. I once had a debate. On this subject. With a professor. Of New Testament studies. Who was an expert. In the biblical languages. I was taking the position. That God does more.

Than invite. And entice. And woo. I think the word here. Is very strong. Because it is the same word. That is used. In the book of Acts. When Paul and Silas. Are dragged. Into prison.

[13:19] It's the same Greek word. Used there. It's not like the jailer. Went inside. The bars. And tried to woo. Paul and Silas. Saying. Come on fellows. Please come on in here. He compelled them.

To go inside. That jail. I think the word. There is strong. And I pointed. That out. To the New Testament. Professor. Then he surprised me.

Somewhat. Because he quoted. The use of the same verb. That he found. In some other Greek literature. Where the verb. Was used. To describe. The human activity. Of drawing water. From. A well.

And the professor. Went on to say. Now. You don't compel. Water. To come up. Out of a well. And I said. But I have to say. You don't woo it.

Either. You don't stand up there. And say. Here. Water. Water. Water. Water. Which again. Sproul doing this. Is wonderful. Here. Water. Water. Water. And expect the water.

[14:14] On its own power. To jump up. Out of the well. Into your bucket. You have to go. Down with your bucket. And take that. Water. I think the force. Of that verb. Is to say. That we are in.

Desperate need. Of the assistance. Of God. To come to Christ. And we will not. Come to Christ. Unless the father. Brings us. To him. Right. Dead.

In our trespasses. Incapable. Of coming. To him. But God. Loves us. Enough. To bring us. To him. Right. For by grace. You have been saved. Through faith. And this is not your doing. It's the gift. Of God. Not a result. Of works. So that no one.

May boast. And so. If you're in Christ. This morning. You find yourself. In Christ. Because of. The saving work. Of God. In Jesus. On your behalf.

[15:12] What wonderful news. Wonderful news. And it becomes. The foundation. For a life lived. Waiting for. The full. Final realization.

Of the kingdom. Of God. Because having been set. Free from the power. Of sin. We still live. In our flesh. We are still. We are still so feeble. And so. Broken. And often.

So inclined. To sin. Each and every one of us. This week. If we are at all honest. With ourselves. Must confess. That we have not lived.

A sinless life. This past. Week. I would venture to say. Even this morning. From the time. Your eyes opened. Until. Now.

You have committed. Some sin. Against. Our God. If we were to think. That we contributed. Anything to our salvation. Whatsoever. What a shaky thing.

[16:09] It would be. To know. If we could remain. In that. Position. But beloved. We are not changing. In degree. We are changed. In.

Kind. God. Has made. Us. New. God. Has. Taken us. From this. Dead. State. And made us. Alive. In. Christ. We are. His. Workmanship. This is what Paul is driving home for us. We are. His. Workmanship. Created.

In. Christ. Jesus. So you will not. And you cannot. Save yourself.

I am so grateful. For a loving. Kind. God. That is. About the work. Of saving. A people. A people. A people. This doctrine. Ought not. Work.

[17:02] Pride. In any of us. But great. Humility. Why. Oh Lord. Such love. To me. I was your enemy. I rejected you.

At every. Turn. I thought. I knew. How to rule. My own. Life. I would have. Rather. You. Dead. And me. On the throne. And yet.

God. Love me. And yet. God. God. Continues. To extend. His mercy. Toward me. In Christ. I am positionally. In. Jesus.

When God. Looks at you. If you're in Christ. He sees. Christ. You're in. Christ. So secondly. You will not.

And cannot. Keep. Yourself. Having been saved. By God. It is God. That keeps you. Because his reputation. Is at stake.

[18:00] He has saved you. And he will save you. To the. End. We are his workmanship. Created in Christ. Jesus. For something.

For a purpose. For. Good. Works. Which God. Prepared beforehand. That we. Should walk. In them. And I want to spend. The next couple of weeks.

On that last half. Of verse 10. Although we. Won't. God's. Sovereign reign. Over all things. In our lives. Including our own. Activity. In our lives.

But the point. Here being. The driving point. That Paul is making. Is that. Our lives. Having been created. In Christ. Jesus. Will express. Thankfulness.

To him. Right. We will. Show ourselves. To be these new creations. In Christ. By the way. That we live our lives. We will show. That we. Love this God.

[18:54] That our hearts. Have been turned. Toward him. That we. Hate sin. We'll be putting it off. And putting on. The righteousness. Of God. Right. We will be inclined. Toward.

Good. Works. It is a wonderful thing. To be positionally. Found in Christ. Positionally. Accepted by God.

So that. We can be free. To love and serve him. With our lives. It is a wonderful thing. For there to be no condemnation.

For those who are in Christ Jesus. Right. Regardless of our successes. Or our failures. Over this past week. Moms. Regardless of your successes. Or your failures. With your children. Over this past week.

Right. If you are in Christ Jesus. Your standing before him. Has not changed. What a freeing thing. This is. To walk that tightrope.

[19:49] Right. To be in Christ. And therefore. Wants to do things. That are good. Works. Nothing can take us.

Out of this. Position. Let me read to you. Extended bit of Romans. Chapter 8. Beginning in verse 29. Those whom he foreknew.

He also predestined. Be conformed to the image of his son. In order that he might be the firstborn. Among many brothers. And those whom he predestined. He also called. And those whom he called. He also justified.

And those whom he justified. He also glorified. Don't trip over all of those words. Just see that God. Saved you. What then shall we say.

To these things. Paul asks. What shall we say. To these things. If God is for us. Who can be against us. He who did not spare his own son.

[20:45] But gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him. Graciously give us all things. Who shall bring any charge. Against God's elect. It is God who justifies.

Who is to condemn. And hear me moms. Including yourself. Who is to condemn. Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that. Who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God.

Who indeed is interceding. For us. Praying for us. Who shall separate us. From the love of Christ. Shall tribulation. Or distress. Or persecution. Or famine.

Or nakedness. Or danger. Or sword. Lord. As it is written. For your sake. We are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep. To be slaughtered. No.

In all these things. We are more than conquerors. Through him. Who loved us. For I am sure. That neither death. Nor life. Nor angels. Nor rulers. Nor things present. Nor things to come.

[21:41] Nor powers. Nor height. Nor depth. Nor anything else. In all creation. Including stubborn kids. And snotty noses. Failed laundry.

None of this. Will be able to separate us. From the love of God. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. Nothing. If God has saved you. God. Will. Keep you.

John Durant. Old. Puritan writer. This is the quotation. On your bulletin. This morning. Once wrote. As nothing in believers. Was so good. As to cause God. To love them.

Nothing is so bad. As can cause him. To withdraw. His love again. Mom's. Work. You have a blessed.

And important. Task. Ahead of you. Work. But do not work. As if your identity. Is found. In. Your work. Your identity.

[22:39] Is found. In. Christ. The one who created you. Who reigns. Over all things. Is pleased with you. In. Jesus.

God loves you. And he does not love you. Because of you. You. This is good news. This is good news. He loves you.

Because he is love. And your successes. Or failures. Will not change him. So it will not change. His love. For you. It's rooted.

In his very character. On your behalf. A.W. Tozer. In the knowledge. Of the holy. Wrote. What comes into our minds. When we think about God.

Is the most important thing. About us. So. When you think of God. Does God stand over you. As a judge. Nitpicking. Your every decision.

[23:36] Your every success. And your every failure. Or is God. A loving father. To you. Because you've been adopted. In Christ.

Does he care about you. Does he extend. Grace towards you. Because you're his. So some application.

And again. Gentlemen. Non-mothers. You can replace the words. I'm using. And have this application. For yourself as well. But moms. I want you to hear. Especially.

This. You can. And you should. If you're in Christ. Mother. From. Rest. Know.

That you're accepted. Before God. The greatest problem. Of humanity. Has been resolved. In Christ Jesus. For you. You can rest. In his presence. And then.

[24:30] Go about. The work. And I know. It's a work. So don't hear me. Telling you. That you're going to walk around. Serenely. In your home. I don't want the job.

Of mother. It's a difficult work. I. I have a difficult work. But it's a focused work. I get to sit at a desk. And be uninterrupted. While I'm doing.

My work. I. On occasion. Not as often. As I probably should. But. Give Sam a day off. And. Wrangle. The boys. I get a lunch break.

When I work here. It's great. I actually clock out. By the time I get food. For the boys at lunch. And I'm trying to sit down. And eat mine. They need something else. There is no.

Break. It is a. Wearisome. Task. So I am not saying. That it just shouldn't be hard. Anymore. So mothering. Is difficult. I.

[25:26] In the measure I can recognize. But. Mother. From. Rest. And let me give you some. Things I mean. By that. The mom who mothers from rest.

Works. Hard. But does so. For the good of her children. And for the glory of God. Right. This is the aim. This is where her mind. Is going.

Right. She is not trying to build. Status or identity. For herself. And her mothering. Right. So she is mothering. She is doing all of those difficult things. That must be done. As a mom. To love and serve her children.

And to praise God. Secondly. The mom who mothers from rest. Does not discipline her children. In anger. In private. Because they are inconveniencing her.

But delights in them. And wants to see them. Walk in the ways. Of God. Seize all of those.

Obnoxious. Sin filled moments.

[26:24] In our children's lives. As opportunities. To help our children. Know. Fear. Love. And serve. God. Right. Doesn't see kids as inconvenient.

Right. Seize this as the task. That God has put. Before you. In order for you to. Serve your kids.

Third. The mom who mothers from rest.

Does not discipline her children. In anger. In public. Because they are making her. Look. Bad. But sees opportunity. To display her love for them.

In their correction. This impulse. In us. To correct our kids. In public spaces. Because we want to have it all. Together. See it as an opportunity.

To be humble. And to express to others. I don't have it all together. But I want. To show. I want to display. What loving kindness. Looks like. For my kids. Fourth.

[27:22] The mom who mothers from rest. Does not think. She has arrived. But seeks to learn. And looks for learning. From the Bible. And teachers. Who point her. To the Bible.

The mom who mothers from rest. Has the space. For humility. Has the ability. To say. I do not have this. All. Figured out. And I will say to you women.

And men as well. Parents come to you. And tell you that they. Have it all figured out. They don't.

The best parents. We have a family. In our congregation.

Who has 14 children. And those two. Wonderful. Blessed parents. Will tell you. That they don't have it all. Figured out. There's a humility. About them.

And they will say. No. We're not experts at this. And if there's anybody. Who could be an expert.

They should be. Have the humility. To look for answers. But find it in the scripture.

[28:19] The Bible gives us. What we need. To raise up our kids. It's sufficient for the task. And teachers. Who point us to the Bible. There's some wonderful books. Out there. That do this. Helpful work. For us.

Fifth. The mom who mothers from rest. Does not compare herself. To other mothers. Ladies.

Comparison. Can be. The death.

Of holiness. Either because you don't measure up. And so you become despondent. Or because you're doing better. And you become. Proud. Don't compare yourself.

To other. Mothers. But. Ask for advice. And help. From those you see. Excelling. At various tasks. In your mothering.

Sixth. The mom who mothers from rest. Can. Use. Social media. But she does not need. Social media.

[29:17] She does not need. To keep everyone informed. Of how good she is doing. The little corner. That got cleaned up. For the picture. She is not concerned. With her online. Presence.

Or perception. She does not care. About. Likes. Moms. Please use social media. I love seeing pictures. Of your kids. It's a wonderful thing.

To see pictures. Of your children. It's a neat tool. To share those things. To keep a record. I'm so glad our family. Is building this digital. Record. Of our. Kids lives.

It's a wonderful. Helpful. Thing. But not a necessary thing. You find yourself. Needing that. That impulsive. Approval. Online. Recognize that you may not be.

Mothering from. Rest. And then seventh. And lastly. The mom who mothers from rest. Deals with the mundane. In the light.

[30:11] Of eternity. You. You likely. Have heard the phrase. The days are long. But the years are short. Right. Our kids are going to grow up. Extremely. Quickly.

But beyond that. Our lives are very fleeting. They are fleeting. And if you're in Christ. You're God's workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus.

For good works. Which he prepared beforehand. That you. Should walk. In them. And all of those. Little tasks. All of those.

Diapers. And. Changed bed sheets. And. Stains on the floor. And. Dropped food. Snotty noses. All of those things. All of the whining.

Right. All of the disobedience. All of those things. Every. Single. Bit of it. All of those. Mundane. Steps. Those things that feel to you. So incredibly. Insignificant.

[31:07] Have a significance. In eternity. Every little. One of them. Our catechism. Question today. Was what hope.

Does everlasting life. Hold. For us. And the long answer. Is it reminds us. That this present. Fallen world. Is not all. There is. Soon.

We will live. With. And enjoy. God forever. In the new city. In the new heaven. And the new earth.

Where we will be fully. And forever. Freed from all sin. And will inhabit. Renewed.

Resurrection. Bodies. And a renewed. Restored. Creation. Every ounce. Of everything we do.

Should be done. In the light. Of eternity.

For. If we are in Christ. We did not save ourselves. We cannot. Keep ourselves. But we will be kept. By God.

[32:01] For that. Wonderful day. So be encouraged this morning. Whether you're a mother. Or otherwise. To do whatever it is. That God has called you to do. From.

Rest. Assurance. In. The fact. That you have been changed. In. Kind. You are his workmanship. Created. In. Christ. Jesus.

If you don't know. If you're unsure of this. I'd like to pray for you. Let's pray together.