

A Great Evangelical Summary of the New Testament

Ephesians 2:8-10

Ephesians 2:8-10 - *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

Background Notes

The first seven verses of Ephesians 2 described our totally helpless condition before God saved us. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were following the world’s system of values and attitudes. We were following the enemy - the devil. We were following our sinful nature - the flesh. That’s a pretty helpless and hopeless situation.

By the way, if you are looking for a verse in the Bible that lists the three-fold enemy of the Christian – the world, the flesh, and the devil - you won’t find any single verse in your concordances. However, Ephesians 2:2-3 certainly mention these words, and they show us what we’re up against in spiritual warfare. Our enemy is the devil and he uses his satanic world system of values and attitudes to appeal to our fallen, sinful nature, the flesh. And we are certainly vulnerable there, aren’t we? The good news of Ephesians 2:1-7 is that God, in His great grace, has rescued us! He has made us alive in Christ, and furthermore, He has given us a spiritual position in Christ. We’re saved forever!

In Ephesians 2:8-10, we have a summary of the good news - and notice that the emphasis is on *God’s grace*. Verses 8 and 9 again: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* How many of you have already memorized those verses? If you haven’t memorized these great verses, you really ought to do so, because this is a wonderful summary of the gospel. If anybody ever asks you, “What do you mean, you can’t get to Heaven by being a good person?” - where are going to go in the Bible to prove it? Right here...Ephesians 2:8 and 9. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works...”* Not of works! How much more clear can you get? *“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

What is the “it” of verse 8: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”* Does the “it” refer back to God’s grace, or does it refer back to our faith? Actually, the *it* probably refers to the whole package of salvation, because that is really the subject of the passage. Salvation is by grace through faith. In the Greek language, both “grace” and “faith” are feminine nouns. The “it” here is in the neuter gender, so most likely the *it* refers to the whole package of salvation. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it*

[salvation] *is the gift of God...*" The whole thing, through and through, is the gift of God. And it's "*not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

Doctrinal Points

Believers are saved by grace alone.

1. Good works are not the root of salvation.

The root of our salvation is not our good works, but God's great grace - and our salvation is 100% by God's grace. Listen to Romans 11:6 about the salvation of God's people: "*And if, by grace, then it is no longer works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace. Otherwise, work is no longer work.*" Do all of you follow the logic of that verse? You can't mix human works with God's grace, no matter how good those human works are! If you do, it's no longer grace. There's no such thing as God's grace plus our human good works. No way - it's impossible! Titus 3:5 says "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.*"

Why is this so hard for people to understand? Last Sunday in a conversation with a woman about salvation, and I asked her when she became a Christian. She said she became a Christian it was when she was baptized as a baby. And this was right after a gospel sermon! Baptized as a baby? I'm so sorry...no way. Salvation does not come about through the "good work" of baptism. Salvation does not come about through confirmation. Salvation does not come about through church membership. Salvation does not come about through being a good neighbor and giving to good causes. Salvation comes about by grace through faith. Believers are saved *by God's grace alone!*

Good works have nothing to do with our salvation. Period. If they did, then people would boast about their good works. Even if good works counted for one billionth of 1% of our salvation, people would boast! "I went to church one more Sunday than you did." "I worked one more day on community projects than you did." "I gave more money to the church than you did." Don't think that would happen? You *know* it would happen!

Good works are not the root of salvation. Salvation is all by God's grace. All we do to receive God's salvation is to trust in Jesus Christ by faith. Have you taken that step of faith, or are you still in that dead condition that of the first part of Ephesians 2? Remember, good works are not the root of salvation.

2. Good works are the fruit of salvation.

Verse 10: "*for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.*" We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works. We don't do good works in order to be saved - we do good works *because* we are saved. Good works are not the *root* of salvation, but the *fruit* of salvation.

So good works do not contribute to our salvation, but after we are saved they should be practiced in our lives. In fact, James 2 says that if good works are not part of a believer's life, it may be an indication that there never was any real conversion! That's the meaning of James 2:26, "*faith without works is dead.*" Just saying you're a Christian doesn't make you one. The evidence of true faith in Christ is good works. Good works are not the *means* of our salvation, but they are the *evidence* of our salvation.

Verse 10: "*for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God ordained [prepared] beforehand that we should walk in them.*" What are the good works "*that were ordained beforehand*"? Does this mean that God has a plan for your life? Yes! God has not only ordained the general character of a believer's walk - a walk of good works - but God also knows the particular good works that He wants you to be involved in, as you serve the Lord Jesus. How can anyone say that God, who knows and plans everything, doesn't have a plan, a purpose, and blueprint for your life? If God has numbered every hair of your head (Matthew 10:30), has He not planned what part you should play in the body of Christ, and what niche you should fill in His Kingdom - even down to the smallest details? Of course He has!

When I get into this kind of topic, everybody asks, "How do I know where I should be serving?" Just get involved! That's the best advice I can give you. Just get involved, and God will guide you to the particular "good works" He has ordained for you. It's hard to steer a parked car - you've got to get moving. Get moving in serving the Lord, and God will guide you. You will find that you're a fruitful Christian, characterized by good works! Good works are the fruit of salvation.

Practical Application

We are God's masterpiece!

Verse 10: "*for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.*" "*We are His workmanship*" means that we are God's masterpiece! God has taken us as raw materials and He's making something beautiful out of us. Every believer - each one of us - God is making something beautiful out of us. We are God's masterpiece. We have been created in Christ Jesus, and now the good works that God has ordained for us are part of His plan in making us His masterpiece. That's how it works. As we get involved in the good works, in the plan that God has for our lives, as we serve Him, He is making us into His masterpiece.

I'm sure you've seen that bumper sticker that says, "Be patient, God isn't finished with me yet." That's kind of humorous but it's true. God is not finished with us yet. Philippians 1:6 says that "*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it...*" The good works that God ordained for each one of us are part of His master plan for you and for me. So, let's get involved in the good works of God's plan for our lives. Let's not slow down God's progress by going on strike, and don't say you don't know what to do. Just get active in living a balanced Christian life. Get involved, and then God can guide you. Remember, we are God's masterpiece!