

**Ephesians 2:8-10**  
**“From sow’s ear to silk purse”**

**I. Intro**

**II. Vs. 8-9 By grace through faith**

**III. Vs. 10 A walking work of art**

**I. Intro**

The first ten verses of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter Ephesians Paul’s focus is on God’s work in our lives, which is always centered upon our transformation! In Christ we can all say:

***“I’m certainly not what I ought to be”***

***“And I’m definitely not what I will be”***

***“But thank God I’m not what I use to be!”***

The question that remains is, “*Why has God done this for us?*”

1. The first answer to that question is found in the words of verse 7; “*that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*” **We are to be forever a display case of God’s grace and kindness.** God could pull any one of us out at random and say, “*You want a demonstration, an example of my grace towards undeserving man? Well take a look at Dale!*” **Each of our lives serve as a living example of God’s character of grace.**
2. Secondly, **we realize that God doesn’t just save us out of destruction, He saves us too something as well, “good works”!** **Our redemption has as much to do with what we are saved TOO as it does what we are saved FROM!** We have heard that old saying that “*You can’t make a silk purse from a sow’s ear!*” Well, I’m here to tell you in Christ He does in every one of our lives but none of us can claim that His doing so had anything to do with anything in you!

**II. Vs. 8-9 By grace through faith**

The emphasis in the 2:1-2 is again found in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse where Paul says, “**not of works**”. The

difference is that the emphasis of verse 10 is WHAT we were created for as Paul writes that we

were: “**created in Christ Jesus for good works**”. This appears to be **a paradoxical statement.**

How can we on one hand have “**no works** “**least we should boast**” (verse 9) and yet on the other

hand be created in Christ Jesus **for good works** to which we are to “**walk in them**”? That is what

is before us this morning “**not working at working**”!

Vs. 8-9 First notice that Paul says, “by grace you have been saved” not “being saved” or “eventually will be saved” but “have been saved”. What Paul has to say concerning our salvation is a finished act and is already true in every born-again believer. It is not “*faith in grace that saves*” its “*grace through faith!*” The difference is that faith in grace gives me something that I had to start with. We are not “saved by faith” according to this verse we are saved by grace (*unmerited favor*) as even our faith is a gift. If you place “*faith*” in front of grace you make our salvation dependent upon “HOW” we believe but when you have grace in front of faith then the emphasis is NOT upon HOW we believe but on WHOM we believe! *Our savior is not our faith our savior is Jesus and our faith which is given to us by grace lays hold of Him!*

Now most of us Christians have no problem saying that we are saved by grace, but Paul brings us to an even more startling truth and that is that even our ability to trust in His unmerited favor is a gift. *God grants us trust as a gift when we hear the word of God but refuse the Word of God and you will never been granted the gift of trusting in it!*

God loves us so much as John 3:16 informs us that “*that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” But *He loves His Son so much that He will never permit anyone in heaven or earth to ignore the sacrifice He made on our behalf!* So here Paul stresses the reason God’s work is totally by grace, “*not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*” There are *two things in which, if we could we, would brag about:*

a. **Character** “*Not of yourselves*”: *God has done it this way because mankind loves to claim some inherent goodness in our nature.* “*I may not be as good as I should be, but I can still claim that there is something I can do*”. To which Paul points out, “*No it is not of yourselves it’s the gift of God*”. *There was nothing in me that caused God to so love me and desire to save me.* You don’t hear folks complain about God’s blessings upon their lives they don’t ever seem to give Him any praise or acknowledgement for it all. Oh, but if something goes away from the script they have written then they blame God and curse His name. *We often equate God’s grace as being given to me based upon something “good” in my charter or nature, He is just*

**rewarding me for being ME!** But it's not "**of yourselves it is the gift of God**". If He rewarded me for me then I would be in big trouble!

b. **Effort** "*Not of works*": Here the point is self-effort, "***I may have not had anything of value in my nature, but I have made up for it by effort!***" Not so says Paul as it is not of works least anyone should boast. Suppose you were really in debt I mean you owed millions and some stranger came and wrote you a check wiping out all you owed. Now it would not take long before everybody who knew your plight would begin to come to you and let you know how fortunate you were to have such a generous benefactor. But what if your response to them was, "***He didn't do all that much why you should have seen me reach out and take that check from His hand!***" "*It was some kind of effort I had to put forth to take it from Him and then I had to go down to the bank.*" "*I had to wait in line at the bank and then sign the back of the check?*" Everybody would think I was totally ungrateful and rightly so, but we do this all the time with the Lord don't we? **We tell people about all the things we are doing for God, boast in all our effort and how difficult it is just to be us, all the while downplaying that it was all the resources of God which has made everything possible!** It is the greatness of God as seen in His grace that has saved.

### III. Vs. 10 A walking work of art

Vs. 10 We see that we have been saved "**from**" which is totally by grace now we see that we have not only been saved **from** but "**too**"! We've answered the "**HOW**" now we answer the "**WHY**" as Paul tells us in the 10<sup>th</sup> verse the reason for this transforming grace.

1. The first thing Paul does is to focus upon God's transforming grace by saying, "*we are His workmanship*". The word "*workmanship*" only appears one other time in the Bible in Romans 1:20 where the English renders it "*the things that are made*" which is in reference to His physical creation. The word in the Greek is where we get our word "**poem**" in fact it is a transliteration of the Greek word. The word means a "*work of art or masterpiece*". We can see what God created in the physical realm is a masterpiece even after the fall but here we are told that **born-again humanity is also His masterpiece.** Look at this carefully and you will notice that it doesn't say, **I'm a masterpiece** but rather that I'm **HIS masterpiece.** I spent many years as a goldsmith creating jewelry and I can tell you that an artist seeks to express themselves through their work and it is the same with God. You see a "poem" is a **work of art in words** and it is what we are as **His Word transforms us into one of a kind redemptive masterpiece!**
2. The second thing Paul tells us is that we are "*created in Christ Jesus for good works*". I find something here that makes me realize how incredible God's grace is when I realize, as Paul told us in verse 2, that **all of us at one time walked and worked in total disobedience. We weren't people with potential we were utterly ruined.** We can further appreciate an artist's talents when we see the materials that they had to start with to create the masterpiece. This verse brings to light is that though it is true that **we are not "saved BY good works but we are most certainly saved UNTO good works". Our salvation is NOT faith plus works but our salvation is very much faith that works!** God's design is "in Christ Jesus" for "good works"! What this tells us is that God's transformation is always active and always has the same aim "**good works**". There are a great many people

that would not be very impressed after they meet me they may say, “*You know Dale you’re not all that impressive there’s some pretty big inconsistencies in your life*”. My response will always be the same, “*You know you are right, but you should have seen what God had to work with when He started!*” **Compared to what I was when He started I’m HIS work of art even though I’m very much unfinished!**

Paul goes on to tell us **two things concerning those works that we are saved too:**

1. **Good works:** First Paul says that they are “good works”. God’s saving us by grace was unto good works but what makes them “good works”? How can I know that I am operating according to His design?

a. First, **a good work won’t be a work that is disobedient as that is what we once were.**

There are a great many people in the world doing a lot of things but if they are still living a disobedient life then they are not engaged in “good works”. Many people think that if they are apart from God that doing something’s “good” will make up for a lifestyle that is disobedient.

b. Second, Paul wrote in Romans 14:23 that “*whatever is not from faith is sin.*” Whatever we do that is not based upon total trust of God cannot be considered “good works”. Paul wrote to the Philippians’ in 2:13 “*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” What makes them “good works” is our trust and surrender to God who works in us both to will and do according to His “**good pleasure**”. We can’t claim “good works” as coming from us simply because we are believers. It is God who works in us both to will and to do and that according to His good pleasure. **If it truly “good works” all we can talk about is what He is doing and not what we are doing!**

2. **Prepared beforehand:** The second amazing thing is that these “good works” are **prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.** We don’t have to go turning over every rock looking for “good works” as God has prepared them for us beforehand. As we go about everyday there are countless “good works” that God has prepared for us. I wonder sometimes just how many “good works” He gives us every day, little things like holding the door open for someone to picking up trash so someone else doesn’t have to. All the way up to speaking His name to a hurting heart. Jesus said in Luke 16:10 “*He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much*”. **I think God has a way of not only preparing good works for us but also preparing us for “good works”.** I can see **three ways He prepares me for “good works”:**

a. **Teaching:** Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in 2:13 “*when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*” God teaches us through His word **not to be self-serving but rather to be self-sacrificing.** In John 13:13-14 Jesus told His disciple’s “*You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.*”

b. **Talking:** In this book in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter verse 20 Paul says, “*to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us*”. I believe God prepares us for good works through our prayer life as we ask Him not only “*to do exceedingly above all we ask or think*” but to do so “**according to the power that works in us**”. Never underestimate the need for prayer to accomplish the “good works” He has prepared for you.

c. **Trials**: Finally, look at what Peter said in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:19 “*let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*” Suffering causes us to recommit our lives to doing good as unto the Lord.

**Trials tear away the things we have attached value too and replaces them with a faithful creator that will never leave us or forsake us!**

So, **God by His grace has saved us from ourselves, and too good works and His design is that**

**we “walk in them” that’s a natural thing isn’t it.** I think far too often the Church has

emphasized “**good works**” that we do before the “**good work**” **God has done.** The truth is the

only way we walk in good works that He has prepared beforehand is that He has already done a

good work in us, and we are continually allowing Him to do a good work through us!