

Stick To The Savior

Ephesians 2:6-10 May 24, 2023

Ephesians 2:6-10 - ⁶He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—⁹not from works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

Delo Adhesive makes the strongest glues in the world. In 2019 they used one teaspoon¹ of their Monopox glue to lift a truck weighing 38,000 pounds off the ground with a crane for an hour, setting a Guinness world record.² Quite a feat for a little bit of glue.

In the opening chapters of Ephesians, Paul talks about what a great feat salvation is. He's been showing its amazing scope in the past, present, and future. As he wraps up this section of thought, he gives us insight into the nuts and bolts of how a person *receives* God's salvation. It will culminate in that familiar verse: "*You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift.*"

All the power and the blessings and the relief and the promises and the eternal inheritance we've been reading about since the book began are part of the fantastically generous work of a gracious God Whose. It's all a *gift* held out to each human being on earth who can receive it by *faith*.

What *is* faith? We often think of it as believing certain truths. But, faith is *more* than an intellectual recognition that God exists.³ There are plenty of things I "believe" but don't care about. I *believe* the clocks are three hours ahead on the east coast, but it makes no difference to me. I *believe* that if I exercised more I would be healthier, but apparently I don't believe it *enough* to do it.

The faith that lays hold of salvation is not like that. The Bible describes it as something we walk in and live by.⁴ We're told that without faith it is impossible to please God. And then that passage goes on to describe a faithful person as one who not only believes that God exists, but draws near to Him and seeks Him, obeying what God says as it is revealed.⁵

Klyne Snodgrass writes, "*Faith has an adhesive quality to it; it binds the believer to the one who is believed. Salvation does not come from believing ideas or an emotional decision, but from being bound to Christ.*"⁶

¹ <https://www.delo-adhesives.com/us/press-and-news/delo-news/details/the-worlds-strongest-adhesive>

² <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2019/7/super-strong-glue-holds-17-tonne-truck-in-the-air-for-one-hour-584909>

³ Darrell Bock *Ephesians: An Introduction And Commentary*

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:7, Habakkuk 2:4

⁵ Hebrews 11:6

⁶ Klyne Snodgrass *Ephesians*

This is why, on the one hand, you can see a person like Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8 “believing” certain ideas, yet not being truly saved. His heart didn’t *stick* to Christ. On the other hand, we see a Apollos in Acts 18 with great passion and zeal for Jesus, yet needing to be instructed more accurately in truth. Apollos was *bound* to Christ, though he lacked significant knowledge.

As Paul brings this section to a close, we should be encouraged to have a stickiness in our faith - sticking to the Savior and sticking to His plan for our lives as we grow in strength and knowledge.

Ephesians 2:6 - ⁶He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus,

God wants us to totally adhere to Christ now and forever. Paul talks about us being *in* Christ and walking with Him. Elsewhere we’re told to let His mind be in us. This letter talks about how Christ and His Church are like a Head and a Body. God’s desire is total attachment between us and Him.

We have here more of that now-and-not-yet tension that we’ve seen before. Paul speaks in the past tense: We’re *already* raised up, *already* seated with Christ. It’s done. There’s no stopping this ultimate result. Of course, despite this being immutable fact, most of the time we feel far from this reality. We recognize that salvation is working out in the present as we progress toward the final fulfillment. It’s a *process*. That term *raised* is defined by *Strong’s* as being “revivified spiritually, in resemblance to” the Lord.⁷ We are being conformed into the image of Christ as God accomplishes salvation in us. Don’t get me wrong - if you’re a Christian, you’re saved. You don’t have to ripen to a certain level in order to get into heaven. But the process continues on and on from now till glory.

Meanwhile, since God has raised us and seated us with Christ, that means we have authority now.⁸ We have blessings now. We have power now. We are no longer subject to death.⁹ We are dead to sin. We can overcome any temptation. We can walk as children of light.

Verse 6 also has important ramifications for our lives, many of which Paul is going to explain in the coming chapters. *Because* we are raised up and seated with Christ our relationships and our goals and our attitudes are going to be very different than what they were. Paul said to the Colossians, “*Since you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*” There is a total perspective shift, a total change in the orientation of our lives.

Ephesians 2:7 - ⁷so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

God is going to put the Church on display in eternity. That is a mind-boggling revelation, but this verse has a lot of encouragement tucked inside of it.

⁷ *Strong’s Concise Dictionary*

⁸ *ESV Study Bible Notes*

⁹ *Faithlife Study Bible Notes*

The first is that you are a display piece. Some of you are collectors. Your collection might be quite large, but you probably have a piece or two that is the crown jewel - the one you wouldn't ever part with. For God, that is saved humanity. Think of all the creatures, all the cosmos, all the expansive accomplishments that an all-powerful God could amass for Himself. In eternity, He's going to put *you* on display as His prize possession.

We also can see an important aspect of God's personality. He *wants* to display His kindness. Dane Ortlund writes, There is "one place in the Bible where the Son of God pulls back the veil and lets us peer way down into the core of who He is, and we are not told He is 'austere and demanding in heart.' We are not told that He is, 'exalted and dignified in heart.' Letting Jesus set the terms, His surprising claim is that He is 'gentle and lowly in heart.'"¹⁰ And we see the Father's desire to display kindness forever and ever through us *and* to us. He will *keep* showing us kindness in eternity.

But now we remind ourselves what Paul has already said - that Christ is the Head and we are the Body empowered by God to display Christ to a lost and dying world. What does God want on display? His *kindness in Christ Jesus*.

Kindness means love in tender action.¹¹ Now, Christ's love was never divorced from the truth or calling sinners to repentance - it always included those things - but we want to take this reminder to heart. We are the Body, called to represent and imitate Christ. Therefore a faithful Church and a faithful Christian will be tender and kind as they move through the world. Not *perfectly*, because we are still sinners, but in a cultivated and growing, fruitful way.

Ephesians 2:8 - ⁸For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift-

What is God's gift? Scholars debate this. Is grace the gift? Is *faith* the gift? There are some Calvinistic interpreters that say the gift Paul is talking about is *faith*, meaning you have no free choice in the course of salvation. By the way, that was *not* how John Calvin interpreted this verse.¹²

Contextually and grammatically,¹³ Paul is saying that *salvation* is the gift God gives. His point is that there is absolutely nothing a person can do to earn, merit, or bid for salvation. Every world religion is based on the idea that salvation is earned. I work off my debt, I show God I am worth saving, I claw my way into Paradise through one effort or another and thereby my reward is salvation.

That's not Christianity. Salvation is not won by keeping the Law or being baptized or converting a certain number of people or by speaking in tongues or by any other activity to show God how serious you are. Salvation is a gift of grace, offered to those who in no way deserve it.

¹⁰ Dane Ortlund *Gentle And Lowly*

¹¹ *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 11: Ephesians Through Philemon*

¹² F.F. Bruce *The Epistle To The Ephesians*

¹³ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

For something to actually be a gift, it must be given out of love and generosity. We've all bought what we *called* "gifts" for an event we didn't want to go to, but in reality those weren't gifts - they were obligations. God's gift of salvation is something He *wants* to give. And the way a person receives it is through faith.

Here is another quote about Biblical faith: Faith is *"relying on something or someone believed [to be] reliable...Faith is relational, describing reliance on a reliable God. Faith is...[covenantal]... expressing the commitment and trust that bind two parties together."*¹⁴

The Bible goes out of its way to say that faith is *not* a work. There are those who criticize the idea that people can exercise faith to receive salvation. They say, "That's a work!" But it isn't. In Romans 4, Paul explicitly talks about how faith is *not* a work, especially when it comes to receiving a gift. If I did an Oprah thing and said, "Everyone look under their seat and there are keys to a brand new car for each of you," would *any* of you leave this place saying, "I, in my power, got myself a new car!"

It's also important for us to note that there's not a magical *amount* of faith that merits you salvation. How much faith did the thief of the cross have? A few minutes before he died he was blaspheming the Son of God. But then he stopped and believed and said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." He knew so little, but it was enough because he adhered himself to the Lord.

Our faith is meant to grow and deepen and strengthen. But to receive the gift of salvation the bar is pretty low, thank God! We remember how Jesus was blown away at how much faith a centurion had. He said, "This is the biggest faith I've seen." But it's not a competition. I remember in 8th grade science our teacher set up an experiment to test lung capacity. It was one of those machines where you blow and it lifts up the ping pong ball. Everyone in the class did it and, because I'm so full of hot air, I won. It was, I think, the only physical contest I've ever won in life. But receiving salvation isn't dependent on having faith strong enough to hold up the ping pong ball for however long. Remember - this gift is offered to us generously and graciously by a God Who *wants* us to have it.

William Arp writes, *"Grace is the basic ingredient in God's dealing with mankind; everything else comes from and builds on grace."*¹⁵ God is a lavish gift-giver. He *wants* people to have salvation.

Ephesians 2:9 - ⁹not from works, so that no one can boast.

No works, period. R. Kent Hughes says, *"If salvation came by works, eternity would spawn a fraternity of...chest-thumping boasters – an endless line of celestial Pharisees."*¹⁶ But Jesus was clear to the Pharisees, especially, "Your boasting is a problem. You guys are not headed toward the Kingdom unless you *actually* get saved!" And many of them did in the book of Acts.

¹⁴ Snodgrass

¹⁵ William Arp *All Grace And Grace Alone*

¹⁶ R. Kent Hughes *Ephesians: The Mystery Of The Body Of Christ*

Just as salvation is not won by works, neither is it *maintained* by works. Now, in a moment we're going to see that good works, spiritual works, are to be the focus of our lives, but you do not do works in order to hold onto salvation. God is the One Who holds you tight in His grip of grace.

Paul reminds us here of our fallen nature, that human propensity to boast and to class ourselves above other people. Ephesians reveals that we're all equal - we're all dead in trespasses and sins. Now, having been saved, Paul is going to show how we're all equal in God's sight and equal recipients of His love and grace and power. So, Christians should not be boasters in ourselves anything we've done. It's wholly inappropriate. **"So let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.** For it is not the one commending himself who is approved, but the one the Lord commends."¹⁷

Ephesians 2:10 - ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

The word "workmanship" means "masterpiece." What an astonishing thing to consider: The stars, the heavens, the planets in orbit - those are just God's *handiwork*, but Christians are His *masterwork*.¹⁸

A born again Christian is a magnificently unique creature. In fact, they alone are the double created - the twice baked potatoes of the spiritual world. In all seriousness, first, as a human being, you are created in the image of God. A human being is *not* an animal. They are a special creation, set apart from all others, both natural and supernatural. And then, to be born again means you are made into a *new* creation, the second birth. And that brings you into this masterpiece category.

The term Paul uses here also means "work of art." Salvation is more than a clean up, more than a remodel, more than a repurposing, more than an upgrade.¹⁹ It is the greatest work of the greatest Artist.

Once, while Michelangelo was pounding away on a great, shapeless rock, someone asked him what he was doing. His reported answer was, *"I'm liberating an angel from this stone."*²⁰ In a much more profound way, God is shaping us. Chipping away edges. Bringing life where there was death. Bringing out the image of His Son through our lives in a beautiful, meticulous, artful way.

That work sometimes takes a great deal of time. Michelangelo took 3 years to carve his statue of David. He wasn't the artist originally hired for the job. In fact, he was the third. The second fellow took a look at the block of marble that was to be used and said the quality was too poor and quit.²¹ For decades that slab sat out in the elements until Michelangelo finally took up the chisel. A number of years later, an Italian artist and biographer described Michelangelo's work on David as, *"the bringing back to life of one who was dead."*

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:17-18

¹⁸ Hughes

¹⁹ Arp

²⁰ Hughes

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/story/how-a-rejected-block-of-marble-became-the-worlds-most-famous-statue>

This is what God has done for us in salvation. To put us on display as the masterpiece of His art. But, unlike the *David*, we're made for more than standing in a room. Paul closes this section by telling us we were "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do."

We're not saved *by* works, but we are definitely saved *for* works. God says He has special activities for each of us - things He's planned specifically for us to discover and accomplish. Ok, so does that mean I've got some checklist? A spiritual "to-do" list in order to be a "good" Christian?

The NKJV renders this phrase: "created for good works...that we should walk in them." The ISV puts it this way, "works...to be our way of life." God isn't giving us quotas, He's giving us a new life to live. This is what you do now, instead of bearing the fruit of the Devil, you bear the fruit of the Spirit.

So, how do I discover these particular plans God has prepared beforehand for me? Hebrews 13 tells us that the God of peace will Shepherd us and equip us with everything good to do His will. As we walk with Him, sticking closely to His heart and His mind and His word, we discover where He wants to lead us and which opportunities He has set aside for us.

And so, Paul encourages us to walk in this new life. To have a sticky faith that understands more and more what salvation really is and responds by adhering to Christ and staying on the path He has placed us on. To walk out of our graves of sin and shame and temptation and walk in the newness of that resurrection power.

Sometimes I forget that when Jesus rose from the dead, Matthew 27 tells us that there were a number of saints who *also* rose and came out of their tombs and went into Jerusalem, appearing to many people. Imagine if they would've said, "I'm good. Gonna just stay here in my tomb." What a waste that would've been! No, they were raised and *came out* for a good work.

Many of you are fans of *Elf*. Remember that sad moment where Buddy has his etch-a-sketch and he has this itinerary planned out of things he wants to do with his dad. He has it because he loves his dad and just wants to spend time with him. His dad just dismisses him and says, "I've gotta go to work, Buddy." He has no interest in Buddy's plans and as viewers we see the heartbreak.

The Lord has plans for us that flow from His kindness and grace and affection and tenderness for us. Paul gives us this perspective and says, "Here's what God has been doing for you since before time began, here's what He's doing now, here's the certain goal He is bringing you to." So stick to the Savior and stick to His plan. You may feel like you only have a teaspoon of faith, but that is enough because it is God who works His power through you. All we have to do is receive His grace and submit ourselves to this ongoing process of salvation and He will finish His masterwork in us.