

**Ephesians**  
**This Is Your Life (Part 9)**  
Ephesians 2:1-10  
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Well it's with a certain measure of sadness that I ask you to turn for the last time to the first ten verses of Ephesians 2. This has been a rich study for me, and I don't know if it's benefited you as much as it has me; but trust me, I'm a different person for having studied this passage; and I hope you are as well. Ephesians 2, and we're going to continue our study in verses 1 through 10--and complete them, Lord willing, this morning.

If I were to ask you, what is the greatest of all of God's works, what would you say? Maybe your mind would immediately go to the cosmos itself. I mean, if you stop to think about the endless reaches of space that our telescopes are just beginning to allow us to glimpse, then certainly it is mind-boggling. Earth, on which we live--this tiny planet--as you know, revolves around our sun. And earth is hurtling through space even as we sit here this morning, at some 66,000 miles an hour. For the earth to complete its rotation around the sun at that speed takes it 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes and 9.54 seconds. But that's not all. Our entire solar system--the stars and the planets of the solar system in which we live--sits on the outskirts of the Milky Way Galaxy. And our entire solar system is constantly orbiting the galactic center of the Milky Way Galaxy.

Astronomers have calculated that it would probably take our solar system about 226 million years to make one rotation around the center of the Milky Way Galaxy. And our entire galaxy--the Milky Way Galaxy--they tell us, is also hurling through space in one great grand orbit that we can't even track. Just the Milky Way Galaxy alone contains some 100 billion stars, and studies of distant space with optical and radio telescopes indicate that there may be 100 billion galaxies in the observable universe. Some estimates of the number of stars reach 10 billion trillion. I have no idea what that number looks like. And all in one day, God spoke it into existence. That's certainly a grand demonstration of the greatness and creative power of our God.

You might say, no. When I think of God's greatness, I don't think of the cosmos, I think of man. And certainly man is an incredible demonstration of the creative power of God. Your body started as one cell. The average adult body is made up of 100 trillion cells. Your body has a number of organs within it that continue to function without your thinking about it, and perform all of the functions to maintain and sustain life. For example, in your chest there are two football-sized organs called your lungs that exchange spent carbon dioxide for fresh oxygen. Those two football-sized organs, to accomplish that, contain inside them the same surface area as a tennis court. Your heart, that muscle inside your chest, beats 100,000 times a day, pumping

blood through a network of blood vessels that are 60,000 miles long. If you live an average lifetime, your heart will beat 3 billion times and pump 46 million gallons of blood, certainly an amazing creation. But as amazing as the cosmos is, as amazing as the human body is; neither of those is, by God's reckoning, His greatest work. As great as God's physical creation is, it is not His masterpiece. Here's the amazing reality. If you're in Christ this morning, if you're a Christian, according to the apostle Paul, you, as a new believer in Jesus Christ are God's greatest creation. God has designed you as a new creature with meticulous precision and with the greatest care to insure that you will fulfill exactly the role for which He has made you, just as everything else in the universe does. That's the message of Ephesians 2:10.

In these verses, in this paragraph that begins in Ephesians 2:1 and runs down through verse 10, Paul describes how God has spiritually rescued us. A rescue that was entirely of God from beginning to end. Rescue, by its very nature implies that someone else is accomplishing it, and that's certainly true with spiritual salvation. In verses 1 through 3 Paul showed us what we were--what we were like when God found us. In verses 4 through 6, what God did--exactly how God accomplished that rescue, how He made us alive. He spoke life into our dead hearts, and we were raised from the dead spiritually. And in verses 7 through 10 of this paragraph, Paul explains why God did it.

What did God have in mind? You see, Paul tells us that God had three goals in mind when He decided to rescue us solely by an act of sovereign grace. What are those three great goals God had in mind? Well verse 7 tells us the first goal was to display the glory of His grace. To display the glory of His grace. Verse 7. So that, for this reason, here's why God did it. "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus," That He might demonstrate--that He might put on display the incredible wealth of His grace. God saved you--He rescued you--to put the glory of His grace on display.

There's a second reason that Paul offers us here. We looked at it last week in verses 8 and 9, and that's to destroy all human boasting. The reason God saved you the way He saved you--and didn't allow you to participate at all, didn't allow me to participate at all, so we can take none of the credit--is to destroy all human boasting. Look at verse 8. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." We can take no credit. God saved us the way He saved us so that no human being can take the smallest shred of credit.

Today we want to look at the third goal that God had in mind when He saved us by grace. It's found in verse 10: to guarantee our good works. To guarantee our good works. Verse 10. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." This verse is really the key to this whole passage. We could even legitimately say that this is what Paul has been building toward through this

entire letter, and through this entire section. He's driving to this reality. In fact, let me go a step further, and say that verse 10 is the foundation on which all of the commands of chapters 4 through 6 are built, as we will see later. It is absolutely imperative that we understand what the Spirit means in this verse, because this is the foundation on which all of the imperatives of chapter 4 through 6 are built. This brief verse, as we take it apart this morning, makes two surprising declarations about the change that has happened to us and the reason God did it the way He did it, two surprising declarations that I want us to see together.

The first declaration is in the first phrase 'we are God's creation.' We are God's creation. Look at verse 10. "We are His workmanship." Workmanship is not a word that we use, so it's a little unclear perhaps--a little vague. The Greek word that's translated workmanship is a very unusual word. It's the word from which we get our English word poem. It's the word *poiema*. You recognize the word poem in it. It literally means something that has been made--a work, a creation. In classical Greek this word was used to describe the work of a craftsman. In fact in one particular case it's used of a craftsman making a crown. In the Septuagint, that is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, where we can learn a lot about the words in the New Testament, we find there it's used in a variety of ways, but it's especially used of the skillful result of the works both of God and of man. It's the work that a craftsman produces. In the New Testament it's used only two times--here and in Romans 1:20. In Romans 1:20 it's used to refer to the original creation of God--the creation of the universe. But here in Ephesians it refers to God's new creation of the believer. That's an interesting picture isn't it, because originally we understand that man was God's creation. Man was the apex, the high point of God's creation. On the sixth day God made man and from man He made woman--in His own image, the high point.

And yet sin comes in Genesis 3. Man falls into sin and that creation of God--that best and greatest of God's creation--is marred and ruined and destroyed. And the history of the Old Testament simply unfolds how badly ruined and how desperately in need of help man was--how badly destroyed God's creation had become.

So there is then, the New Testament tells us, in Christ, a new divine act--a re-creation. It's an interesting picture of salvation isn't it? I mean, Paul has already, in chapter 2, given us several word pictures of our salvation. He's described it as a resurrection. God raised us from the dead. He's described it as liberation from slavery. We were enslaved to the world and to our own flesh and to Satan himself, and we've been liberated. He described salvation as a rescue from divine wrath. The end of verse 3 says we were children of wrath. We have been delivered from God's wrath. And here, He says it's like a new creation. Our salvation is like God started from scratch and made us again.

It reminds me of 2 Corinthians 5;17, doesn't it? Where Paul says "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature." Or we could translate it like this: "If anyone is in Christ, a new creation. Old things passed away, behold new things have come." So when you go back to Ephesians 2 and you look at the word 'workmanship,' understand that we could legitimately translate that word as a 'work of art'--the work of a craftsman. As believers, we are God's work of art--we are God's masterpiece. By the way, the emphasis in this first statement is on God. Literally it reads like this in the Greek text, 'of Him we are a creation.' The emphasis falls on God. Understand, 'of Him we are a masterpiece.' Paul is playing off the picture of God as a master craftsman or as an artist. A picture that's often seen in the Old Testament.

This Greek word, *poiema*, from which we get our word poem can refer to all kinds of works of art. It's used in classical literature to refer to painting, to sculpture, to a song, to architecture, or to a poem. But I think Paul is intentionally calling to mind the Old Testament, and the most frequent metaphor of God as a craftsman or artist in the Old Testament, in reference to His people, is what? A potter. You remember, there are so many times in the Old Testament when God is pictured this way. Let me just show you one. Turn back to Isaiah 64:8. Isaiah writes:

But now, O Lord, You are our Father,  
We are the clay, [and] You our potter;  
And all of us are the work of Your hand.

That picture is in Isaiah 29, Isaiah 41, Isaiah 45, Jeremiah 18. Consistently throughout the Old Testament, when the authors of Scripture want to portray God as this sort of master worker, this craftsman, this artist, they go to the image of the clay and the potter. Paul uses that same picture in other places in his writings. Some of you studied this morning in Romans 9 in your Sunday School classes. That picture is there as well. All of us have probably had the occasion to watch a modern potter at work. We've watched as they've fashioned a piece of clay into a beautiful pot, or a vase, or a bowl. It's fascinating to watch as they throw the clay and then begin to spin it, and as it spins they mold and shape it with their hands into exactly the particular shape they want. You see, the point here is clear. The point is in the same way that a pot is made by a potter, and is designed and fashioned to fulfill the ends for which the potter intends it. In the same way, God has recreated us. He has made us His masterpiece, and as He has shaped us on the potter's wheel, if you will, He has designed us exactly to fulfill the original purpose He had in mind. We are His creation. We are His work of art.

This powerful image of God as the craftsman creating us comes with several implications that are far-reaching. You see, the idea of us being His masterpiece implies ownership. The artist, the potter, owns the pot. It belongs to him. Also implied in this is sovereignty. The potter has the right to decide to do with each piece he makes, whatever he chooses to do with it. And also involved in this image is design. The bowl doesn't decide how it will live out its existence. It is

shaped by the potter with specific characteristics to fill a certain role, whatever that may be. And we'll see in a moment what the potter had in mind when He created us.

But this grand declaration that begins verse 1 serves as a kind of hinge in this passage. It flows out of verses 8 and 9, and it leads into the end of verse 10. So, think of this first phrase as a kind of hinge on which the passage turns. Notice, verse 10 begins with the little word 'for.' As a side note, by the way, when you're reading your Bible, be aware that often the smallest words--words like *by*, *for*, *but* are the most important words in the passage, because they mark a change in the author's flow of thought. And they carry huge meaning. You need to understand what that word is doing—what's it functioning as-- in the passage. In verses 8 and 9, what's been happening? As we saw last week, in verses 8 and 9, Paul has just explained that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone to the glory of God alone. And at the end of verse 9, notice he says, "so that no one may boast. For [because] we are His workmanship." We are His work of art. Here is another proof of salvation being by grace alone. We didn't make ourselves. God made us. We can't boast in what we are. We can't boast in the beauty of the vase that we are, because the potter turned it; he's solely responsible--another proof of salvation being by grace alone without human merit or efforts. We are His creation. Now think about that for a moment, and ask yourself if this is how you normally think about your salvation--that you have been created by God. You see, we are so human and so fallen, that our minds naturally gravitate to think of our salvation in human terms.

If I were to ask you, well, how did you become a Christian, you might say something like this. I heard the gospel, and I decided to follow Jesus, or I gave my life to Christ, or I accepted Christ, or I received Christ. And of course, all of those things are true. There's an element of truth to all those statements. But what Paul wants us to see is that before our decisions, and before our prayers, and before anything pertaining to us, God, as a master craftsman, recreated us. He remade me by an act of His grace. So that connects back to verses 8 and 9.

But the phrase "we are His workmanship" not only points back to the idea that we have no reason to boast before God. It also points toward the end of verse 10 and introduces us to a new idea. If we are God's creation, God's masterpiece, His work of art; then like all craftsmen, like all great artists, God must have had a finished product in mind when He began. He must have had a plan, and this verse makes it clear that, in fact, He did. In this verse, Paul not only makes the declaration--number one, that we are God's creation--but he ends the verse and the paragraph with a second great declaration. Not only are we God's creation, but secondly, God has created us with a specific design. God has created us with a specific design in mind. Look again at verse 10. "For we are His workmanship, created..." This word "created" and everything that follows it in the rest of the verse explains what God had in mind when He set out to create His greatest masterpiece. By the way, that little word "created" means to call into being what has not previously existed. In the New Testament it's only used of God, and it's only used of God doing

two things. Of God's original act of creating the universe. In Colossians 1:16 it says 'by Jesus all things were created.' There's our word. And it's used secondly of God's change of the inner person of the believer.

Keep your finger there in Ephesians 2 and turn over a couple of pages to Colossians 3. You'll see it used in this way. Colossians 3:10 says I want you to "put on the new self [the new person you are in Christ] who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." You were created as a new person, if you're a Christian, by God.

Now, back in Ephesians 2, notice he says "created in Christ Jesus." If you've been studying with us through the book of Ephesians, this phrase doesn't come as a surprise to you at all, because Paul began the book--and we've seen it over and over again--by saying that everything we enjoy from God is because of our connection to Jesus Christ. You say, how am I as a Christian connected to Jesus Christ? Well, you're connected, or you're in Christ in two ways. You're connected to Him in the sense that He is your permanent representative. Everything He does, you get credit for. And you are also connected to Him in a spiritual way. The best way I can illustrate that is; it's as if there were a spiritual umbilical cord running from Christ at the throne of God into your spiritual life and giving you the energy to live for Jesus Christ. If you live a life of obedience, if you seek to obey Him, if you're growing as a Christian, it's not because there's something in you that enables you to do that. There is, as it were, a stream of life flowing from Christ Himself that empowers you to live like that. So, we were created because of our connection to Jesus Christ--because we are in Jesus Christ.

And notice he goes on to say we were created for good works. Here we get into the idea of design. You were created with a specific design in mind, created for good works. By 'for' Paul means goal or purpose. God created us with this design in mind. What design? Good works. Now, immediately, if you're a thinking person, your mind should go back to the fact that last week we talked about good works a lot. In verses 8 and 9 Paul deals with good works, and he says they're not good. But here he's saying that good works are connected to salvation. How do you reconcile that? Well, understand that Paul is making two entirely different points here. In verses 8 and 9 he's making one point; in verse 10 he's making another. In verses 8 and 9 Paul is making the point that the grounds of our salvation--the cause of our spiritual rescue--has nothing to do with our own efforts, or our own works.

And in verse 10 he's saying that while good works in no way contribute to our salvation, God so designed the rescue operation so that all of those who are rescued by grace alone will, after they have been rescued, be committed to good works. Two different things. Good works do not get you in, but if you're truly saved, if you're truly rescued, there will be good works. One commentator puts it like this. "Here is the Pauline paradox. All of the good works in the world

cannot put us right with God, but there is something radically wrong with the Christianity that does not result in good deeds."

Now, folks, understand that this is an absolutely crucial issue to get right. This is the difference between the true gospel and the false gospel. There are very few false gospels or false teachings about salvation, that leave out the word grace. If people show up at your door or you talk to friends who are from various traditions that have strayed on the issue of salvation, they will use the word grace. You talk to Mormons, or to Jehovah's Witnesses, or to Roman Catholics--you will hear the word grace. But that's not the issue. The important distinction--the crucial distinction between the biblical doctrine of salvation and the unbiblical teachings about salvation is this. What role do they assign to 'works' in salvation?

For example. If you could reduce the Roman Catholic system, the Roman Catholic teaching of the church, to a mathematical formula--when it comes to being right before God, to being justified, to having a right standing before God--that mathematical formula would go like this. Listen carefully. It would be Faith + Works = A Right Standing Before God, or Justification. Faith + Works = Justification. Now, grace is involved--God's grace gives you the ability to do those works, gives you the ability to believe--but you are made right with God based on your faith plus your own efforts. The biblical formula and the one that Paul is explaining in Ephesians 2, is totally different. Listen carefully. This is the biblical formula, if I reduced it to a mathematical formula. It would be Faith and Faith Alone = Justification, or a right standing before God + Works. You see the difference? Faith = Justification + Works.

You see, faith alone is the means by which sinners come to benefit from the finished work of Christ. But by faith alone we are justified--we are declared righteous before God--but that faith that justifies is never alone, as the reformers used to say. We are saved or justified by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. That is, it is followed by works. Where there is true faith, there is justification. Wherever there is true faith and justification, works will follow. Not as, listen carefully, not as the grounds or the cause of our salvation, but as its result. Paul totally excluded good works from contributing to our salvation in any way, back in verses 8 and 9. And in verse 10 he begins by saying we are God's work--His creation. Good works can never achieve our spiritual rescue, but they always follow it. They're not the goal of salvation--excuse me, good works are the goal of salvation, not the ground. They are the fruit of salvation, not the root. You see this throughout the Scripture.

Turn to our Lord's words in Matthew 5 as He begins the sermon on the Mount. He explains to His disciples that they are to be salt, and they are to be light. And as He finishes that, notice what He says in verse 16 of Matthew 5. "Let your light shine before men" And let it shine "in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Jesus said, if you're one of My disciples, there will be good works, and those good works will be a

demonstration that you are Mine. So many passages. Turn to another in Paul's writings, Colossians 1:10. In verse 9 Paul prays for the church in Colosse, and he says, I'm praying that you would be filled with the knowledge of His will. Why? Verse 10, "so that," in order that, "you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects," And how does that happen? "bearing fruit in every good work." In Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews 13:21 has the same prayer. In verse 20 he says I'm praying for you, verse 21, I'm praying that God would, "equip you in every good thing to do His will."

But the idea of Christians engaging in good works is a major theme of Paul's pastoral letters--that is, the letters he wrote to his young proteges, young pastors, Timothy and Titus, urging them to urge their congregations on the importance of good works. Let me just show you what a heavy emphasis Paul places on this as he writes to these young pastors. Turn to 2 Timothy 2. Second Timothy 2:21 says--he's talking about people in the church as vessels. Back to this idea of potter. He says if anyone cleanses himself from--in sanctification from various sins--he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared for every good work. Chapter 3 verse 17, as he talks about Scripture and all that it give us in its fullness. He said Scripture will make a man of God adequate--equipped--for every good work.

Turn over to Titus, the little letter of Titus, the next book. Titus 2:7. As he tells the young men what they are to do, of course this is true for all, but this is especially a struggle for young men, so he urges them--verse 7--in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds. Titus 2:14, Jesus gave Himself for us, to redeem us from every lawless deed, and not only to redeem us, not only to forgive us, but to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. Titus 3:1. Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed. Verse 8, "This is a trustworthy statement, and concerning these things, Titus, I want you to speak confidently so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men." Verse 14, our people, that is, the people of the church, people who know God, must learn to engage in good deeds. You see the stress that Paul puts on this. If you're in Christ, this is what God re-created you for. Get in step with the program. Get in line with what God made you to do and to be. That's what Paul is urging us. This means that for the Christian, good works aren't just kind of a good idea that you ought to do if you can fit it into your life. This is what you were designed for.

When I travel, I often will pick up a gift for my wife, and from time to time, we both enjoy hot beverages, coffee or hot tea, and so I was, at one point, in a place where I thought I'd pick up a teapot. And I bought her a teapot, and it was a beautiful teapot, very well designed, beautifully arranged, and so I bring it home, and we think, once I got home, well, , let's make some tea, and enjoy it together on one of the mornings after I got home, and so she made tea, and she goes to pour the pot of tea, and the tea, instead of coming out of the spout, drains and dribbles down the edge onto the table. And no matter how hard you worked at making that teapot pour properly, it



didn't work. It didn't fulfill the design for which it was made. Listen, God designed us, He made us for a specific purpose in mind. And when God designs something, it always functions the way He designed it to function.

The question is, if we're designed for good works, what exactly are good works? Well, in one sense, we could say all of Scripture, all the commands of Scripture are good works. And that's certainly true, but in the context here, Paul is referring I think more specifically, to the commands that he's going to give, the practical commands he's going to give in chapters 4 through 6. He is going to fill out exactly what good works look like when he gets to chapters 4 through 6. In fact, buried at the heart of that practical section at the end of the letter, Paul comes back to this idea of our having been recreated with this design in mind. Look over in chapter 4 of Ephesians. Ephesians 4:24. Buried right in the heart of his discussions about sanctification, of living a different kind of life, look at what he refers to. Ephesians 4:24. As he's talking about the process of sanctification, he says "put on the new self." The new person that you are in Jesus Christ. Start living in keeping with that person, and that new person is in the likeness of God-- has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

You see what Paul's doing? He's saying, listen, as I'm telling you to do all this stuff, understand that the commands I'm giving you, these very practical commands, are ultimately built on the foundation I built back in chapter 2, that you were designed for this. You were made by God to live like this. That's what he's arguing. God created our new lives as Christians for this reason. Now, notice how Paul describes these good works back in Ephesians 2. He says in verse 10, we're created for good works, and then he describes them in two different ways. He says, which God prepared beforehand, and a second way, so that we would walk in them.

Let's look at both of those phrases, because they help fill out this idea of good works. First of all he describes them as works God eternally prepared--which God prepared beforehand. You know what he's saying? He's saying before God recreated you, before you were saved--he's really talking about eternity past. In eternity past God determined the direction and function and pattern of your new life. God decided it would be good works. This is hinted at in chapter 1. You go back to chapter 1 verse 4, where we were talking about election here. Paul says He chose us in Christ that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In eternity past, God chose us with the goal of our being holy and blameless in Christ. In Romans chapter 8, Paul makes it explicit, when he says God predestined us--what?--to become conformed to the image of His Son. Do you see it? In eternity past, God decided--listen carefully--that you would ultimately be like Jesus Christ. He predestined that you would be conformed to His Son. What was Jesus like? What did Jesus' life on earth look like?

I love Peter's description to Cornelius in Acts 10. He says Jesus of Nazareth was, as you've heard, a man who went about doing good. Jesus' life was a life of good works, of both

benevolent deeds as well as obedience to His Father. This is who Jesus was. That's why John the apostle, in 1 John 2:6 says, "the one who says he abides in Christ ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked."

If you claim to be a Christian, then live like Christ. Pursue living like He lived. That's what God has in mind. God had a particular design in mind when He saved you, and that design was to make you like His Son. It's like the renaissance sculptor and painter Michelangelo was once asked as he was chipping away at this shapeless stone with a hammer and chisel. He had really just begun. Someone asked him what he was making. And I love Michelangelo's answer. He said, I'm liberating an angel from this stone. You see, as the great artist, he already had in mind what the finished product would look like, and when God saved you, He already had in mind what you would look like. It wouldn't be an angel. It would be like His Son, Jesus Christ.

Notice the second way he describes these works back in verse 10 of chapter 2. Not only did God prepare them beforehand, but they are works that we must walk in. Works that we must habitually practice. This is why God prepared our good works beforehand. Here's where divine sovereignty meets human responsibility. God designed you for good works, so walk in them. The word walk implies conduct as a habit of life. If you're a Christian, God designed you as His creation so that you would walk as a habit of life in good works. You remember how we used to walk. Go back to chapter 2 verses 2 and 3. We used to walk in step with Satan, in step with our flesh, in step with the world, but God has designed us now to walk in good works.

I cannot explain to you how important this verse is to the rest of this letter adequately, but let me try to show you. Paul builds on this very concept of walking in what God has made us to be when he gets to the practical section of the letter. In fact, look at Ephesians 4:1. At the very first verse of the practical section of this letter, what does he say? "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." He comes to this idea of walking in conduct in keeping with who you are and who you were designed to be. Verse 17, stop walking like the Gentiles walk. Chapter 5 verse 2, walk in love--in fact, verse 1 says it--"be imitators of God as beloved children, walk in love as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for you." Verse 8, "for you were formerly darkness, but you're now light in the Lord. walk as children of light." Verse 15, "be careful how you walk."

You see, Paul is playing off this verse we looked at this morning when he gets to the practical section, and he's saying, listen, God designed you. You are His creation. And He designed you to live like this, so start walking like this. That's the heart of Paul's admonition here. We are His creation--we are God's creation--and God created us with a specific design in mind, and that design was a life of good works, a life of obedience to His word, a life described in Ephesians 4 through 6.

Now, as we finish our time today, very briefly, let me give you a couple of direct applications that grow out of this text for us, things we ought to think differently about, and things we ought to do.

Number one. Based on what we've studied here in this verse, understand that good works are an important evidence of genuine salvation. Good works are an important evidence of genuine salvation. There's another view that's fairly popular here in the Dallas area. If we reduce what they teach to a formula as I did the other formulas before, it would be Faith = Justification period, no works on either side of the equation. There are those who deny that a Christian will, of necessity, once saved, do good works. Whoever may teach that, and however much they may be respected, that's not what the Bible says. We studied James 2 at great length when we went through the Epistle of James. James makes it clear that faith that isn't followed by works isn't saving faith at all. Listen to Lloyd-Jones.

"If you do not desire to be holy, I do not see that you have any right to think that you are a Christian. It is a part of God's design that we be prepared unto good works. If you think that you can abstract forgiveness only from the plan of salvation, you completely misunderstand the plan. When God looked upon you and loved you and began to work in you to make you a Christian, He had already prepared the works which you would live and perform. There is no such thing as justification without sanctification. Faith without works is dead."

Harold Hohner of DTS shows that he is out of step with some of his compatriots when he writes in his commentary, "works are not a means of salvation--only faith is. But works are an evidence of salvation. God working in the believer His prepared works."

Number two. Good works are still grace. You see, good works are not something that we do separate from the empowerment and grace of God. Good works are something that God works in us and through us. You remember in John 15, Jesus says, I want you to bear fruit. I want you to bear fruit. I want you to bear fruit. And then He says, buried right in the very middle of all of that, and apart from me, what?--you can do nothing. The way Paul puts it in Philippians 1:6, is that God began the work in you, God is continuing the work in you, and God will complete the work in you. Or Philippians 2:12, 13. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because it is God who is at work in you and God is giving you the willing to do and the doing. Good works are still grace, something God works in and through us. That's why, by the way, those rewards we get in heaven represented by the crowns, we just throw them back at the foot of Christ. Because we didn't earn them. They're not ours. They're still grace.

Number three. Salvation is from start to finish a work of sovereign grace. Salvation is, from start to finish, a work of sovereign grace. We are His workmanship, His masterpiece, His work of art,

He painted us, He wrote us, He sculpted us. We're His. We did not make ourselves Christians, or who we are. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 15:10, 'by the grace of God I am what I am.'

Number four. The ultimate goal for every Christian is to be like Jesus Christ. I love Galatians 4 verse 19. "My children [Paul writes] with whom I am again in labor, until Christ is fully formed in you." Listen, that's your pursuit, if you're a Christian. That's your goal--to live and to think and to act like Jesus Christ. And to whatever extent you don't, confess that to God and be pursuing that. We will not arrive in perfection. We're all frail and feeble and weak and sinful, but that ought to be the direction of your life, if it's not the perfection of your life. And it's not the perfection. But it ought to be the direction.

Number five, and finally. Every Christian will reach that goal. Every Christian will reach that goal. You see, there's a wonderful sense of assurance that flows out of verse 10. If God had a plan, and He did, then He will stop at nothing to see that plan fulfilled in each of us. There is nothing inside of us or nothing outside of us that will prevent God from fulfilling the design that He intended. My teapot may not have fulfilled the design for which it was intended, but God has no rejects. He has no failures. He predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, and without failure, without exception, every true Christian will arrive there. It may be haltingly. It may be by fits and starts, but we'll get there. What God designs always works like He designed it. And what God starts, He always finishes. As Lloyd-Jones puts it "there are no rejects in God's factory of salvation." Or to put it another way, God never ruins a piece of canvas. He never mars a piece of pottery. He never has to rewrite one of His great poems. We are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works. So we end this paragraph where we began it. Our salvation is from the very beginning to the very end, entirely of God.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank You for the majesty of these profound thoughts. Lord, help us to think on these things. We get so tied down to earth--so tied to the stuff that keeps us busy--that keeps our eyes on the smallness of life. Lord, lift our eyes to think and to contemplate on what You have done and are doing in us and through us. Help us to see that we are part of a huge majestic plan in which You have determined to set your glory on display, to remove all calls for boasting from the universe, and to guarantee our good works for Your glory, and for the glory of Your Son, whose image we will someday bear.

Father, I pray for us who are genuine Christians here this morning, who truly are followers of Your Son. Help us pursue likeness to Him. Lord we realize it won't be because of us--it will be by grace, but give us the strength to grow. May we see, may we comprehend in ourselves growth in likeness to Him, as day goes by day and week to week, and year to year.

And Father, I pray today for those Christians that are here that have stopped pursuing the design. Instead they're pursuing their own designs. Father, may this be the day that there's true

repentance in their hearts. Bring them back to Christ, back to His Lordship, back to His sovereignty in their lives.

And Father, I pray as well, for those who are here this morning, who don't know Christ, who are pursuing their own ends, their own goals, their own pleasures. They're enslaved to themselves and their sin. Lord, may this be the day You open their eyes to see the beauty of Jesus Christ, and may they be willing to give everything else up to get Him. We pray it in His name. Amen.