

TBC – 1/2/05 p.m.

“HIS WORKMANSHIP”

Ephesians 2:10

Intro: Ephesians 2:1-10 is one of the great salvation passages of the Bible. Those verses can be divided into four parts:

- 1) In verses 1-3 we see the need for salvation.
- 2) In verses 4-7 we see the divine nature and scope of our salvation.
- 3) In verses 8-9 we see that salvation is by grace.
- 4) In verse 10 we see the present object of our salvation.

In spite of such clear teaching there have always been, and probably always will be, those who want to bring our works into salvation. And some are so afraid that faith and works will be mixed together that they want to omit any reference to works in the preaching of the Gospel. But it is clear in this passage that Paul did bring them together. But it was not that we work for our salvation, but that we are saved unto good works. If it were not for the mercy and love of God toward sinners, sinners who according to chapter 1 who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, there would be no salvation. And we can see from the first three verses of our chapter that our condition was so hopeless before we were saved, that if God had not done something about our salvation, there would be no salvation. But verses 4 through 7 show that salvation from start to finish is all of God. Verses 8 and 9 show that no part of it is deserved by us, no part of it is dependent upon us. And verse 10 tells that our salvation is the result of God's doing. “We are His workmanship.” Salvation is just as much of a miracle as the creation of the world, and that is why both are spoken of as creations. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

And so “we are His workmanship,” His ποίημα.

This Greek word is only used one other time in the NT, and that is in Romans 1:20 where it is translated as “the things that are made.” The world and all that is in it (except for sin) was created by God. The world is His workmanship. No creature had any part in it. Read Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and you will see that all of creation was completed before God created Adam and Eve, and so it was impossible that any human being could contribute with God in the work of salvation. And God has put in every human heart the consciousness of God's existence, and that the universe is His work. But Paul described man, that is, human

beings, as *God's workmanship*.

Now when God created this universe in which we live, along with all of the living creatures that live upon it, or above it, or below it in the waters of the earth, what did He have to begin with? Nothing. Now take that to salvation. When God decided to save us, what did He have to begin with that was already in us. Again, the answer is, Nothing. Salvation is not the regeneration of Ephesians 2:1-3, but it is the creation of a life that was not there before. The salvation of any individual, of every individual, is just as miraculous a work of God as was the creation of the universe in the beginning. It consists in being born again, or being born from above. The work of salvation is a miraculous gift by God, and from God. But, in spite of all that the Scriptures say about salvation, there are always some who want to give man some of the credit for becoming a child of God.

Or if you take the idea of the new birth, we all have to admit that we had absolutely nothing to do with our first birth. And carrying that idea over into our salvation which is a new birth, we have nothing to do with it. It is totally a work of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In Titus 3 we have a passage that is similar to the first 10 verses of Ephesians. Turn to Titus 3: 3 and follow in your Bibles as I read down through verse 8. (Read.) Verse 8 reads very much like Ephesians 2:10, doesn't it?

While we are in Titus, look at chapter 2, verses 11 through 15.

Now the point in all of this is that we are not saved by any good works that we do, but we are saved "unto good works." We don't work up to salvation because there is nothing that an unregenerate sinner can do to please God. But after we are saved, things are altogether different for us. Then, by His grace, and only by His grace, we can do good works. Paul called it walking "in newness of life."

Think of good works as a total change of character. The Apostle John was very strong on this, and he wrote his first epistle to tell us how we can know that we have eternal life. And the point that he made, is in complete harmony with the teaching of the Apostle Paul that if there is no change, there is no life, no eternal life. The Bible knows nothing of a salvation which leaves a person after he was saved, just like he was before he was saved. Again referring to 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in

Christ, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” When Saul of Tarsus went into the city of Damascus, he was an entirely different man from what he had been when he left Jerusalem to go to Damascus. So instead of binding Christians and taking them back to Jerusalem to persecute them, and probably have some killed, he met with the believers in Damascus and taught them, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was their Messiah, the Christ. And Paul never reverted to what he had been when the Lord saved him. His life was forever changed.

I am not saying that we as Christians are perfect, because we are not! But we are changed, transformed, new creatures.

Now let us go back to Ephesians 2:10.

Paul was addressing all of the believers in Ephesus, and, if it is true that this epistle was a circular letter intended to be delivered first to the church at Ephesus, and then passed on to many of the same cities and churches where John was told to send the book of The Revelation, then Paul was including every believer, every true believer, in all of those places when he said, and they read, “we are His workmanship.” They may have been in many different stages of spiritual growth, but they were all God’s workmanship. And the same is true of us tonight. “We are his workmanship.” Let those words sink down into your heart.

And you know, this is one reason that we need to be very careful about trying to get people to make a profession of faith, or to tell us that they are saved. No one is saved until God saves them. This is what this expression means. We are not in the business of saving people. Our responsibility is to make sure that people hear the Gospel. We are witnesses, not Saviors.

The story is told of a drunk who stopped D. L. Moody as he was walking down a street in Chicago. He was so drunk that he could hardly stand up. But he recognized Mr. Moody, and said to him, “Do you know who I am? I’m one of your converts.” Mr. Moody responded by saying, “That’s probably true because it is very apparent that your not one of the Lord’s converts.” We need to witness, answer questions, and to urge people to believe in the Lord Jesus, but then we must leave it up to the Lord if His Word is to bear fruit in the life of that person, or not. We pray, and we can continue to witness, but the Lord must do the saving.

But now look at our text again. “We are His workmanship, created.” Only God can create out of nothing. And He does it “in Christ Jesus.” And then I want you to notice something very, very important in our verse. *Paul linked together the word “works” with the word “walk.” Basically our works are our walk. And, as I sought to bring out in my message this morning, our walk is the way we live, taking one step after another as we seek to live in ways that are pleasing to the Lord.*

My talk may indicate that God has saved me, and it should. But it is my walk, my lifestyle, my conduct, where people are to see that God has saved me.

So, are works important? Let us let James answer that question for us. I am always amazed to remember that Martin Luther called the epistle of James an epistle of straw. It is solid truth.

Let me read to you the passage in which James spoke of the importance of works as evidence of our salvation. Please turn to James, chapter 2, and verse 14, and follow me as I read down to the end of the chapter. James was dealing with the question as to whether or not faith is true faith if it not accompanied by works. And he gives us two illustrations from the OT to show us examples of works. We think of preaching sermons, or teaching a Sunday School class, and those are works which only a true child of God should be involved in. But he gives us some ideas of what the word *works* includes. How important it is to know the stories of the Bible! They are like lights turned on to help us to understand the teaching of God's Word.

Now let me read James 2:14 through 26.

Back to Ephesians 2:10 as we close. Do you see the sovereignty of God in this verse. Look at the words “before ordained” with respect to our works. This word also appears only twice in the NT, here and in Rom. 9:23. Each one of us has a plan from God laid out and decreed before we were even born. He uses us all as His servants. He saves us, and then makes us instruments in His hands to touch the lives of others. Tom explained to us this morning that our Lord is “upholding all things by the word of His power” from Hebrews 1:3.

We show by our lives that we are “His workmanship.” And we must never forget this in our walk with the Lord, nor must we forget it when we

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are telling others about salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.