

Eph 2 7-10

Good morning and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 2?

Do you ever go through old family photos? **SHOW PIC** It's always interesting when you dust off the old pictures you haven't seen in awhile, and a whole flood of memories overtakes you as your eyes carefully study those old pictures. Those old photos are a reminder of who we used to be. **CLOSE PIC**

In much the same way, this is what we saw last week in verses 1-3 of chapter 2 as we studied our testimony, who we were before we came to Christ. But then in verse 4 you'll recall it begins with those monumental, glorious words, 'but God'.

This morning we'll pick up our study in verse 7, but before we do, let's again read verses 1-10 to make sure we understand the context of what we're digging into

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in

the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We're only going to study verses 7-10 this morning, and the title of the message is "The Marvelous Masterpiece"

Let's pray

7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Here is the final and definitive reason for God's action on behalf of humanity. Here is why He's made us alive, why He's raised us, and seated us along with his Son in the heavenly places.

God wants to show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us, in the ages to come-for all eternity we'll be praising the One who did all this for us!.

Just think about the church for a minute. The church, the body of Christ is Exhibit A on Gods incredible mercy and grace. We're a bunch of flawed, sinful, people who are still capable of stupidity and faithlessness aren't we? We have different backgrounds, different hobbies, different personalities and passions. How can such a diverse group of sinful men and women get together and do anything for the glory of God? Who else but God would use people like us?

You and I are trophies of God's grace! It's all on His end, He initiated it all, and we'll be praising Him for all eternity. More on this later.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, Now this isn't the first time in Ephesians that we see that it's by grace we have been saved. We saw Paul's parenthetical declaration of this in verses 4 and 5 **4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

Elaborating on the statement in verse 5, verse 8 removes any doubt that our salvation is based on our efforts.

Now as Christians we can sometimes be guilty of throwing words around and we forget what it is that they mean, so let's take a moment and define some of these words.

What does it mean to be saved? That's what verses 5 and 6 told us last week, that as followers of Jesus we're made alive, raised, and seated with Christ. We're saved from our old lifestyle of sin. Because we were separated from God we were on our way to hell. But now we have a home in heaven. That's what it means to be saved.

And what have we done to deserve this salvation? Nothin'!

Remember, mercy is not getting what we deserve. If I get pulled over for speeding, and the cop gives me a warning, he showed me mercy.

But grace is getting that which we don't deserve. Remember the acronym for grace that beautifully defines it. God's Riches At Christ's Expense

So not only does God mercifully not give us the judgment and punishment that we so clearly deserve, He swaps out our punishment with the almost unbelievable gifts of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. What a deal!

But something is required of us to enjoy these eternal benefits. God's grace requires faith on our part to accept it. Why?

Because it's clear to every person, and ourselves that there's only one verdict possible. We are guilty sinners. So by grace you have been saved through faith, by placing our faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins.

So let's take this from the theological to the practical.

In verse 4, Paul mentions God's "rich mercy," and His "great grace" - then he says something wonderful. He adds five words, "with which He loved us." It's one thing to speak of the richness of God's mercy and the greatness of His grace... They fill the heavens!

But then God aims his mercy and grace toward each one of us. God took His "rich mercy" and "great grace," and with them, He

loved us! This is mind-boggling, and here's where Paul gets careful.

Paul goes out of his way to protect against anyone thinking that our salvation is something we've earned. It's all God's grace! We've been saved "by grace..."

SHOW PIC In a "Dennis the Menace" comic strip, Dennis and his buddy, Joey, are leaving Mrs. Wilson's house. Their hands are full of cookies. Their faces are covered with crumbs and chocolate smudges, and great, big smiles.. Joey asks, "I wonder what we did to deserve this?" Dennis, who normally is a menace - answers with the perfect definition of grace, "Look Joey, Mrs. Wilson gives us cookies not because we're nice, but because she's nice."

CLOSE PIC

That's a great description for God's grace! It flows from His heart. Grace is God's initiative. It's His willingness to love folks who don't deserve to be loved. Hey can any of us in this room really say that we DESERVE to be loved?

Hey and never forget-grace isn't fair - grace is free. Grace isn't earned - it's given... It's the unbuyable, un-earnable love of God.

See if we could act in a way to earn God's favor, or His love; then it wouldn't be grace. God saves us not because we're good, but because He's full of grace.

This is why it's so treacherous for folks to try to be religious to improve their standing with God. Religion thunders with a booming voice-more responsibility! More structure and more

duty! But Jesus says the work is done. The price is paid.

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grace-the free, unearned, unmerited, underserved LOVE of God is upon each and every one of us because of Jesus Christ.

Verse 9 adds those words you likely know...

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

So we know that salvation is by grace, and it's not of us. Salvation is also through faith, so it is not by works. And it's God's gift, which means it's not of our origination. This is beautiful because it means no one now, and no one in heaven will ever be able to boast that they have done something that earned them salvation.

Could you imagine how awful heaven would be if we had to listen to prideful people drone on and on, year after year - for all eternity - about the great sacrifices they made, the good they did, all their noble deeds. After a few thousand years of brag-fest I'm certain heaven wouldn't seem so heavenly if we could boast about our works. But there is no boasting in heaven!

SHOW PIC On September 18, 1985, late night talk show host David Letterman broadcast his very first of many top 10 lists. Do you remember those top 10 lists? **CLOSE PIC**

Well did you know God has his own list-it's not 10, but actually it's 6 things the Lord hates - and look at what's first on the list

Proverbs 6:16 These six things the LORD hates,

Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

17 A proud look,

A lying tongue,

Hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans,

Feet that are swift in running to evil,

19 A false witness who speaks lies,

And one who sows discord among brethren.

Proverbs 6 tells us God doesn't wait for a proud person to open their mouth. No, God hates a proud man's look. Like someone raking their fingernails down a blackboard, arrogance grates on God's nerves. The one thing we'll never find in heaven is haughtiness.

It's wisely been said, "Pride is the only disease known to man that makes everyone sick except the one who has it."

And this is what makes grace so amazing. If there was something we could do to earn God's favor it would justify our boasting, but there's not, so we can't. God has eliminated all possibility for boasting by rendering our good works unnecessary for His grace.

Because we live in such a performance driven society, we can struggle with the concept of grace. But the bible is clear-no matter who we are - what we do - how hard we try - on our own, none of us will ever be good enough for God.

We obtain and we maintain a right standing with God - “not of works” but “by grace through faith.”

And this is what makes grace so wonderful! God wants to cleanse us of our sin, and make our lives beautiful, and useful, and full of good works, but not as a way to earn God’s favor, but rather as a way to place His favor on display and bring Him glory

Sadly there’s folks who feel like they have to try to get saved every day, going forward to another altar call every week, trying to recommit their commitment. Listen, we don’t have to grovel, God doesn't want our groveling.

As a dad, I don't want my kids groveling at my feet. I love them. I want them to understand everything I have for them and everything I would do for them and how I would lay down my life for them.

Ephesians 2 is telling us these things because God wants us to know we’re secure, He wants us to stand.

God interrupted our lives that were hopeless, and He did it because of the mercy and grace and the love He has. He saw us in the cemetery, He saw us in the graveyard of sin, and He loves with such a great love that He called us out of there. And He put us with His own Son Jesus. God gives us life with Jesus, He raised us with Him, and He sits us in heavenly places with Him.

And you know what? In the ages to come, everybody's gonna see the great love and the grace that God has towards His kids. It's gonna be demonstrated forever.

You and I didn't do any of this anymore than Lazarus did it when Jesus called him out of the tomb. God did it all. All of the glory is Gods. All of the honor is His. All of the praise is His. We'll be in heaven and we'll see the Lamb with the marks of slaughter upon Him in the middle of everything, because He paid the price.

We're gonna spend the rest of our time this morning on verse 10

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Verse 10 tells us "We are His workmanship!"

In the Greek language the term "workmanship" is "poema" - from which we get our English word "poem."

A poema is an artistic expression, its a work of art.

When a painter paints or a sculptor sculpts, the art that comes forth is an expression of the artist's tastes, desires, and dreams, and creativity. It's a reflection of the artist's heart. You are God's masterpiece.

When we came to Christ, God put the Spirit of the Artist in each of us. The Holy Spirit now treats us like His canvas. He applies His brushstrokes, and spreads out His mixtures of color, and adds texture here, and highlights there. God is using these lives of ours to carry out His plans.

Which means we should think of our lives as the canvas on the easel, or the clay in the Master's hands. We should be available, and moldable to His promptings.

I did a little research this week, and found that

SHOW PIC The most expensive painting ever sold was the painting called Salvator Mundi, it was sold for a staggering \$450.3 million in 2017 to a Saudi prince, who reportedly kept it on his yacht. **CLOSE PIC**

Imagine- \$450 million just to hang on a wall in a yacht sitting in a dock. So now can you fathom what your life is worth! You're worth so much more, Jesus was willing to die for you!

To be sure, we're all paintings in progress-none of us are finished masterpieces yet. But never forget ultimately our lives reflect the impression of God, which means you and I are invaluable.

And who knows how your canvass will appear - how it will all blend - when God the artist is finally through. You are His masterpiece and He'll work tirelessly in you to produce the work of art that will bring Him glory.

And I hope you know this is the heartbeat of Christianity. If your concept of the Christian life is a bunch of rules and regulations that have to be laboriously kept - or a list of duties we trudge through day after day - then you are missing out on the glorious grace of God!

Christianity isn't focused on what we can do for God, as it is about what God has done for us!

Which means we can't brag! Anything we are that's good and godly in our lives is because we're His workmanship - not our own. We're God the Artist's masterpiece.

When you go to an art museum, you know what you never ever see. The paintbrush! You see the painting, the details of the painting, but never the brush! Why? Because the brush is just the tool in the hands of the artist.

Nobody ever looks at a master painting and says oooh and ahhhh look how amazing that paintbrush is. No they say look at that artist.

One of the biggest problems affecting our society today, especially the younger generation, is that of a low self esteem. This is why these verses are so important-Listen-know who you are! You are God's masterpiece!!!! Yes the world may reject you, the world may exclude you, but God will never leave you nor forsake-you're His! Your heart is connected to His heart

SHOW PIC Have you ever noticed the incredible variety in an art museum? No 2 paintings are exactly the same. Paintings come in all different sizes, and styles, and colors, and textures. **CLOSE PIC** And it's the same with God's masterpieces!

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all

baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. As individual Christians we look different, we talk different, we have different hobbies and enjoy different activities. But we are bound in unity because we have the same Artist who is shaping our lives.

Think about what our world values most today. It values power, and prestige, riches, and fame. But our world doesn't even value human life any more, it doesn't value the masterpiece you are! The world has rejected the Artist, which means they'll reject His work. This is why we don't fit into this world, because this world is not our home.

Let's read verse 10 1 more time **10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

Later on, in his last meeting with the elders of this Ephesians church, Paul said **Acts 20:24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself,[fn] so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.**

Paul says if by any means I might finish my race with joy. He understood there were things that God had laid out for him that were to be part of his life.

God didn't just save us and we're static, or idle. God the artist is using us to reach the lost realm of humanity through our lives. God has decided to make us a demonstration of what He can do. You know what we call this? It's our testimony.

If the Christ who walked among us, who raised the dead, healed the sick, who did not sin, who did good works, if that Christ comes into our heart and lives, then it only figures there should be good works flowing out of us!

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

There should be good works in our life as we run this race of life, because this is the Christ who's living in us. This is the Holy One. This is the Savior.

And what the devil tries to make us forget is that when we mess up in this race, when we take a wrong turn, when we make mistakes, God doesn't put a vacancy sign out in front of us and move on.

No God's committed to us, because He knows the end from the beginning. Remember, He sees us justified, sanctified and glorified. As long as we have breath in these lungs, He is still working in us and through us! **Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;**

God has things for us to do while we're here on this earth, however much time we may have left. These works God has planned for us beforehand, and we should walk in them because we're His canvas, we're His poetry to a lost world.

Please, never forget God wants to touch a lost world through your life.

Think about what we've studied in the last few weeks. We deserve nothing. We were lost and dead in our trespasses and sin. Then we accepted Christ's forgiveness when we didn't even deserve it and now we have a future inheritance in heaven.

After we got saved, He put us in a position where He has good works for us to walk in, that you can get heavenly rewards for when we get to heaven. **1 Corinthians 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.**

We can't fully fathom all of this grace!

But the problem is, if you're not saved, if you don't have a relationship with God through Jesus, then you're spiritually dead. And if you're spiritually dead, you can't see this, it doesn't make sense.

But if you're alive in Christ, we spend the rest of our lives learning to take hold of this because it's beyond wonder.

I've spent the last several minutes discussing how God views us, and the implication of these verses, knowing we are God's masterpiece. But as we get ready to close there's one other application to verse 10 that we can't ignore.

See knowing that we're all God's poem, we're all His masterpieces, shouldn't this dictate how we treat one another? You don't walk up to a masterpiece on a wall and pull it off there with your grubby hands. No it's delicate, you wear white gloves, and handle it gently, because it's invaluable.

Shouldn't we treat each other the same way? We should never devalue God's work of art by tearing others down with bitter attitudes or spiteful words. Remember, that person is God's masterpiece, and He's not done working in them, just like He's still applying the brush to my life, and your life.

We're all works in progress.