



# gracefellowship

Series: What About the Change?  
Date: October 15, 2024

Title: Changed to Do Good  
Passage: Ephesians 2:1-10

Introduction: We just finished a teaching series called “unWorthy: Calling the Outcasts.” Throughout the series we focused on God’s love and grace expressed through Jesus in the book of Matthew. God has a heart for people the world has turned it’s back on. There is no one who is too great a sinner for the love of God to reach and change. That series was heavily focused on God’s grace and love. The issue we see in our world all too often though is that people want to focus on the love and grace of God that they believe God calls people to Him in their sin but has not expectation that they change in any way.

In fact, Paul dealt with that same line of thinking when he wrote the book of Romans. In Romans 5 he makes the statement that “where sin increased, grace increased all the more.” (vs 20) This led to a hypothetical question: “Shall we go on sinning so grace can increase all the more?” (Romans 6:1) And Paul’s answer is emphatically, “No!”

Every New Testament author would say that when we come into faith in Jesus a change is meant to take place in our lives. We have been set free from sin in order to pursue a different path, a different direction. When you trust in Jesus as your Savior there is change that is meant to take place in your life. In this series we are going to look at those different changes that take place when we leave our former life behind us and embrace the life of Jesus.

In our last series we did a message about how the grace of God was extended to the thief on the cross and even though he never took communion, attended a Bible study, got baptized, tithed or anything else, he still made it into the eternal reward of God simply through his faith and God’s grace. But what if that man had been taken off the cross? What if he had gotten to experience an extended life? What would we have expected to see from him?

We would expect for him, in a life surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus, to...

- follow Jesus in baptism
- join in the generosity of giving
- plug into a community of faith
- study and follow God’s Word
- share his faith

We would expect that a person who genuinely commits their life to Jesus is changed by Him and submits to His Lordship.

In fact, our definition of a disciple of Jesus comes from Matthew 4:19 when Jesus called His first followers:

**:: Matthew 4:19 (ESV)**

**19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”**

**A disciple of Jesus:  
Follows Jesus  
Is Changed by Jesus  
Joins the mission of Jesus**

The last series we did was focused on people following Jesus. This series is going to focus on being changed by Jesus. Our Christmas series is going to focus on joining the mission of Jesus.

You and I, if you are a follower of Jesus, are like the thief on the cross- we've been given eternal life with God because we've placed our faith in Jesus for salvation from our sins. However, unlike the thief, we have been given a life to live after we started following Jesus.

**What changes are you seeing in your life, over time, as you follow Jesus?**

- I've heard conversion accounts of people being radically changed by Jesus in a moment and having addictions taken from them instantaneously or marriages healed almost overnight or relationships that had been broken for years restored in moments.
- Then there are those who accept Jesus as younger kids or teenagers and their journey is marked by a lifelong pursuit of knowing and loving Jesus and growing in faith and obedience over the years.
- I've also know people who have trusted Jesus as their Savior and has battled their demons from the past for years and struggle for decades to gain the kind of freedom they long for in their faith.

As you walk with Jesus, some changes come quickly and are lasting. Some changes take time and there is a struggle to embrace the changes God wants for you. But no matter where you find yourself, realize that our journey is a life-long pursuit and sacrifice is required.

In fact...

**You can't claim faith in Jesus and not change to be like Him.**

Can you imagine joining the military, going to boot camp and the first time your drill sergeant tells you to run 5 miles you reply by saying, “I think I’m going to stay in the barracks and take a nap!”

Or imagine joining a company and the first day of your job when your boss gives you an assignment, saying, “I don’t really want to do that; it doesn’t seem fun to me.”

Yet, for some reason, we think we have the option of coming to Jesus and saying, “I want to go heaven and enjoy an eternal reward, but while I’m on earth, don’t even think about touching this part of my life, or speaking into this issue I deal with, or telling me how to think and behave. I don’t want to change.”

This morning I want us to take the remaining time we have and look at Ephesians 2 together and talk about the first area of change that occurs when we come into faith in Jesus.

### **God changes us to be part of His work in the world.**

#### **:: Ephesians 2:1-10**

- 1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,**  
**2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.**  
**3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh<sup>a</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.**  
**4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,**  
**5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.**  
**6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,**  
**7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.**  
**8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**  
**9 not by works, so that no one can boast.**  
**10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

#### Talking Points:

1. Before Jesus saved us, Paul says we were dead in our transgressions and sins. We are born into this world as enemies of God, with our hearts set against Him. In verse 3 Paul says we are by *nature* deserving of wrath.

2. In our rebellion we are fixated on gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following our desires and thoughts with no respect to God. “If it feels good, do it!”
3. But...God! God, who created us to be in relationship with Him and who desires our freedom from the effects of sin, made the way through Jesus’ death on the cross to save us from our sin.
4. How did He accomplish that? By grace. Twice in this passage Paul says that it is by grace you are saved. Then in verse 8 he elaborates further and says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast.” (vs. 8-9)
  - a. The change that we are invited into is by God’s grace, through our faith- a gift, not something we can work for or earn. Why? So no one can boast and say they deserve it.
  - b. Every major world religion has a works based approach to salvation- you work and earn and achieve, and if you’ve been good enough you make it to God. Christianity says, you can’t do enough good to get to God, so God humbled Himself and came to rescue us!
  - c. No one gets to heaven based on the merits of what they did. When we get to heaven one day you won’t meet a single person who says, “I’m here because of all my volunteer hours with the homeless shelter.” Or, “I got in because I gave 50% of my income to charities.” Salvation is a gift born out of God’s grace toward us.
5. Now, here’s where things turn slightly. Once we are saved Paul states emphatically and unapologetically: “For we are God’s handiwork (masterpiece), created in Christ Jesus to *do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**We are not saved by our works, but our salvation will result in good works!**

Part of the change that happens in the life of a believer in Jesus is that you will seek to honor God by doing good deeds in His name. This is why we believe so strongly in serving our community and work so hard to create spaces for people to serve and engage outside the walls of our church.

Illustration: Yesterday we partnered with an event in Kingsport called Model Love. We had people from our church at three different venues serving and making an impact around our city. This is part of our #20for20 Service Projects for the year. As we celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a church we are engaging in 20 service projects around our community. Why? Because we have been saved to do good works.

While you wait for the glorious promise of heaven there is work to be done on earth to bring God’s Kingdom into view for others all around us.

James talks about this aspect of following Jesus. He describes how our faith is demonstrated by the things we do.

**:: James 2:14-19**

**14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?**

**15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.**

**16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?**

**17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**

**18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”**

**Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.**

The basic argument James lays down is you can't demonstrate faith by wishing someone well- there needs to be a practical meeting of needs to demonstrate the faith God has placed in your heart. Our love for Jesus drives us to see people and move in compassion toward them with works of faith.

Where has God strategically placed you to make an impact for His Kingdom? And what kinds of things might you do as a demonstration of your faith?

Some of you may take initiative to do something in your neighborhood or your workplace- maybe you want to bake cookies for your neighbors or co-workers and just take them a gift in God's love.

Some of you may be way more adventurous and you feel God calling you to engage with a ministry that puts you in direct contact with people in need.

- Homeless Ministry
- Prison Ministry
- Women's Shelter
- Volunteering at a school/nursing home/hospital

Then there are others of us who, just in the course of our daily life, will see a need and meet it. Like in the example James gave us- a neighbor may knock on your door (or text you since it's the 21<sup>st</sup> century) and let you know of a need they have. How you respond in that moment is a demonstration of your faith in Jesus to bring His Kingdom to play in our world.

How is salvation bringing change to your life? The longer we follow Jesus and the more mature we become the more selfless we become. As you are on this life-long journey of faith, look for the changes God is making in your life. And be comforted when you look in the mirror and don't like what you see or you're not as far along as you hoped at this stage in your life: you are a work in progress!

**:: Philippians 1:6**

**6 ...being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

As God is working on you, be available to do His work in this world. You are the hands and feet of Jesus!

- Pray