

So Ephesians chapter two today. Give you guys a quick recap as we're, as we're moving over there. We're only going to get 10 verses in today. That was a pretty good chapter break for us today. But if you guys kind of remember Ephesians chapter one, we looked at the apostolic nature of who Paul is.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. So that was the last eyewitness going on here, the last apostle kind of speaking to this church in Ephesus that he had a great relationship with. And this was a broad epistle, a broad letter. Epistle is not a direct letter. It is a letter that is designed to be circulated.

So this was designed to be circulated through all the believers in Ephesus. And it rings true today for us as well. We looked at the Christian operation order in the sense that in Ephesians, if you guys have any kind of military training whatsoever, we know that a operations order has five paragraphs. Those five paragraphs dictate exactly what a soldier will and will not do on a battlefield. And Ephesians breaks down linearly into that operations order for us. So we can have our entire marching orders based out of the book of Ephesians, cross reference through all of scripture. And it is a mostly complete doctrine that you guys can live by. It is practical Christian living to get you on mission for Christ. We discussed your identity being adopted into the royal body of Christ, the royal family of Christ, and what that adoption means. And the price that was paid for you to be adopted into that was nothing to shake a stick at.

This adoption puts you at an elevated place in heaven. And again, we talked about how the, the glory that we will in Christ is not for our own glory. We're not building our own crowns that we can boast in, but that we would be able to throw them at the feet of Jesus on that last day. And again, one of the key points there was, what a shame would it be that we didn't live on mission for Christ, we didn't build a crown and we have nothing when all of our friends are casting their crowns. We have no offering for Jesus on that final day.

And then we got into the prayer of wisdom last week and the source of wisdom and where Jesus becomes that source of wisdom for all of our lives. Like this isn't just good for our spiritual life, but our identity is first and foremost a Christian that does other things. If you're a mechanic, auto mechanic, accountant, whatever it is, you're a Christian that happens to be a mechanic, a Christian that Happens to be an accountant. That is your day job on this earth. But we're not looking to finish the race on earth.

Well, we're looking to finish the race spiritually. Well, so our identity is completely intertwined in the person and. And the divinity of who Jesus is. Today we're going to be looking at the further aspects of how God has adopted us into that family. So the title, if you guys keep track of titles, is From Death to Life is our sermon today.

And we're going to be looking @ Ephesians chapter two, if you guys will stand for the reading of the word.

Ephesians, chapter two, starting in verse one, says, and you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you were once

walking, 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, among whom we were also once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and of the mind. And we were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved and raised up. Sorry.

Raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show his exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Jesus Christ. For by grace you have been saved through faith, not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works lest any should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which he prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Father, again, Lord, we just praise you and we thank you for your word.

We thank you for just these reminders that you have a purpose for our lives, that we should walk in them, that you've created us new in Christ, that we have the ability to walk in the good works that you've called us to, that your grace is enough, that we are saved not by our own efforts, but by your love and your love alone. Father, again, we praise you because you alone are holy. And who are we to stand in the presence of you today? May your word go forward. May you hide me behind the cross.

Father, we love you. We pray this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen. You guys may be seated. All right, so Paul gives us a pretty big diagnosis here.

So anybody been to the doctor or a therapist? They give you a Diagnosis, they tell you what the problem is. You go to a mechanic, they tell you what your problem is for your car. Paul gives us a pretty big diagnosis here. And the diagnosis is blunt.

Before Christ, we were dead. Point blank, end of story. This isn't a soft metaphor that we'll use in our youth groups where it just means that you're unhappy, you're just not fulfilled, you're not living your best life now. It means you're point blank dead, cut off, separated from God. The scholarly analysis of this to us means that this is a state of a spiritual incapacitation, meaning the vital part of our being, our spirit is dead.

The most important factor in our lives, God himself. We are disconnected from. We are disconnected from the ultimate source of life. Which kind of reminds me in the Garden of Eden. I mean, if you guys remember, last week we kind of talked about the thing.

She texted it to me, but it was way late, but it was laminin. Laminin is this molecule, this protein that binds pretty much the entire universe together. When they put anything under a microscope, there will be laminin that will be holding everything together. It's like the glue. It's like the duct tape of the world.

But what's interesting about this molecule, it is in the shape of a cross. And so this kind of brings us back to this concept of Adam and

Eve in Genesis, where they once had fellowship with God, they once walked with God, they had open communication with God. And then sin enters the world. And he tells Adam, before sin entered the world, he says in that day. And speaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil says, in that day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. Now, what's cool about this verse is that the original Hebrew here is a double emphatic. What that means for us is that it's like saying, in dying you will die. Well, if you die, you're dead. You can't die die. It doesn't work that way.

But what this is describing to us is both a spiritual and a physical death. Both a spiritual and a physical death. And this is foreshadowed all the way back in Genesis again, bringing everything back together. You can't disconnect the New Testament from the Old. They are all intimately intertwined.

As Pastor Steve always says, the old is the new contained. The new is the old explained. Everything is built on this one story. The origin of who we are and who we were made to be in co union, in spiritual unity with Jesus and in co stewardship of the world. And here it says when death and sin enters the world, you will die spiritually.

You'll be cut off from the source of life, the sustainer of all things, the bread of life. That's why Jesus, when he shows up on the earth finally, he said, what? I'm the bread of life. I'm living water. He says, guys, I'm the source of life.

I'm what you need. You're both spiritually dead and physically dead. The physical death is now an analogy for the more important factor of our life, which is our spiritual death. So spiritually instantly cut off from God at that point when sin enters the world and eventually physical death. And that's where you have your medical conditions and everything else.

The world spiraling completely out of control. As first Corinthians also tells us that the earth longs to be reunited with its creator. It's the growing pains, it's your natural disasters, everything built into this. As Romans 3:20 says. 3:23 says, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

So now we're seeing that every single one of us has now been born, born into this curse. We are born into sin. So Paul uses two words here to describe the condition, trespasses and sins. We're going to look at these trespasses in, in the Greek is pictures, this concept of rebellion. And, and really it's like the act of deliberately crossing a line.

It's the concept of saying, hey, this is the line and I'm going to go ahead and test my boundaries. How much can I get away with? Anybody ever know a two year old in their life with maybe a three year old? Okay, so you know what I'm talking about. They're going to push the button.

You say don't touch the button, they push the button. That is essentially what this word trespasses means. It means that we've crossed the line with intentionality, with the heart and the desire to challenge God's boundaries. Now sin means to miss the mark. And sin is actually an old archery term.

Sin is to miss the target. And so this really kind of interesting thing happened when the Bible was translated from, in this case the original Greek into modern English. That was a big deal. Sin was something. Archery was actually a pretty cool sport back then when this was translated and it was a big deal.

So now it put this huge concept of we've fallen short. Now picture the arrow falling short. Now picture Romans 3:23 Again, for all have fallen short. You were on the trajectory and we fell short. And it means to Miss the mark.

And this is a fundamental failure to meet God's perfect standard. Again, being born into the sin, we can't meet God's perfect standard. So here's the diagnosis again. Apart from Christ, we are both rebels against God, authorities and failures to meet his standard. As such, we are dead.

And this is what death looks like. In verse two, it says, we walked according to the course of this world. We lived according to the flesh, and we lived according to the desires of our flesh. So what does this mean? Is that the great deception here is that when we feel like we're going to be the masters of our own lives and we start walking according to the ways that we feel, we are being literally deceived by the powers of evil that are at work in this world.

We cannot be our own masters. We'll look at this a little bit deeper, I'm sure, as we get into spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6. But the idea, the concept here is that we are submissive beings. From Genesis on, we were created to be submissive to the power of God. So you will submit to a spiritual authority in your life.

And what's really cute about what our enemy does is makes you think that you are actually submitting to yourself and not him.

He makes you think that you are in fact in control. But all the while he is in control of your life. There's that old adage, when we play stupid games, we win stupid prizes. Well, that's the reality, is that we are having the wool pulled over our eyes and we don't even recognize that we are following an idol into destruction and into deception. In Ephesians 5 or Galatians 5, which we just went over on Wednesday, we were looking at again, the works of the flesh contrasted with the spiritual fruit and the works of the flesh are obvious.

You can see it as soon as you walk out these doors. I promise you somebody's going to get cut off by somebody out here on Main street on their way to Chili's or some nonsense, and you're going to see the works of the flesh. Maybe you'll even feel that work of the flesh start trying to rise up in you as you want to yell and use your traffic fingers and everything else. That's the works of the flesh. It's obvious you don't have to try.

It's just going to happen. But the fruit of the Spirit shows us the contrast. So this great deception is that we believe that we're following our own lives and we are the masters of our own destiny. But Paul here reveals that the truth is that we are not, not our own masters, that we are walking actually in accordance to the prince of the power of the air. Now, I like looking at verses in multiple translations when I study.

Now, this verse in New King James Version, which is what we traditionally use here at the church, is the prince of the power of the air. If you read this in nlt, it translates it to commander of the powers of darkness. If you really think about this, that puts a new perspective, because a prince kind of is a commander. You'd see a prince on a battlefield, you'd see all these. He'd be basically general under the king in war.

And a lot of this is dealing with the spiritual warfare. But when you really break it down to the word commander, we start realizing, oh, this thing has power over me. If you let it, if you let it, you are not your own master. Because if you choose to rebel from God, you are actually walking in accordance with the commander of the power of the air. As Romans 6 says that we are slaves to sin.

Slaves to sin. That means it is commanding you, it is forcing you. The best way to describe this is an addiction. If you think about any kind of addiction, whether it's nicotine or alcohol or anything, as soon as you get your paycheck, the first thing that an addict will go to buy is those things, cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, whatever it might be that is running their lives and it's commanding their paycheck. That is what sin does, is it commands your life.

It forces you to feed the flesh. And as the more you continue to feed the flesh, the more it commands your desires, further disconnecting you from the source and sustainer of true life, spiritually and physically dead, deceived by the enemy. We believe that we are on our masters. We believe that we can ride our own destiny. But by nature, as our text here says, that we were children of wrath, we desperately deserved the wrath of God in our rebellion.

We desperately deserved the wrath that, when you read Revelation and study that, that wrath, the bowls of wrath that are going to be poured out at the end of time, that's for us before Christ, the wrath that God had already poured out on his Son was what we deserved. And when we look up at that image of the cross, and again, not to go into too much detail, but when you read about how Jesus was brutalized and whipped into something beyond recognition, as the text says, that you couldn't recognize that he was even human. Think about a ball of tissue and flesh and blood on a cross 14ft in the air and that was the wrath that you deserved. That's what we deserved before God. But then the two most powerful and hope filled words in the Bible follow that statement.

But God, I was dead in my transgressions, but God, I was an adulterous alcoholic, but God.

Verse 4 says, But God, who is so rich in mercy because of his great love which he loved us, us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised up together and made us to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the coming, sorry the ages to come, he might show his exceeding riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Jesus Christ for grace you have been saved through faith not of yourselves, but of a gift of God. But God. This very short and powerful phrase encapsulates the entire essence of the gospel message. It's but God

that is our salvation. And the salvation originates entirely from God's character, His sovereign initiative.

We've talked about this before, that God exists outside of space and time. He didn't have to wait for you to know your life fully, to fully exist, to fully experience your life, to know every aspect of who you are, to see how you would finish the race. And yet he still chose to love you even though he knew that you would rebel and in his sovereign initiative still paved the way for us that we would have a way back to redemption. We used a 3D printer model before. If you guys have ever played with 3D printing, if you mess up one setting and then you go to work and you come back to your 3D printer, you're gonna end up with a whole mess of weird plastic spaghetti.

It's just not even gonna be at all what you thought it was going to be. That's one setting. And God chose to hit print anyway.

Knowing that your life would be marked by rebellion, knowing that you would fall short of God's perfect standard, knowing that you could not stand in the presence of a holy and sovereign God of the universe.

It's by his mercy.

And what even is mercy? We used to teach this in Sunday school and I know that we do here next door. But I think we have an illiterate church generation where most people don't even know what these words mean. We use them the churchianity, Christianity words of Christianese. Oh, mercy, grace, sovereignty.

These are all words that the normal world doesn't even use. You know, you might throw out there repent and somebody's gonna be Thinking Honda Civic, is that a car? Like, it doesn't make sense to the rest of the world. But mercy is God's intervention is deeply rooted in his great love, his abundant richness in mercy. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve, which, again, was the wrath.

What Jesus got on the cross was what we deserved. Mercy is God saying, I'm not gonna give you that punishment. Now, grace is kind of like on the other side of that coin. And we like to try to put these two together, but they mean something totally different. Now.

Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve, right? So if you look at that in context is God's boundless mercy forms the very foundation upon which why he acts to make those who were dead in sin alive in Christ. He's giving us something we don't deserve while not giving us a punishment that we do deserve. Forgiveness, a seat in the heavenly realms, as Ephesians here describes for us. Guys, what an honor that we don't even deserve.

And then how do we respond to that? Out of obedience, out of an obedient heart. See, even when we were dead in trespasses, God, in his astonishing love, made us alive together with Christ. So looking at this, Paul wrote it in the present tense, and tense means something. When you study Greek, you have past, present, future, just like we have in American English.

So Paul writing this in the present tense shows a marked shift in his theological understanding. In his earlier epistles, you might see Paul writing more in the future tense. But this is one of his final letters written in about 60, okay, A.D. 60 to 62. Somewhere in that ballpark,

this is later on.

And he starts understanding that this is a present moment. Okay? This isn't just a future promise, but a present reality raised up together, made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So our present calling right now is to walk in Christ. It's not.

I said a prayer and now I wait. The present calling to walk in Christ is part of the sanctification journey. It's part of your obedience that turns into the fruit of the Spirit. It's part of your obedience and cooperation with God and the Holy Spirit turns into living out that model that we see in Genesis of Adam walking with God in the garden. That's pretty wild.

So many people always sit here and say, well, I'm just gonna wait for the future. But right now is your mission. Right now is your choice to walk in what God has done for you. To walk not just in a future salvation, but in a present salvation. Because spiritually right at this moment, those in Christ Jesus are spiritually resurrected and enthroned with Him.

Why? Again, because a day is like a thousand years to God, and a thousand years is like a day, spiritually speaking, outside of space and time, in this realm of reality that we understand, spiritually speaking, there's another plane that we can't understand, because our finite man minds are not capable of fully grasping the concept of who God is. And that's what makes him worthy of worship. But outside of space and time, right now you are seated with Christ.

So we walk in that. So then it begs the question, why did God do this? And the text answers this for us. It says, why did God do this? That in the ages to come, he might show his exceeding riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

And again, this is not because we earned it, but it's because of his goodness. It's because of his kindness, his incomparable riches. In this temporary world, he is transforming us.

If you again look at Genesis was the perfect, and you see in the New Testament too, how Jesus is supposed to be the second Adam, right? The perfectness of mankind, the crown jewel of all creation, the image of God. It was right there in all of creation. Let us make man in the image of God. So in the image of Christ, we were made because Christ is the visible representation of an invisible God.

So in the image of Christ, you were already made. However, when sin entered the world, Satan kind of ruins, okay, that image. It's distorted. Yet God is saying, right now, I'm transforming you back into this masterpiece of goodness. So your new life here isn't some cheap knockoff.

It's not some way of modifying behavior. We're not looking at behavior modification tools. You can go to secular psychology and therapy for that. We're looking for a total radical heart change. As the Old Testament says, that God will take out your stony heart and put in a new heart of flesh.

That is what we live out of. That new heart becomes the wellspring of your life. Everything flows out of that. And once we have that gift as we walk in that we protect that heart with everything we have.

This is the life that Christ's own resurrection, his ascension. This is the life that you have been invited to. Because of that act on the cross, you are not just forgiven, but you have a seat in victory. And when you walk in that victory, life has changed, changes your entire perspective. And again, why would God do this?

Verse 7, in the ages to come, that he might show his exceeding riches of his grace toward us in Christ Jesus. Now, that's not just for believers. That's the mission statement for believers. This is the cornerstone of Christian theology, that salvation is entirely a free gift unearned by any human effort or merit or performance. It's not of yourself, okay, lest anyone boast, but this is firmly establishing that human effort and human merit plays no role in salvation.

It shifts our mindset completely from fallen, competitive human nature to a thankful heart rejoicing in the equality that not one person on earth can be more righteous than another. Not one person, not one human on earth can be more holy than anybody else. Not one person that has a title, not one person that has anything else can be more righteous because the blood of Christ is equal for all believers.

Levels the playing field. Now, how effectively are you walking in that?

Now, that's a different story. But from God's eyes, we are all equally righteous, we are all equally saved, and we are working out of our salvation to display his glory. As verse seven says, that God would display his exceeding riches and his goodness and his kindness towards us. Now, us. There's a couple ways to translate that.

Some people say that that is specific for believers. Some people say that this is us as in all of humanity. I'm going to go with, this is our mission statement to show God's glory to all of humanity, to make him known, not ourselves. And again, it's not about what spiritual gifts you have. And so many people, they covet the more loud spiritual gifts, if you want to call it that, the more seen spiritual gifts.

But guys, we have people in this church that their spiritual gift is servanthood. And you will never see them. They show up midweek, they do all the cleaning, they do all the yard work, they do everything else. And then they disappear without even a name, a T shirt, a badge, whatever. Guys, it's about making God known, not ourselves.

And that's the key that we don't boast in our salvation. That's why it had to be the way that it is. That's why it had to be totally on God and not on us. Because if it was on us to earn anything, we would fall straight back into the human competitions. Think about Jesus's day and age and the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were the moral police, essentially, that were running around saying, you're a bad Jew, you're a good Jew, you paid your dues. You didn't. You picked up a pencil on the Sabbath. How dare you. And this is the competitive nature of mankind and competition can be good in sports, competition can be good in work because it breeds excellence.

But in our spiritual lives it ain't going to breed excellence. It's going to breed boastfulness. It's going to breed power hungry religious control.

So again, the cornerstone here is that it's God's work, not ours. But then it becomes that we work out of our salvation to display God. It's always about him. It's always about God and he will always have the glory. You think back to the Old Testament with the victories and the battles and everything else and what is it it's always to God be the glory.

God will always take the glory. He will always take the credit. You think about Gideon as we're prepping for men's breakfast. Rise up mighty warrior. And he says, who am I?

And then he gets this big army and he's going to go up against this even bigger army. And then God says what? Cut that in half. And then says what again? Let's cut that in half again.

So next thing you know, he's got 300 soldiers and he's going up against 10,000. The original Spartan movie, I guess the 300, you know. But he's going up against these insurmountable odds. Why? So that God would get the glory.

Think about Joshua walking into the promised land, crossing the river. Who was the first people to step into the Jordan river was not the generals, was not the commanding officers of the army, it was the priests with the Ark of the Covenant because God will have the glory.

Then two miles ahead of Joshua is still the priests and the Ark of the Covenant. And then two miles behind them is now the army guys. In what world are we going to send the chaplains with our most holy possessions into battle before our foot soldiers get on the ground?

Think about the strike in, in Iran this week. Could you imagine if instead of sending the B2s with the, with the bunker buster bombs, we just sent some chaplains over there. Worldly, it just doesn't make sense. But spiritually, God is going to have the glory for every battle in your life. But you have to live with that mindset.

You have to live in the victory that God has already given you, knowing that if this is a battle that you are to win, then God will have the glory. But if I keep striving in my flesh, I will almost never have victory. And when I do have victory and I don't give God the glory, I'm going to keep doing what we call play stupid games, win stupid prizes. It's not going to grow me spiritually. It's going to bolster my ego, it's going to boost my flesh, and I'm going to keep living out of that.

And sooner or later, I damage every single relationship that I touch. It's a slippery slope when you think that you are the God of your own universe.

So again, it comes down to faith. We've got to analyze today what is faith? Hebrews 11. 6, it says, but without faith, it is impossible to please him. For he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

So faith is our response to God's grace. Okay? It's believing that God exists. It's believing that he rewards those who seek him. You know, the old school Sunday school definition that's found in Hebrews as well.

What is faith? It's hope in the unseen belief in God. So think about Abraham again, Old Testament here, and he's in the hall of heroes.

This is Hebrews 11:8, says by faith. Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place that he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going. So he had this blind faith, trusting that God would lead him to where he needed to go. That is faith. How many of us can say that? That's the kind of faith that we aspire to. That's the kind of faith that we live, that it doesn't matter if God calls me to the unknown, I'm gonna step out in faith, guys. That's really hard for American humans to do because we have to have all the answers, guys, especially my generation. We gotta know the why behind the what before we even take one step. You know, forget the days when drill sergeant said, jump and you said, how high? In mid flight it was, well, why? I had a first sergeant when I was at my first duty station in Fort Myer, Virginia. I was in the honor guard.

And you had to be a specific height, you had to be a specific look, you had to be a specific build, you had to have a specific intelligence level, which they graded called a GT score. But you had to have this specific GT score to get into this unit to begin with. And this infantry first sergeant's looking at us one day and he's like, I hate you old guard soldiers. I'm like, top, what, what? And he's like, because back in the 82nd Airborne, I could say, run in here and clear this room.

And they would do it without even thinking. And it's a Room full of like fiberglass, like insulation and asbestos and everything else. And he says, you old guard soldiers, you'll stop and evaluate the situation before you even think about moving. It's my generation, I apologize. But that's the reality is the faith that God calls us to is like that 82nd Airborne soldier that without even thinking, puts full trust in everything that their commanding officer is saying because they know it's part of the mission and it's good for the unit and good for them.

That's the trust that Faith is. Romans 4:3 says, so what does scripture say? Abraham believed God and was accounted to him as righteousness. So you can also consider Rahab and Jericho. We'll kind of speed read through this one.

She had faith. She trusted in God's people and God's plan, even when it seemed impossible. She didn't even know God personally, but she had heard about God. She had heard about the mighty things that God was doing with the army of God's people and said, you know, forget this. Like, these people don't have anything good for me.

But this good God that is taking care of his people, I want to be a part of that. That she had faith, and it was credited to her as righteousness as well. And then you look at the lineage of Jesus, and Rahab is right there listed. How cool is that? Faith seems like such an obvious choice.

When you look at the idea again that we are called to be or we are built and designed to be submissive beings, spiritually speaking, that we will submit and we will worship something spiritual. You have to choose what you're going to worship. Are you going to choose the Prince of Darkness, or are you going to choose God? And again, this

seems like such an obvious choice. But here's the problem.

John 3:19. Jesus says this when he was speaking to Nicodemus. He says, and the condemnation is this, that the light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil and the light came. But many chose darkness. So there's this problem that men and women, we love our flesh often more than we love God.

I would say that in America that we have so many people that love the idea of God but have no true relationship, or even better yet, no true desire to have a relationship with God. Why? Because if I have to have a relationship with God, that means I have to step closer to the light. And if I step closer to the light, then my evil deeds are exposed, and I got to deal with that.

Looking back at faith, there's a fairly heavy, weighty scholarly discussion on whether or not faith is a free gift of God or it is a gift of God that God gives you faith that you can place in him, or if it's a human choice. And we looked at that when we looked at predestination and things of that nature at chapter one. But when we look at the grammatical structure of Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, it leads to salvation being the gift, not necessarily faith itself. And to go into further detail with that, the idea here is that you're using feminine and masculine verbs, okay? And the feminine verbs connect and the masculine verbs connect.

And the gift was looking at specifically salvation, while faith became an effeminate verb in that sentence, which was really, really interesting. So how do you reconcile this? How do you reconcile this scholarship that people say that God gives you faith and now you can believe, and that fits into your Calvinist models and everything else. The best way to look at this is that Romans 12:3 says to each one, a measure of faith is given. And it basically states that God has given us faith.

But perhaps the way that we look at this is that God has given us the capacity to put our faith in something. God has given you a measure of faith. Because if it's not something that I can work on and steward, then why does scripture also say, add to your faith these things? So I can build faith by trusting in God more. But God first gave me that initial investment.

It's almost like walking into a casino and your dad handing you \$100 bill or, you know, whatever. This happened to me one time and said, go, you know, spend, spend this on whatever. Go play the slots, go do the thing, you know, just go learn about gambling. It's not going to be good. And then the choice my brother and I had to make, well, I was the dumb one that put it in a slot machine.

Guess who didn't have any money. At the end of the day, this guy, my brother. Being the hyper analytical nuclear engineer that he is, he decided, I'm going to put this in my pocket. Forget these slot machines. Why?

Because the house always wins. So when we look at faith from that standpoint, imagine putting yourself in those shoes and God gave you that initial portion of faith and said, what are you going to do with

this? What are you going to invest this into? Are you going to invest this into the Prince of Darkness and follow to the deception of becoming your own master? But guys, guess what?

The house always wins. Or are you going to invest this piece of faith into me? What I, as in God, wants you to do, God has given you that to invest. And you have a choice today. The truth is again that we are designed to be a submissive spirit and we will follow a spiritual influence.

Guys, there's a lot of voices out there. The spiritual voices that we hear on a daily basis. They are unnerving and they are loud. Some of them are blatantly obviously dark. Some of them are masquerading as an angel of light, as scripture says.

These voices will lead you to believe things that are not in scripture. But again, if you look and test every spirit in Scripture, you find that you have freedom in Christ. And when you choose to invest that faith in truly following Christ and trusting God and recognizing that we are not our own master, but confessing that Jesus is Lord, that is where true freedom comes from. John 8:36. Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you are free indeed.

Which brings us to our final kind of question here. Is that why must we be saved? And if we're not saved by our good works, then then what are we really doing here anyway? Is that we are saved for good works. We are saved for good works, not by good works.

Verse 8 says, by grace you've been saved through faith. And yes, it's not of yourselves, but a gift of God that none of you should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. This is your crucial clarification of everything in this first part of chapter two. All of the salvation.

Understanding that you were dead without Christ, understanding that you now have a saving faith that God has done something for you, you in your life.

But why?

Not by works, but for works. Salvation brings you to the point where you can work again for God, where it restores the image that you had in Genesis 3:1, 2 and 3 really before the fall that you are co ruling the earth. Genesis Adam was given work was the very first thing God put him in the garden and told him to do what? Cultivate it, work it, grow it, name the animals, have dominion over all things, over all creation. Being made in the image of God meant that he was co stewarding.

God didn't want to micromanage all of earth. He wanted humans to do that, to have a relationship with us. But until we are created new in Christ Jesus, we can't possibly have a relationship with God. In Ephesians 2:10, which many of you guys know is ultimately my life theme of verse and the NLT translates it, you've been created new in Christ Jesus. Well, that means this old thing, this old man, we've got to do away with it.

We wake up every single morning and we do battle with our flesh. We put two to the heart of what the flesh wants, and one in the mind of

what the mind desires. And we say, let me be who God wants me to be today. Let me represent most who God wants me to represent, which is Him.

We are his workmanship. The Greek word here, poimea, means the idea of a masterpiece. Not simply like, I created something and it was effective, but I created something beautiful. It is the culminating work of all of creation. That is who you are.

But you've been created new that you would have access to do the things that God has called you to do. You were a deliberate creation, then remade and repurposed in Christ with a specific objective. Now, these good works, again, these are. These are not the cause of our salvation, but they are the result and the purpose that we should walk in them, that we glorify his name.

I think as we wrap this up today, I want to kind of go over a little bit of the history of Israel. If you think about this as we looked at already, Genesis 3 describes the fall. Genesis 1 and 2 describes creation. Our role here as human beings was to glorify God to all of creation, to represent Him. Well, then we get away from that and Abraham becomes the representative of God after Noah was the representative of God's salvation.

And then through Abraham, you get into Jacob, Israel, representing God in all these foreign places. And then we get to the idea that again, Israel came as his chosen people to portray a better way. You know, when you contrast the food laws even of what Israel had versus what the Canaanites were doing, the law alone showed them that this nation was something totally, radically different. They couldn't eat over half of the things that the Canaanites were eating. Why?

Because they were unclean. God was exhibiting his holiness through his people. And again, they constantly failed. But the intention was to display the glory to the nations. Ezekiel 16:14 describes one of these good moments as your fame went out among the nations, because your beauty for it was perfect through my splendor, which I had bestowed on you, says the Lord God.

Again, the Lord will get the glory, but the reality is that Satan mars that image through sin. And the more that we walk in flesh, the less people will see of God. God's heart for you today is that you demonstrate his glory to the world. James 2:18, in referring to faith, again it says that you say that you have faith and I have works. But show me your faith without works and I'll show you my faith by my works.

We'll pause there for a moment. Okay. Can I demonstrate my faith if I'm living in my flesh? Short answer is absolutely not. I can demonstrate my faith that I'm following my flesh, but I can't demonstrate what God has done in my life if I continue to live like the old man.

So James here is telling us, I will show you my faith by my works. Verse 19 says, you believe that there is one God and you do well, but even the demons believe that they tremble.

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham, our father justified by his works when he

offered up Isaac on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works? And by works faith was made perfect and a scripture was fulfilled which says Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. And he was called a friend of God. And you see the man justified not by works and faith only. It goes on and we don't have time to get too far into that. But guys, the key here is that salvation is a gift. It is a free gift of a work of God, his grace. But our response is to joyfully live out of that gift, to respect that gift.

You know who's doing something really cool with that is the Muslims. If you give a Muslim a gift, their culture point blank says, I have to respect this gift. I read a story, a gentleman was given a Bible, and because he had to respect the gift he read it changed his life. The reality is, are we respecting the gift that God has given us?

We have to actively participate in the purpose for which we were saved again, to expose the glory of the Lord to the world around us, to demonstrate that we are still walking in his victory, that we are the crown jewel of all of creation, that we have been raised up with Christ and seated in the heavenly places. When people look at you, do they see your own glory? Do they see your own accomplishments? Do they see your own striving, your own success? Or do they see a life transformed by the grace of God?

When they look at you, do they know that God had something to do with getting you to from where you were to where you are today? Is there a marked difference between who you were before Christ to who you are after Christ? Living in God's grace is a life empowered to do the good works that God has prepared for you, to partner with him, to demonstrate his glory and goodness to the world. That mission has never changed. That mission has been the same since creation as it is today.

And it perfectly lines up with the immutable, unchangeable nature of who God is. The church now encompassing both Jews and Gentiles, which we're going to look into more next week, is a community that is supposed to spread the gospel, that is supposed to make disciples of all nations. And this involves a broad spectrum of actions. You could say love, which is again, sacrificial love, selfless service to others, pursuit of godly justice, a clear proclamation of the gospel message. Using actions, sure, absolutely.

If necessary, use words. But your actions will often speak louder than words.

By God, we have the capability to live a righteous life that represents him, and it does not come from our own willpower. We can't just modify our behavior and say that we're good, because in the long run, that's not going to last. It's by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the intentional transformation of a new heart. As Romans 12 says, that we don't copy the behavior of this world any longer, but we allow God to transform our mind. And we do that through the reading of his scripture, letting the Holy Spirit make these words come alive to us.

We have a new heart, a new spirit, and ultimately a new desire to

praise God. Your purpose is now, as verse 6 says, you were raised up together and made to sit in the heavenly places. That means right now you have the ability to demonstrate through the seal of the Holy Spirit and represent a holy God to the world. So the question is, what action are you taking to demonstrate your faith? What action are you taking to demonstrate God's glory to the world?

And guys, sometimes this doesn't have to be this big thing where we're funding ministries or we're preaching or doing any of these other things. You take your spiritual gift, the things that God has given you to do, and maybe it's just loving your family and showing them a better way. But how effective are you living out your calling? Are you allowing God's grace not just to have to save you, but to transform you in your daily life, in your daily interactions with people, do you demonstrate God's grace? Are you actively seeking your purpose?

Now, some of us, we may not know our purpose fully in God, but as we allow God's Word to transform our mind, then we will know what God's purpose is for us. I'm not going to say that the spiritual gifts tests are the end all be all, but it Gives you a pretty good clue of what areas in your life you could be working in. And then you step up and serve. Try a few out. The good works that God has prepared for you are designed for you to walk in now, not later, to live out your identity as his masterpiece.

A visible witness of his character, A visible witness of a light to the world that so desperately needs Him. Let's pray.

Father, again. Lord, we just. We thank youk for your word. We thank youk for these reminders that we have the ability to live out the calling that yout've given us today. That it's through youh grace that we have the ability to even step forward, to know you, to understand your glory, to be able to give that glory to the people around us.

So, Lord, I just ask for strength today that you'd give us. That you'd give me the strength that I need to be graceful, to demonstrate your purpose in my life. That not only that, we would know your purpose, that you would give us the power to be effective in that purpose, that we would study your Word and see lives transformed around us. Father, we love you. We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus.

Amen. Let's stand as we sing praises to the King of Kings.

His name. His name shall be called.

His name. His name shall be called counter.

Almighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace throughout eternity.

Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace throughout eternity.

As we dismiss today, guys, I'm going to remind us of the Great Commission here. And this is the through line that as we looked at the Commander's intent, Ephesians 1, we can look at the mission of what God has called every single one of us to do. And the key here is that Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe the things that I have commanded

you to do. And lo, I will be with you even to the end of the age.
Guys, this week, as we're walking out, the challenge that I would leave you with is, how are you making disciples? And can you first make a disciple of another if you haven't made a disciple of yourself? Have a blessed week and we will see you guys here on Wednesday.