

All Saints Talk for 19th January 2025

Together We Stand.

'God's Handiwork' Emma King

Ephesians 2:1-22

When you think of being saved, what comes to mind?

For many, salvation is a personal, life-changing experience, a moment where God's grace touches their hearts and pulls them from darkness into light.

We often think of salvation as something that removes us from sin and secures our place in heaven—and that's true. Phew! It's all going to be alright now!

But God's grace doesn't just save us from something—it saves us **for something**.

In this passage, Paul teaches us that salvation isn't the end of the story—it's just the beginning. He doesn't stop there. We are not only saved by grace but also saved **to do good works** that God has prepared for us. Salvation and service go hand in hand. There was so much in this passage I could have talked about today, it's so full of wisdom!

But today, I want to talk about how **being saved by grace empowers us to do God's work** because it's so easy to focus on the *show* of salvation—what Jesus did on the cross for us—and forget about the *why*—why we are saved in the first place.

Firstly, and probably most importantly, **Salvation is entirely by grace**.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

- Salvation is a gift we could never earn, no matter how hard we try.
- It's God's grace that saves us—His unmerited favour.
- We couldn't do anything to deserve it.
- Our good works don't save us.
- No amount of church attendance, volunteer work, or good deeds can bridge the gap between us and God.
- Only Jesus, through His death and resurrection, can reconcile us to God.

- **Faith as the Means:**
Salvation comes through faith.
- We simply trust in what Jesus has done for us, accepting His offer of grace and forgiveness.
- Faith is the hand that receives God's gift, but the gift itself is grace—unearned and freely given.

I wonder if you've ever been to an auction. My husband is an Antiques dealer, so I've been to many. Imagine you are at an auction, bidding for a prized item. The price is so high that you could never afford it. Just when the bidding ends, someone steps up and pays the full price for you—completely without asking anything in return.

This is what Jesus has done for us. We were unable to pay the price for our sin, but He did it all on the cross. Salvation is a free gift, bought with His blood.

You can't buy this at any auction, no matter how fancy it is!

Paul says, "**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**"

- **We Are God's Masterpiece, his handiwork!**

The word meaning of the word "workmanship" in the Oxford Dictionary means "The Degree of Art, skill or craftsmanship with which a task is done or a product made"

- We are not just another face in the crowd; we are **God's masterpiece.**
- He designed us with intention and purpose, and He created us to do something significant for His kingdom.

- **Good Works Are Prepared for Us:**

God doesn't just save us and leave us with nothing to do.

- He has already prepared what He wants us to do.
- These are not random tasks or empty chores; we weren't designed and saved just to do the washing or cook the dinner!
- These are divine assignments that, when done in faith, bring glory to God and bring His kingdom to earth.
- Good works are an outflow of a changed heart, not a means of earning God's favour.

- **Walking in the Works:**

Salvation isn't just about believing—it's about living it out.

- It's about actively engaging in the good works God has for us.
- The good works God has prepared are not optional or extra-credit tasks; they are the very reason for which we were created.

My friend's daughter is a Paralympian, and she is a 100m runner. She often talks about what it's like to run a race and the adrenaline that is pumping through her body before a race. She's been training, she's received the signal to go, and now the purpose of all that training is to run the race. In the same way, salvation is the starting line, and good works are the race we are meant to run. We're not saved to stand still or watch the race; we're saved to participate, to go out and serve. And imagine having the adrenaline of the Grace of God pumping through our bodies as we do it! We've worked out that good works are the reason for which we were saved, but what does that actually look like in our daily lives?

How do we "walk in them"?

- **Serving Others:**

One of the most wonderful ways we do good works is by serving others.

- Jesus said, "**Whoever would be great among you must be your servant**" (Mark 10:43).
- This means that our salvation forces us to live lives of humility, caring for others—whether it's helping a neighbour, providing for someone in need, or volunteering in the community.

- **Living with Integrity:**

Good works are also about living in a way that reflects Christ.

- In our workplaces, schools, and families, we are called to be people of integrity, honesty, and kindness.
- Our actions should speak louder than words, and the way we live should reflect the love and character of Jesus.

- **Sharing the Gospel:**

Perhaps the most important “good work” we can do is share the message of salvation with others.

- The Gospel itself is the greatest work of all.
- God has entrusted us with the good news that through Jesus, all can be reconciled to God.
- We are called to share this message and lead others to Christ. – The great commission tells us this!

If we don't do these things, Serving, Integrity and Sharing... then what exactly are we doing? Think of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

A man was beaten and left for dead by the side of the road. A priest and a Levite passed him by, but a Samaritan—someone whom society looked down upon—stopped, cared for him, and ensured he received the help he needed. The Samaritan didn't do this to earn favour or to look good; he did it because he cared. Our good works should be motivated by love and compassion for others, not for recognition or reward. When we begin to live out the good works God has prepared for us, it changes everything. It changes us!

- **Glorifying God:**

Our good works glorify God, not ourselves.

- On my phone I have this sticker that I was given at an All Age. I have it on there as a reminder to me every time I pick up my phone...
- Jesus says in Matthew 5:16: "**Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**"
- As we serve, the world sees God's love and power at work through us.
- Our actions and the way we live our lives point others to Him.

- **Witnessing to the World:**

Our good works are a testimony to the world.

- When we live out our faith in practical ways, we reflect God's heart and make His love visible.
- People don't just hear the gospel—they see it lived out.
- Our actions can open doors for conversations about Jesus.

- **Growing in Faith:**

As we step out in faith to do the good works God has for us, our own faith grows.

- We learn to trust God more; we rely on His strength and witness His provision.
- The more we serve, the more we experience His power working through us.

Imagine a small, flickering light in a dark room. The light doesn't struggle to shine; it just shines. As it does, it pushes back the darkness. Similarly, our good works are like lights in a dark world. We don't need to try to make ourselves shine; when we walk in the works God has prepared, His light shines through us, bringing hope and life to those around us.

So, what can we take away from this passage today?

1. Embrace Your Identity in Christ:

Remember, we are God's masterpiece, created for a purpose.

Take time to reflect on who we are in Christ and the good works He has prepared for each one of us.

2. Look for Opportunities to Serve:

Be intentional in looking for opportunities to serve others.

Whether big or small, every act of kindness and love is a good work in God's eyes.

3. Live with Purpose:

Let our life reflect the love of Christ in everything we do.

Whether at home, at work, or in your community, be intentional about living out the good works God has planned for us.

So, as I come to finish...

Salvation is not just about what we've been saved from, but about what we've been saved **for**.

We've been saved by grace through faith, not by our works, but we've also been saved for good works.

God has designed each of us with a unique purpose, and He has prepared good works for us to do.

As we leave today, remember salvation is just the beginning.

Walk in the good works God has planned for you and let your life shine with His love and as I always say at the end of a service... walk in the light...

Closing Prayer:

Lord, Thank You for saving us by Your grace.

We are humbled by Your love and the purpose You've given us.

Help us to live out the good works You have prepared for us, serving others, glorifying You, and growing in faith.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.