

GRACE THAT WORKS: Walking Your Purpose Ephesians 2:8–10 Reformation Weekend

By System Import | Sermon | March 14, 2026

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For over 500 years, this weekend has been a celebration of a moment that shook the world. It's when a humble monk named Martin Luther, tormented by his own sin and his inability to ever feel "good enough" for God, nailed a list of 95 arguments to a church door. He was living in a world that taught that salvation, grace, and forgiveness could be earned, or even bought. He was in a prison of performance, frantically trying to work his way to God. His heart cried out, "How can a man be righteous?" And it was in the book of Romans, and in this very passage in Ephesians, that he found the key that unlocked his chains and set the world on fire. And before we dive in, if this message is already stirring something in you, hit the subscribe button and stay connected to God's Word daily, because this truth is just as revolutionary today as it was in 1517.

We call it the Reformation, and at its heart were two explosive truths: Sola Gratia Grace Alone and Sola Fide Faith Alone. This is the glorious freedom found in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9. But in our joy over this freedom, we often put a period where God put a comma. We celebrate our "get out of jail free" card, but we forget to read the very next sentence—the one that explains why we were set free in the first place. We have become masters of "grace that sits" but we are called to a "grace that works."

The Reformation was not a rebellion against good works. It was a rebellion against the idea that good works could save us. The proper order, the biblical order, changes everything. The world says: Works → Salvation. The Bible says: Salvation → Works. The world says: "Do good things to get God to love you." The Bible says: "God loves you, so you are now free to do good things." This is the "Grace That Works." It is not grace versus works. It is grace that produces works. And today, we are going to look at this foundational text, Ephesians 2:8-10, to see the source, the proof, and the purpose of your life.

Number 1: The Source of Your Salvation - "By Grace Through Faith" v. 8

First, Paul establishes the source. Where does this all come from? He says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith..." Let's shatter these two words down to their core. Grace *charis* in the Greek is the unmerited, unearned, unconditional, free-for-all favor of Almighty God. It is God giving you what you do not deserve His Son and not giving you what you do deserve His wrath. It is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. It is not a bonus for good behavior. It is the life-support system for the spiritually dead.

But how do we get this grace? Paul says it's "through faith." Faith is simply the hand that receives the gift. Imagine I am holding out a \$100 bill to you. It is a free gift. But it is not yours until you

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reach out your hand and take it. Did your hand "earn" the \$100? No. Did your hand "deserve" it? No. Your hand simply received what was being offered. Faith is the empty hand of the soul that says, "I cannot. God can. I accept His gift." Faith is not a "work." Faith is the renunciation of all works.

And just in case we are tempted to be proud of our "great faith," Paul adds the knockout blow: "...and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God..." Even the faith to believe is a gift of grace! God provides the gift salvation and He even provides the hand faith to receive it. There is absolutely no part of your salvation that you can take credit for. You were spiritually dead, a spiritual corpse, and God, in His pure grace, reached down and breathed life into you. This is Sola Gratia. It is all of grace. This is the truth that set Martin Luther free, and it is the truth that sets us free today.

Number 2: The Proof of Your Salvation - "Not By Works" v. 9

Paul is so passionate about this point that he says it again in a different way. He clarifies the source by telling us what the source is not. Verse 9: "...not by works, so that no one can boast." This is the verse that tore down the entire religious system of Luther's day, and it tears down the entire system of self-improvement in our day. Your salvation is not by works. It is not by how many times you go to church. It is not by how much money you give. It is not by being a good person, a good parent, or a good citizen. It is not by works.

Why is God so absolute about this? Paul tells us: "...so that no one can boast." God, in His infinite wisdom, designed salvation in a way that eliminates human pride. He is the potter; we are the clay. He is the Creator; we are the creatures. The one thing that cannot and will not be allowed in heaven is the arrogance of a human being strutting around, taking even 0.01% of the credit for their own salvation. If we could be saved by our works, heaven would be an intolerable place, full of people boasting about how they got there.

God's plan makes heaven a place of pure, eternal worship, where every single crown is cast before the throne of the Lamb who was slain, and the only song is, "Worthy are You... for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God" Revelation 5:9. Salvation is not by works. This is the truth that allows you to stop striving and start resting. It takes the crushing weight of "am I good enough?" off of your shoulders forever and places you securely in the finished work of Christ. You are not saved by your performance. Period. This is the freedom from.

Number 3: The Purpose of Your Salvation - "To Do Good Works" v. 10a

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Now we come to the great pivot. This is where so much of the modern church gets stuck. We love the freedom from in verse 9, but we forget the freedom for in verse 10. The sentence does not end at "no one can boast." Paul continues, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works..."

This is the "Grace That Works." This is the part that makes us uncomfortable, because it sounds like "works" are back on the table. But look at the order! Paul did not say we are saved by good works. He said we are saved for good works. The works are not the cause of our salvation; they are the consequence of it. They are not the root of our salvation; they are the fruit of it. long-Example: A tree is not a "fruit tree" because it tries to produce fruit. It produces fruit because it is a fruit tree. The fruit is the evidence of the life that is already inside it. In the same way, you are not saved by your good works. But if you are saved, if the life of Christ is truly in you, you will produce the fruit of good works.

This is the balance of the Reformation. Luther didn't just teach "faith alone." He said, "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." It is always accompanied by works. It's what James, the brother of Jesus, meant when he wrote, "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" James 2:17. Paul and James are not contradicting each other; they are attacking two different errors. Paul attacks the legalist who says, "Works save me." James attacks the liberalist who says, "Works don't matter." The true, biblical position is that works cannot save you, but the faith that does save you will produce works. Grace is not a "pass" to be lazy; it is the power to be holy.

Number 4: The Proof of Your Worth - "God's Workmanship" v. 10b

Before Paul even gets to the "good works," he gives us one of the most beautiful descriptions of our identity in the entire Bible. He says, "For we are God's workmanship..." This one word in the original Greek is *poiēma*. Does it look familiar? It's the word from which we get our English word... "poem."

You are God's *poiēma*. You are His masterpiece. You are His work of art. You are His poem. Think about that. You are not a random accident. You are not a mass-produced item from a factory line. You are a one-of-a-kind, handcrafted, divinely-designed masterpiece. The same God who sculpted the mountains, who painted the galaxies, who breathed life into the stars, looked at you and, with that same creative, loving, and intentional hand, He made you.

What does this mean for your purpose? It means an artist always creates art for a reason. A poet writes a poem to express something. A composer writes a symphony to be heard. A master

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craftsman builds an instrument to be played. God, the Master Artist, created you, His poiēma, for a specific purpose. He didn't save you from the scrap heap just to let you sit on a shelf. He redeemed you, He restored you, He remade you "in Christ Jesus" so that your life could display the artistry of the One who made you. Your good works are how your life "plays the music" that God composed for you.

Your worth is not based on your performance. Your worth is based on your Artist. You have infinite value because the infinite God is the one who made you. When you feel worthless, when you feel like a failure, remember this verse. You are not trash. You are a poiēma. You are God's poem. And He doesn't make junk. He looked at His work in you and called it "very good."

Number 5: The Path of Your Purpose - "Prepared in Advance" v. 10c

So, we are saved by grace v. 8, not by works v. 9, to be God's masterpiece v. 10a that does good works v. 10b. But this is where it gets even more personal and profound. What good works? How do I know what to do? The verse concludes: "...which God prepared in advance for us to do."

This is staggering. This is the biblical truth of "Walking Your Purpose." This verse says that before you ever drew your first breath, before the foundation of the world, God, your Artist, not only made you, but He planned a life for you. He laid out a unique, custom-designed pathway of good works, opportunities, and divine appointments specifically for you.

Your purpose is not something you have to invent. It is not something you have to strive for. It is something you have to walk into. Your life is not a series of random accidents. The family you were born into, the gifts you have, the job you are in, the people you meet, the challenges you face—these are all part of the "prepared" path that God has placed before you.

This means the good works God has for you today might not be "big." They might not be on a stage. They are the "prepared" work of being patient with a difficult child. They are the "prepared" work of showing integrity in a business meeting. They are the "prepared" work of encouraging that co-worker who looks down. They are the "prepared" work of forgiving your spouse. These are not interruptions to your purpose; these are your purpose for that day. Your job is not to create your purpose, but to wake up and "walk" in the purpose He has already prepared for you.

Number 6: Grace That Works - From "Reformation" to "Transformation"

How does this "Grace That Works" change us? It moves us from a "Reformation" mindset which is about doctrine to a "Transformation" mindset which is about life. When you truly grasp all of Ephesians 2:8-10, your life changes in three practical ways.

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First, you stop living in fear and start living in freedom. You are no longer terrified of God's judgment, no longer trying to "earn" His love. You are secure. You are His child. You are His masterpiece. You are free from the prison of performance v. 8-9.

Second, you stop living in selfishness and start living in service. Because you are secure, you no longer have to spend all your energy trying to save yourself, protect yourself, and promote yourself. You are free to finally forget about yourself and serve others. Grace doesn't make you selfish; it makes you selfless. It makes you look for the "good works" He has prepared for you to do for others v. 10.

Third, you stop living in confusion and start living in confidence. You no longer have to wonder, "What is my purpose? Why am I here?" You know your purpose. Your purpose is to be the poiēma of God. Your purpose is to "walk" in the path He has set before you today. You can have total confidence that your life, even the mundane parts, is filled with divine, pre-prepared purpose. If this message inspires you, don't forget to subscribe for more Bible insights every week.

Number 7: Your Invitation to "Walk"

So, this Reformation Weekend, we celebrate this profound, two-sided truth. This is the "Grace That Works." It is a grace that frees us from our past and a grace that empowers us for our future. It is a grace that declares our salvation and a grace that defines our purpose.

The question for you today is, have you received it? Have you, like Luther, stopped working for God's approval and simply received the free gift of His grace through faith? Have you let go of your boasting, your striving, your performance, and just rested in the finished work of Jesus? This is the first step. You must be saved by grace.

And if you have, the second question is: Are you walking? Are you living as the masterpiece He created you to be? Are you waking up each day and asking, "God, what are the good works You have prepared for me to walk in today?" Are you showing the world the artistry of your Creator through your love, your service, your integrity, and your kindness?

This is the whole gospel, right here in three verses. We are saved from sin and for a purpose. We are saved by grace alone, but the grace that saves us never leaves us alone. It transforms us, empowers us, and sets us on a path of purpose. That is the Grace That Works.

Conclusion

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This Reformation Weekend, we stand on the shoulders of giants like Martin Luther, who rediscovered the truth that has set us free. We have explored the most beautiful passage in Scripture: Ephesians 2:8-10.

We saw the source of our salvation is God's Grace, received through Faith, a gift from start to finish. We saw the proof of our salvation is that it is Not By Works, so that all boasting is silenced and all glory goes to God. This is the grace that saves.

But we didn't stop there. We saw the purpose of our salvation is To Do Good Works. Grace does not lead to laziness; it leads to a life of good works, the evidence of our new heart. We discovered our identity as God's Workmanship, His poiēma, His poem, His masterpiece, created with infinite value and for a divine reason.

We learned that this purpose is not a mystery we must invent, but a Prepared Path that God has laid out for us in advance. And we learned that living this out transforms us, freeing us from fear, selfishness, and confusion. This is the Grace That Works.

My prayer for you is that you would, first, rest completely in the grace that saves you. And second, that you would walk confidently in the purpose He has prepared for you. Stop striving, and start walking. That is the legacy of the Reformation.

Before you go, make sure to subscribe, like this video, and share it with someone who needs encouragement today. And join us next time as we uncover another powerful truth from God's Word.