

God's Work For Us

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[0 : 0 0] Last week we were in the graveyard, that great graveyard of spiritual death, the abode of everyone without Christ. We saw how, or saw what sin had done for mankind.

We saw the result of sin's work against us. We saw that apart from Christ, we're dead, we're disobedient, we're depraved, and we're also doomed.

But God went to work. I love those two words, but God, because we hear about what sin does for us. We hear about what our future is apart from Christ or before Christ, and then we hear those two wonderful words, but God.

God went to work. Sin had worked against us, but God went to work for us. And this is what we're going to see this morning.

We saw sin's work against us, and this morning we're going to see God's work for us in Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 4 through 9.

[1 : 1 3] Let's go ahead and go there this morning. Ephesians chapter 2, beginning with verse number 4. And there are those two words, but God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved, and 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 the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ.

And then these very, very familiar words of Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9. For by grace you're saved.

We have been saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Because of sin's work against us, God went to work for us. And the Apostle Paul, in these verses of this letter, as he's talking to the Ephesian Christians, he is letting them know that progression, as we talked about last week.

We see that complete picture of the man. We use that term generally, the person without Christ, that apart from Christ we are sinful.

[2 : 5 0] And then God goes to work for us. And he shows, as we're going to see in a moment, his love for us. He exalts us. And so on.

It's all based on the first thought in these verses. Everything that God does for us is based on this. God loves you and he loves me.

That's the message the world needs to hear. There are so many that feel like the world is against them, that God is against them. And that maybe because of their life, no one could love them.

And many don't even love themselves. And we see that happening over and over and over again. Many are taking their own lives.

As a matter of fact, that's the number two cause of death right now for those late adolescents and early adults, 18 to 24. And we're seeing it at an epidemic level.

- [3 : 50] And we need to hear, God loves you. And we can follow that up with, and I love you as well. Because we're told by God to love one another.
- Verse number four. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love, the Bible says, he loved us.
- And by nature, God is what? God's love. By nature, God is love. 1 John chapter 4, verse number 8.
- But imagine this, or think about this. God would love even if there were no sinners. Why? Because it's a part of his being.
- God is love. Theologians, when they talk about God, they talk about attributes, the attributes of God.
- [4 : 47] And the one type of attribute to which they refer, those are intrinsic attributes. Those things that are just part of our being.
- Love is one of God's attributes. But God has two kinds of attributes. Those that he possesses of himself. God is eternal. God is love.
- God is truth. God is unchanging. Those are just qualities, attributes that God possesses in and of himself.
- He received those from no one. They are part of him. Life, love, holiness. Those are all intrinsic attributes of God.
- And then, there are those by which he relates to his creation. We call those relative attributes. God is love. But God shows that love towards creation, specifically toward mankind.
- [5 : 47] We call those relative attributes. For example, God, we know the Bible says God is truth. But when God relates in truth to mankind, it's faithfulness.
- We know God's true. But in terms of that relative attribute, when God in truth deals with mankind, he's always going to be faithful. Because he's always going to act based on that truth.
- He's going to be true and truthful and faithful no matter what. Because by nature, God is holy. And when he relates that holiness to man, it's justice.
- Because God's always holy. God will be just in everything that he does. Love is one of God's intrinsic attributes. But when this love is related to sinners, it's grace and mercy.
- God shows his love through his grace and through his mercy. We saw that in verses 8 and verse 9. Ephesians 2, 4. We saw God is rich in mercy.
- [6 : 56] He's rich in grace. Ephesians 2, verse 7. And it's these riches that make it possible for us to be saved. What was it two weeks ago? Wake up and smell the riches. You know, there are so many believers.
- There are so many followers of Christ that don't realize what we have at our disposal. It's like having a huge bank account and living like a pauper.
- You know, all we've got to do is write the check. All we've got to do is go and make a withdrawal out of the bank account. And all we have to do is pray, talk to our Heavenly Father, trust, and withdraw out of that heavenly bank account.
- God's power, God's grace, and all the things that we need to make it through our lives. And God is love, but this will come as a shock to many, many people.
- Not you, of course. But it comes as a shock to many people that we're not saved by God's love. God's love does not save. You say, well, Pastor, that's bordering on heresy.
- [8 : 02] No. No. God's love, the mechanism of salvation, is not love. It's based on love. Because God loves us, God demonstrated that love.

How? He sent Jesus to the cross. And it's the atoning death of Jesus Christ that makes it possible for us to be saved.

But it's because of His love. It's His love. And so many people get hung up on that, and they say, because God loves the world so much. God loves everyone. Therefore, I don't see how God could send anyone to hell.

You see, and I had a Bible college professor that put it this way. All of God does all that God does. All of God does all that God does. Meaning, God is love, but God is also a God of justice.

And those who refuse to obey His plan will face the consequences. God loves us. That's why He demonstrated that love and made it possible through the death of, the sacrificial atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross, that if we just simply believe that He's God, believe who He is, and trust that death on the cross of Calvary to be sufficient for forgiveness of sin and to be made right with God, that is when we come into a right relationship with Him.

[9 : 29] In His mercy, He does not give us what we deserve. In His grace, He provides for us what we could never merit and what we could never deserve.

And all of this is made possible because of the death of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. God displayed His hatred for sin there on the cross and His love for sinners.

Romans chapter 5, verse 8. We read, But God, I alluded to that earlier, but God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

That ought to ring as a wonderful truth in the ears of all of mankind. God loved us, but God showed that love. He demonstrated it. It's not enough for us to say, I love you.

Hi, nice knowing you. Good luck. God said, I love you, and because I love you, I'll show my love, and I will send Jesus to earth. Jesus said, I will divest myself of my glory that I have up here with the Father, and I will lower myself, and I will become a human being.

[10 : 43] Fully God, but yet fully man, and I will taste death for every man. That is God's love demonstrated toward us.

We also see in John chapter 3, verse 16, For God so loved the world that He what? He gave. He loved. He gave.

His love, He acted upon His love. He gave His only begotten Son, His unique Son, none like Him, that whosoever, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Our ability to be reconciled with God would not be possible without God having first loved us. God's love started it all. God created.

God set mankind in the Garden of Eden, and He gave man this whole garden to possess, to tend, and to be over. The animal kingdom as well.

[11 : 46] And He said, but there's just one thing. This tree that I've set in the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He said, of all the trees of the garden you may freely eat, but don't take of that fruit of that tree, because in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely what?

Die. And we learned last week that that spiritual death, that moment that Adam took a bite of that fruit, mankind was separated from God.

And that moment they began to die physically. And death is a result of sin. Death is a result of that disobedience.

But God, He, because He's rich in mercy, loved us and demonstrated that love by sending Jesus Christ to the cross of Calvary.

Secondly, God gave us life. Remember last week we talked about being in the graveyard. We talked about the result of sin is sin brings death, but God brings life.

[12 : 57] Even, we go to verse 5 now, even when we were dead. Even when we were dead, how, why, where? In sin, in trespasses.

He made us alive together with Christ. He says, by grace you have been saved. This means He made us alive even though we were dead in sin.

He accomplished this spiritual resurrection by the power of the Spirit using the Word. In the four Gospels, it's recorded that Jesus raised three people from the dead.

He raised the widow's son in Luke chapter 7. He raised Jairus' daughter in Luke chapter 8. And then Lazarus and John chapter number 11. In each of these cases, Jesus spoke the Word and He gave life.

The Bible says the Word is living, is powerful. We know that God's Word gives life. And these three physical resurrections are pictures of the spiritual resurrection that comes to the sinner when he hears the Word, when she hears the Word and believes.

[14 : 11] Let's look at John chapter 5, verse 24. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my Word and believes on Him who sent me has everlasting life.

Not might have, not will have. But the moment we place our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ, the Bible says we are saved. He says, and who has sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but has passed, where?

From death into life. By trusting Christ, we've gone from death to life. He has made us alive.

But our spiritual resurrection is much greater than physical resurrection, because what does it do? It puts us in union with Christ. It puts us in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

God has made us alive together with Christ. As members of His body, we are united with Him. Ephesians chapter 1, verses 22 and 23, so that we share His resurrection and we share His power.

[15 : 31] Ephesians chapter 1, verses 19 and 20. So we have brand new life. And that's what Jesus offers to everyone that trusts Him.

Life, eternal life that begins the moment we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. And the great thing is, we don't have to wait till we get to heaven to begin enjoying that life.

We begin enjoying the power. We begin enjoying union with Christ the moment we trust Him as our Savior. And so we are raised from the dead, spiritually, and we're united with Him.

And then thirdly, we get to enjoy exaltation. Not only did He love us, not only did He make us alive, but the Bible shows here in this portion that we're reading this morning, is God exalts you and me when we trust Christ as our Savior.

We look at verse number 6. Not only has He made us alive, but the Bible says He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

[16 : 43] We're not raised from the dead and left in the graveyard. We are raised from the dead, given brand new life so that we can be alive with Christ.

And right now, positionally, you and I are in heaven with Jesus Christ as He's sitting on the right hand of God the Father. And so we are exalted.

Because we're united with Christ, we've been exalted with Him and we're sharing His throne in the heavenlies. Now one day, we're going to pass from this life, this earthly life, we're going to have ultimately those glorified bodies and then we're going to be able to taste for the first time and for eternity what it's like to be together with Him forever.

That life begins when we trust Christ as our Savior, we're exalted immediately and positionally we are with Christ in the heavenlies. Now our physical position might be on earth, but our spiritual position is in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

And like Lazarus, we've been called out of the grave to sit with Christ and enjoy His fellowship. Let's look at John chapter 12 this morning.

[18 : 11] John chapter 12. Then six days before the Passover, verse 1, Jesus came to Bethany. Now that sounds familiar because that's where Lazarus, who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead, Bible says, verse number 7, there they made Him a supper.

Martha served. There's a whole other story that goes around that account. But Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.

Like Lazarus, we've been raised from the dead for a purpose. Lazarus was raised from the dead to be able to enjoy union and fellowship with Christ.

He was raised from the dead and now we're sitting at the table with Jesus to be able to fellowship with Him. Then, it doesn't stop there.

Lastly, we are kept for a reason. We are safe in Christ for a reason.

[19 : 27] Let's take a look at verses 7 through 9. That in the ages to come, what is the reason that He has given us brand new life?

What is the reason that He has exalted us with Christ in the heavenlies so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ?

He wants to show you and me off. He wants to show us off to all of creation. Look at what grace does. Look at the riches of grace and kindness that God's not doing it because He's egotistical.

He's doing it because He's God. Because God wants to be exalted. God deserves to be exalted. And so, He has made us alive.

He has placed us in the heavenlies with Christ positionally so that He could show off the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us in Christ.

[20 : 35] Why? Because it's for by grace that we are saved through faith and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest anyone should boast.

See, God's purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell. As great a work as that is, that's not God's primary purpose.

His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity His church, the body of Christ, might glorify Him and might glorify His grace.

Verse 6, verse 12, we also see that in chapter 1, verse number 14. God saved us and exalted us so that we might show Him praise and honor and glory and He could show us off to all His creation.

So, think about this. If God's will or if God has an eternal purpose for you and for me to fulfill, He therefore will keep us for all eternity.

[21 : 41] Since we haven't been saved by our good works, we can't be lost by our bad works because it's all by God's grace. It's all by God's power.

It's not of us. It's not of ourselves. But it's the gift of God. Not of works, the Bible says, lest anyone should boast. Grace means salvation completely apart from any merit or work on our part.

Grace means that God does it all for the sake of Jesus Christ because our salvation is a gift of God. We see that word in chapter 2, verse number 8.

The word that. If you take a look at the word that in verse number 8 of Ephesians chapter 2, that, excuse me, that Greek word is neuter.

And if you go back to the word faith, it's feminine. So, if we're reading verse number 8, for by grace you have been saved through faith and that.

[22 : 48] And we always have to look at what a word refers back to in order to be able to understand it correctly. The that doesn't refer back to faith.

It couldn't because of the way the Greek language is constructed. The word that refers back to our salvation as a whole. God does it all.

God does everything. It refers to the whole experience of salvation including faith. Salvation is a gift, not a reward.

Because otherwise we could say, well, I had the faith. God had to save me. It's based on all God and faith was part of the package.

Salvation is a gift. It's not something we work for. It's not something we check a box. And God says, oh, okay, you're saved. It's a matter of God doing it and we trust and then we, he gives us brand new life.

[23 : 52] Salvation can't be of works because when was salvation accomplished? On the cross of Calvary. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

So the work of salvation took place on the cross and all that remains is for us to accept the gift, the gift of eternal life by placing our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ.

This is the work that God does for us and it is a finished work. Look at John chapter 17. Let's listen to Jesus. Jesus spoke these words, lifted his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come.

We know that was talking about his imminent death. Glorify your son that your son may also glorify you as you have given him authority over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him and this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God, Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

And he says in verse number four, I have glorified you on the earth. I have what? I have finished the work you have given me to do.

[25 : 12] And then we go to John chapter 19 verse 30. There on the cross, Jesus, when he had received the sour wine, when he had received the vinegar, says it is finished.

One word in the Greek language, it is finished. And bowing his head, the Bible says he gave up his spirit. We can add nothing to it.

Hebrews chapter 10 verses 1 through 4. We don't add anything to God's word and neither do we take anything from it. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was ripped in two from top to bottom.

That way we know that the way to God is now open. There's no more need for earthly sacrifices. One sacrifice, the Lamb of God has finished the great work of salvation.

God did it all and he did it by grace. In mercy, God doesn't give us what we deserve. In his grace, he provides for us what we could never merit and what we could never deserve.

[26 : 18] You see, sin worked against us, but God went to work for us. For the great work of conversion is just the beginning.

Life doesn't stop at salvation. It just begins. And as we go through our daily life and until we meet our Heavenly Father one day, the work continues.

And we'll look at that next week. Let us pray. Father, this morning as we come into your Word and as we look to see what you have accomplished for us, that great work of salvation in Christ.

Father, I pray that anyone listening to your Word this morning may understand and may grasp that you love them so much that you sent your Son Jesus to die on the cross in our place.

That if we just, that if we but simply place our faith and our trust God and may have saved us in that Jesus once and for all paid the penalty for our sin and that you're offering to us the free gift of a new life, a life that never ends.

[27 : 40] And we simply appropriate it by faith, by grace through faith. All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. So, Father, this morning I pray that anyone who's listening to this Word today, that if they simply surrender to you and trust, that you will provide them a brand new life.

Father, we thank you for what you're going to do. We thank you for the power of your Word and for your work that continues on our behalf. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.