

• *God's intervention continued*

• *How the change took place*

**1. Great words used by Paul**

• *Saved*

• *Grace*

• *Assurance*

• *Faith*

**2. Salvation: a fuller explanation**

Paul now explains what he said in 2:4–7, more from the angle of the Christian believer. He now concentrates more on the Ephesians themselves; he talks about 'you'. Ephesians 2:1–10 unfolds as follows:

- Ephesians 2:1–3 – deal with what we were.
- Ephesians 2:4–7 – deal with what God has done and what we are.
- Ephesians 2:8–10 – explain more fully how the change took place.

*'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. <sup>□1</sup> It is not of works, lest anyone should boast'. <sup>□2</sup>*

□1 2:8

□2 2:9

**1. Let us focus on some of the great words Paul uses in 1:8–9.**

First: **saved**. This term is Paul's brief way of summarising everything he has referred to in verses 1–7. In verse 3 we were dead, enslaved to wicked powers, under God's anger. In verses 4–7 we see what happened to us – how we were made alive, raised with Christ, transferred to a new realm where we are seated with Christ in heavenly places. Paul now puts all this into one word: 'saved'. It means: rescued from the death of sin, rescued from the guilt of sin, the power and bondage of sin, the defilement of sin. It means: brought safely to life, to forgiveness, to a spiritual position in the heavenly realms; to spiritual power, to holiness, to total safety with Jesus.

Next: **grace**. 'By **grace** you have been saved'. Grace is the opposite of deserving something. It is God's help for the helpless, even though undeserved. We cannot be saved if wicked works get in the way. But we cannot be saved by good works either! Even faith is not a human achievement. We believe through God's grace. We do the believing, yet God is working this in us. After we have believed we give all the glory to Him, even for our faith.

**The Christian is meant to have assurance of salvation.** 'You have been saved' or 'You are saved'. Paul is sure about them – speaking generally. He knows they are saved. He wants them to be sure of it too. It never helps the saved person to doubt whether he is saved.

Our next word is: **faith**. 'By grace you are saved through faith'. It does not say 'by faith' but 'through faith'. Faith is the channel. It is not a human achievement. Salvation is of God. Even faith is worked in us through God's activity in our hearts. Verse 8b adds something; it goes even further. Faith is a gift of God; God works faith in us as we hear His Word (see Acts 13:48; John 6:44; 6:37; 2 Peter 1:1 which says faith is 'allotted' to us; and 1 Corinthians 12:3).

This means that any kind of boasting is excluded. Salvation is 'not of works, lest anyone should boast'. If salvation were by works you could boast. But since every aspect of our salvation comes from God, no boasting is possible. Even our first being given spiritual life (2:4) comes from God.

□1 2:4

**2. A fuller explanation comes in verse 10.** It develops what has been said already. *'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them'. <sup>□1</sup>*

□1 2:10

• **God's workmanship**

**Salvation is God's workmanship.** God is the workman. He makes us alive. He raises us. He works faith in us

• **An act of creation**

**Salvation is an act of creation.** Nothing creates itself. Salvation was not brought about by us. It was God's act. We did not save ourselves. God had nothing to work with. He did not use prior material. It was not because of anything in us. We were not newly created because God found something in us to re-mould. He created us anew out of nothing.

• **Not by, but for good works**

**We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works.** Our salvation is totally free. It did not come because of anything in us at all. But we still have to live a good life. This is not the cause of our salvation, but it is the purpose of our salvation. Good works do not contribute to our getting right with God. This is a bold and daring thing to say. Only the Christian faith says it! We are brought to salvation without our deserving anything. We do nothing, but we believe in Jesus Christ as the One who died upon the cross for us. And God's gift of new life becomes ours. Then – and only then – God begins to work in us in such a way that we live for Him. Then the 'good works' begin to flow in our daily living.

• **God has a plan for our lives**

**God has a plan for our lives.** There are '...good works, which God prepared beforehand...'. How do we get to know God's plan? We seek Him, seek to know His will. We use our gifts. God's plan will fit the way we are made. We must not be too proud; we must not be too fearful. God has a plan. Even the particular things He wants us to do are on His heart.

• **Human responsibility**

Although God has a plan for our lives **we are responsible to fulfil that plan.** Paul says good works are '...prepared beforehand that we should walk in them'. We have to do the walking. Because the plan is there it does not mean that we are passive and do nothing.

• **Things we do yet they are God's work in us**

In all of this there is a lot that is mysterious and surprising. When we first put our trust in Christ it feels like something that we do. **We** put our faith in Jesus. **We** give our lives to Christ. Yet Ephesians 2:8–10 tells us things that we did not perhaps realise at the time we first believed. God was working in us. Even our coming to faith in Christ was actually the work of God. Our salvation was **more** by grace than we ever realised. This is why it is to the praise of the glory of His grace.



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