

5. Learning How God Worked in Us

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be made spiritually alive. We saw that when Adam and Eve sinned, they experienced immediate spiritual death because spiritual death is separation from God. We saw that at the moment of salvation, God gave us spiritual life and we are now able to enjoy fellowship with God again. Today, we are going to see how this spiritual life has made it possible for us to now carry out the things God has designed for us to do to give our lives purpose and meaning.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” It was the mercy and grace of God that made it possible for us to receive salvation so that we received spiritual life. We see here that we received that grace through faith. However, God wants us to clearly understand that the faith we have is not the result of our own efforts. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Here, we see that the first thing that God did to give us faith is to make it possible for us to hear the Word of God.

In addition to making it possible for us to hear the Word of God, Christ said in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” Here, we see that the Father is also the one who draws each person who comes to Christ for salvation. Then, Romans 8:30 says, “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Here, we see why God made it possible for us to hear the Word of God and then drew us to Christ. God did these things because He had chosen us before He ever created the world. As a result, our salvation from beginning to end is a gift that is given to us by God.

Our works have nothing to do with this salvation. Verse 9 points out that if there is anything we could do to in any way make our salvation possible, we would boast. That is why Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” The word that is translated “filthy rags” speaks of the bandages that were used to cover the sores of lepers. As a result, any works that we would do to try and earn our salvation would be completely useless.

Instead, we see that we are His workmanship. The word that is translated “workmanship” means *the works of God as the Creator*. God created us and chose us to be His children. Here, we see what God created us to do. He created us to do good works. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” The word that is translated “good” means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.” Here, we see that God has worked through Christ to make us complete for every good work.

2 Timothy 2:20-21 tells us, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” If we will cleanse our lives from the things that bring dishonor, the Lord will use our lives in ways beyond what we can imagine because He has already prepared us for every good work. Then, God tells us how He equips us for every good work in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where we read, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Here, we see that God wants us to become familiar with the whole Word of God so that we are thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We also want to encourage our children to pray for other Christians that the Lord will cause the works of others to be fruitful. Paul gives us the illustration of such a prayer when he says in Colossians 1:9-10, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” As we help our children to become thoroughly equipped for every good work, a part of those good works is praying for others that the Lord will also equip them for good works.

We saw in an earlier topic that God chose us to salvation before He even brought the creation into existence. Here, in Ephesians 2:10, we also see that God created us for good works before the creation. This is a great reminder that God has created every Christian for a purpose. It is a wonderful thing to know that God has created us in such a way that our lives can have great meaning and purpose as we learn to carry out the good works for which God has equipped us.

Paul goes on in Ephesians 2:11-13 to remind us, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” During that time, the Jews felt that the Gentiles had no part in the promises of God and rejected the Gentiles. Since most of us are Gentiles, Paul wanted to remind us how separated we were from God before we came to God through Christ.

First, we see that at that time we were without Christ. The word “Christ” means *the Anointed One*. Because of the promises that God gave to Abraham, throughout most of the Old Testament, at least some of the Jews were looking for the coming of One who would be their Savior. The Gentiles did not know the Word of God and could not look forward to a Savior. In contrast, Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Christ came as a Savior for both the Jews and the Gentiles.

Second, we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. As aliens, we were not a part of the nation of Israel and could not enjoy the blessings that God had promised to Israel. The only other time the word translated “commonwealth” is used in the New Testament is in Acts 22:28 where we read, “The commander answered, ‘With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.’ And Paul said, ‘But I was born *a citizen*.’” Here, the word is translated “citizenship”. At the moment of salvation, we became a citizen of heaven with all of the blessings that we have seen in the first chapter of Ephesians.

Third, we were strangers from the covenants of promise. The word that is translated “covenants” is the word that is also translated “testament”. In 1 Corinthians 11:25, we read, “In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.’” Christ came to make a New Covenant with His blood. This covenant is for all who come to Him by faith. We quoted Hebrews 13:20-21 in an earlier paragraph. In those verses, we see that the blood of Christ made us complete because it was an everlasting covenant.

Fourth, we had no hope. We were without hope because God had given us as Gentiles no promise. We saw in an earlier topic that true hope for us is based on the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ. Hope is the confident assurance that God will do exactly as He as promised. Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” We can now look forward to the coming of Christ because we know that we have been given eternal life and that the day will come when Christ will return to take us to heaven.

Fifth, we were without God in the world. Because the Gentiles did not know God, Ephesians 2:2 says, “In which you once walked 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.” We did not know God and so we walked in darkness and did not know where we were going.

In contrast to the five things above, we see that at the moment we placed our faith in Christ Jesus, we were brought near by the blood of Christ. John 1:29 says, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” When John the Baptist introduced Christ, he pointed out that Christ came to take away the sin of the world and not just the sin of the Jews. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand how God has worked in our lives as Gentiles, they will grow in their understanding of the great blessings that we have received through Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand how God has worked in our lives.