

Created on Purpose

Ephesians 2:1-10

Today we begin a new series called ***God and the Rest of the Week***. We will be studying the book of Ephesians which is beautifully balanced between theology and application. The first three chapters establish wonderful gospel truth. The last three chapters apply that truth with five “therefore live” exhortations.

So the whole **structure of the book presents the gospel**. In the Bible God’s commands always come AFTER His promises. We live in response to grace, not trying to earn it. We obey God not to earn His favor but because we HAVE His favor. This is the difference between Christianity and every other religion!

- Religion is man’s attempt to reach God.
- Christianity is God reaching down to rescue us.

Religion



Christianity



Religion is about what **YOU MUST DO**. Christianity is about **what GOD HAS DONE**. Therefore religion is always an uphill climb - always an exhausting, never ending list of requirements. And even if you devote yourself to prayer, Bible study and community service, you will never know if you’ve done enough. ***Religion is a man-made ladder***, trying to reach up to heaven. But you can never know when your ladder is big enough because there is always more you COULD do, always more you feel like you SHOULD do.

Christianity is not a ladder with a list of rules you must follow and then God will accept you. **Christianity is a rocket ship.** Jesus came to earth and invites you to get on. For all who come to Jesus in faith, He takes us up into a new level of purpose and joy NOW and He promises to bring us all the way to heaven when we die.

God has done the work. Salvation is a complete package. There is nothing you or I can add to what Jesus has done for us.

Ephesians 1-3

What God has DONE

He has

- Loved us (ch. 1)
- Saved us (ch. 2)
- United us (ch. 2-3)
 - ***in Christ***

Ephesians 4-6

What we must DO

Therefore, live

- Worthy (4:1)
- Holy (4:17)
- Lovingly (5:1)
- Truthfully (5:8)
- Wisely (5:15)

Ephesians 1-3 show us *the richness and beauty of all God has done for us in Christ*. He has loved us infinitely, He has saved us from death and condemnation and He has united us with Jesus and one another.

Ephesians 4-6 call us to *the appropriate response* to this lavish grace. As those who have been loved, saved and united, we must live in light of that grace, in response to it. We must live worthy of this calling. As those who have been forgiven and set free from sin, we must live holy lives, putting off our old nature and putting on the new. As those who are one with each other spiritually we must treat one another with love, setting aside our own desires in preference to each other.

Though we live in a dark, sinful world, we must not be conformed to it, but must ***live as children of light***, walking in the truth we know. This calls for wisdom that resists the foolishness and temptation of the world and seeks instead the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Look at Ephesians 2:8-9.

“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.” Ephesians 2:8-9

We are saved by **grace ALONE through faith ALONE**. How much of your work goes into your salvation? What percentage of your salvation do you get credit for? The answer is 0%. “This is not your own doing.” It is 100% a gift of God’s grace. The wonder of the gospel is that we DON’T get what we deserve - judgment, punishment, condemnation. No one can boast - no one can brag, claiming they have done anything to earn God’s favor. Again, that is RELIGION.

Religion



Christianity

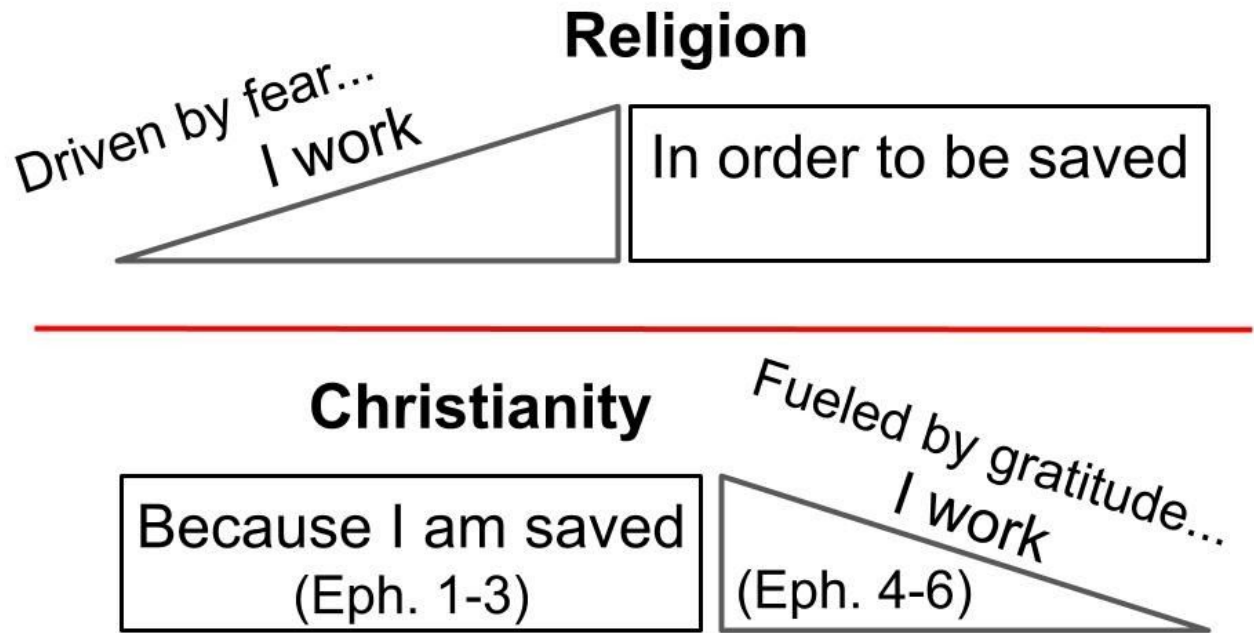


Religion says, “I work... in order to be saved.” If I pray enough, give enough, serve enough, do enough - I will earn God’s favor and get to heaven. That is the ladder of human effort - the path of self-reliance. Every religion is based on this construct, though they present the work in slightly different ways.

Christianity is totally different from every other religion. It does not say you must work TO BE SAVED. It says YOU ARE SAVED! God has done it! Jesus paid it all! You are forgiven! You are free! You are loved and adopted now as a child of God. You are alive, born again, a new creation in Christ. You are no longer under the control of sin and destined for death you have the Holy Spirit inside of you and are destined for eternity in heaven with God!

Do you see the difference between the ladder of religion and the rocketship of Christianity? They could not be more opposite. And if you sometimes fall into the trap of a religious mindset, you feel the exhaustion and anxiety of it, don’t you? You feel the weight of EARNING - performing -

trying to do enough - just a little bit more. Because these two approaches to God draw from two totally different motivations.



Religion is driven by FEAR. **Christianity is fueled by gratitude.** Religion says, “You better work - you better give - you better pray - you better serve - OR ELSE.” Religion is based on threat.

Christianity is fueled by gratitude for all God has done for us. “It is by GRACE you have been saved.” The believer in Jesus knows it’s all about what He has done for us - His finished work. We cannot add a single thing to that infinite grace. **It’s all grace!** We simply access that gift through faith. We simply say “Yes” to Jesus and the flood of His mercy comes into our lives. We simply get on board that rocketship and all that is His becomes ours!

We have two parts to the message today, and we’ve already mostly covered the first part.

Fueled by the Gospel

“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.”
Ephesians 2:8-9

& Formed by the Master

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

We give everything we are in service to Him

Everything we ARE is because of the gospel, so everything we DO should be in response to the gospel. This is our FUEL. We are not driven by fear. God’s perfect love, in the gospel, has driven out fear. There is NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is love, acceptance, freedom, power and purpose.

So if you need some encouragement in your walk with the Lord, if you need some fuel for your daily life, if you need some energy to bring back to your marriage, some motivation to your parenting, some fresh life to your work - ***this series is for you!*** God and the rest of the week. The gospel is not just something we celebrate on Sundays. It is the fuel for every day of our week.

First, let’s walk through the gospel in Ephesians 2, to get a charge from this fuel.

Fueled by the Gospel

- We deserved Death and Hell

“You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked... and were by nature children of wrath.” Ephesians 2:1,3

Here is the stark reality. “***You were DEAD,***” in your sins. So was I. that was our condition before Jesus saved us. You weren’t mostly dead, you were all dead. You were not struggling to stay afloat in the turbulent waters of your sin - you were DEAD.

All of us were **sinners by nature and by choice**. We were born IN ADAM with sinful desires and tendencies and each one of us, over and over, have chosen to follow those desires instead of listening to the voice of God in our conscience that tells us what is right and wrong.

And so, Romans 6:23 tells us, "the wages of sin is death." We were dead spiritually and we deserved to stay in that condition forever. Ephesians 2:3 makes it clear that is not just a physical reality but a spiritual reality. We deserved to die and remain under God's wrath forever.

"BUT GOD." Verse 4.

Fueled by the Gospel

- God gave us Life and Heaven in Christ

"But God, being rich in mercy... made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places..." Ephesians 2:4-6

Instead of giving US the death and hell we deserve, Jesus came and died for us - enduring the full wrath of God as He hung on the cross. ***Jesus died the death we should have died.*** He experienced the wrath we should have experienced for all of eternity. Jesus died so we could live. He was cast out of the Father's presence to bring us INTO the Father's presence. He suffered hell to bring us to heaven!

This is the wonder and glory of the gospel! **We were IN SIN** - But God, entirely by grace and only in response to our faith, united us together with Christ. Christian believer, you are no longer in sin, **you are IN CHRIST**. You are one with Him: alive with Him, raised up with Him, seated with Him.

This is who you are now. "The old has gone, the new has come." You have been born again into a living hope that cannot perish or ever be spoiled.

- You are forgiven - your sins washed away.
- You are free - the power of sin over you has been broken.
- You are filled with the Holy Spirit - you have a new Master and new resources to live in Christ and for Christ.

We are not who we were - hallelujah, we sing! We were bought by His blood so we belong to the King!

That is our fuel. If you are struggling in your marriage, or with your kids, or in your job, or with a relationship or with some ongoing sin - this is the place to come to fuel up. Remember the gospel. Remember who you were. Remember where you were when God called you. Remember the price He paid to save you. Remember the significance of all God has done for you in Christ. Feed on this. Feast on this. This is our fuel.

But the good news doesn't stop there. Yes, we are fueled by the gospel and we will see how the gospel applies to every area of our lives. But we have also been formed by the Master.

Formed by the Master

- He intentionally Created us as we are

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...” Ephesians 2:10a

Christians have been created TWICE. First in your mother's womb, God knit you together exactly as He wanted you to be. Then at your spiritual birth, you were born again, and created anew IN CHRIST.

Hear this, brother, sister - ***God created you intentionally.*** Every aspect of your life is part of God's perfect plan for you.

- Your physical strengths and weaknesses.
- Your personality and temperament.
- Your life experiences, even the bad ones.

Everything in your life is part of God's ongoing work in your life. “We are his WORKMANSHIP.” That is one of those beautiful words in Scripture. The Greek word is “poema,” which helps us feel the beauty of this work God is doing in our lives. The word means “***masterpiece.***”

God has not made a single mistake in your life or ever in history. You are not an accident. You are a priceless work of art. You are God's “poema.”

One of our dear friends from Chicago is **Barb Blasco**. She and her husband Rich were active in the church I grew up in, and she was church secretary during the years I was there as a youth pastor. On April 3, 1979, Rich and Barb had their only daughter - ***Kathryn***. When she was born the doctor said, “It's a girl... but she probably won't make it...”



Kathryn was born with part of her brain outside of her skull and severe microcephaly - multiple serious genetic conditions that made it very unlikely she would survive birth much less life outside of the womb.

Remarkably, Kathryn made it through that day just fine - and continues to live to this very day. On April 3 she celebrated her **41st birthday!** She is a quadrapelegic who depends on others for her care, and she is non-verbal in terms of recognizable words. But if you spend any time with Kathryn you start to get to know

her personality and you begin to realize that she - just like you and me - is a masterpiece of God's creative work.

Many in our world today would say that Kathryn should have been aborted in the womb, or allowed to die after her birth. But Kathryn has been a joy to her parents and to so many others because she is exactly who she is.

Through their experience with Kathryn, Rich and Barb have had ***a lifetime of ministry*** to other people navigating the world of disability. For years at our church they ran a support group for others facing this kind of challenge. They were active in the ministry of Joni Earackson Tada.

Hear this - Kathryn Blasco was not a mistake. **She is a masterpiece.** She is a miracle of God's creative work.

And so are you. Don't ever believe the lie that God's one mistake was you. You are His masterpiece. He created you intentionally - just as you are. Second:

Formed by the Master

- He relationally Connected us in the Church to multiply our impact

“Who has made us both one... that he might create in himself one new man... a holy temple in the Lord.” Ephesians 2:14-15,21

God created you exactly as He wants you. Then He connected you with Jesus by faith and through that connection, He bound you forever into the body of Christ, the church.

In the first century, ***the dividing line between Jews and Gentiles*** was as prominent as that between black and white people in the U.S. in the early '60s. “Separate and unequal” defined how most Jews viewed Gentiles and Samaritans, who were half-Jew and half-Gentile.

But that division is what God demolished in Christ. The two separate peoples were bound together in Christ. There is not a Jewish church and Gentile church, there is one church - one body.

It's important to see that this whole chapter is written CORPORATELY. It's about US, not me. It's for all of us, not just each of us individually. Yes, we can and should apply these truths to ourselves personally, but there is an essential application of this that is communal, for it is all connected to the church. **WE** are His workmanship - all of us together.

We are being built together, like living stones God is assembling into one holy temple where He lives now and where He will dwell forever! Our work on earth continues, because there are stones for this temple that have not yet been cut out from the quarry of this world. There are still

tribes and nations yet to be reached with the gospel who must be a part of this great eternal temple.

In our culture of independence and self-gratification it is important to keep this in mind. Yes, you are God's unique masterpiece, but you were not designed to stand out on your own as an **individual display** like the Queen's Crown in the tower of London.

You are one perfectly carved stone designed to fit into God's great temple, the church.

When Solomon built **the original temple in Jerusalem**, none of the chiseling was done on site. All of it was done elsewhere and the fully cut stones were brought to the temple mount and assembled together. What a beautiful picture of God's work in the church today!

He carved you out of the world - where you were dead in your sin, disgusting and corrupted in your filth - and He remade you a new creation in Christ. He continues to chisel away at our rough edges and He is fitting us together in His great global masterpiece.

You CANNOT fulfill God's purposes for your life APART FROM THE CHURCH. It is impossible. God's design is ***focused on the church and fulfilled through the church***. Come back next week to hear from Mike Maggard, one of our new missionaries and also my father in law. He will share from Ephesians 3 about how the church is God's only plan to reach the world. "THROUGH THE CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God is being revealed!"

To say you love Jesus but you don't need the church would be like ***trying to have a relationship with me but saying you didn't really want to have any contact with my wife***. I can assure you, that relationship would not go very far. Kristin and I are united. We are one. If you honor my wife, you honor me. If you dishonor her, you better watch out - because we have four boys and three of them are bigger than me now (or nearly so).

It's a popular view to say, "I love Jesus but I don't like the church," but it doesn't work with New Testament Christianity. To follow Jesus is to be a part of His church. That is what He is doing right now - building His church. If you are not a part of that building project, then you are not a part of God's work in this world.

And the reason for that is first because we best reflect the relational nature of God by serving Him in community and because **team ministry multiplies our impact**.

Let's say you wanted to **build a house**. You could do all the work yourself. You could cut down trees, shape them into boards, dig the foundation by hand, run all the plumbing and electrical. You COULD, conceivably, do all the work yourself. But it would be slow, exhausting, lonely work.

OR - you could invite 15-20 other people, with other skills and resources to help you. Maybe one friend has an excavator. Another is an electrician. A third is a concrete guy. By involving them in your project, you are not only blessing their businesses but you are improving the quality of your house and the efficiency of your building project.

AND - let's say you have an 18 year old son. You could work faster without him. But if you bring him along and show him the work you are doing, step by step, do you see how that multiplies your impact? You not only get the work done and give him some little projects to contribute along the way, but you help prepare him to do this kind of work in his life.

That is how the church is designed. We are **BETTER TOGETHER**. We can accomplish so much more together than we ever could individually. That is true of our single local church and it's even more true of the global church of Jesus Christ.

Our church of 200 or so people cannot make a dent in ***the lostness and sinfulness of Tampa Bay***. But together with 400 other gospel-preaching churches in our region, we can transform this whole area through the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Our little church cannot make much of a difference in completing ***the great commission*** in the world - reaching 2 billion people who have never heard the gospel. But we are not alone in this mission! We are laboring together with **at least 500 million evangelical believers** all over the world! Suddenly the task feels far less daunting, if we work together to get it done!

One more way God formed us:

Formed by the Master

- He supernaturally Commissioned us for specific tasks

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

God created us physically on purpose. He united us relationally to multiply our impact. And He supernaturally commissioned us for specific tasks. Good works that God established “beforehand.”

Oakwood church, God ordained, before you or I were even conceived - that **this group** of people would be together for **this period of time**, walking through this strange virus pandemic. And He orchestrated all of this, with the unique mixture of our gifts, abilities, resources and experiences, so that we would do some specific assignments.

One of our leaders works at ***Advent Hospital Carrollwood***. Two of our members were on the second floor there in January, both of them for long periods of time in the ICU - so we got to know the nurses and staff pretty well on that floor.

Someone had the idea, as this virus thing developed, to bring **care packages** over to the nurses' stations. So a couple of weeks ago one group brought fifty little gift bags over to the second floor station - each with some chocolate, a Dunkin Donuts gift card, a Nutri-grain bar and a little hand-written note from someone our church.

Following that example, three other groups adopted the other three floors and brought similar care packages over to them. 200 nurses and workers at that hospital. **Before time began, God envisioned that project** - and it made Him smile. He worked over the last 37 years to assemble the right team to accomplish that project.

What's your team? What's your project?

God has supernaturally empowered you with spiritual gifts like teaching or service or encouragement or wisdom or faith or generosity... There's a little form there for you to fill out considering:

What is your S.H.A.P.E.?

- **S**piritual Gifts
- **H**eat / Passion
- **A**bilities
- **P**ersonality
- **E**xperiences

Take some time today to **reflect on how God has created you** and what that means for YOU. If you're married, discuss this as a couple. If you have kids in your home, talk about it as a family. (You have nothing but time together, right now. What else are you doing?) Discuss this with your small group this week and talk about **what projects the Lord is calling you to TOGETHER.**

- Every believer has one or two **spiritual gifts** - divine enablements to teach, encourage, administrate, give, serve, help, counsel, etc.
- We also have unique **passions** - issues and interests that draw us to certain issues.
- And you have unique **abilities** - some are athletic, others artistic, some musical, some skilled to work with their hands.
- You have a unique **temperament** - a personality that makes you wired toward people or tasks, toward structure or flexibility, toward thinking or feeling.
- And you have custom set of life **experiences.**

How has God uniquely prepared YOU and the people closest to you for specific assignments?
What is He calling you to right now?

Now look at this resolution. In a few minutes we will come back to it and recite it together.

As a born again child of God, bought with the precious blood of Jesus, I am a unique **Masterpiece**, planned before the world began, fashioned in my mother's womb, developed according to God's infinite wisdom and constantly being transformed by His grace.

God designed my body, experiences, family, resources, neighborhood and life stage for me to touch specific people through preordained acts of service. I resolve to use my spiritual gifts, natural abilities, physical and social resources and my life experiences to maximize my impact for Christ and His Kingdom.

As a member of the body of Christ, I will support the fellow workers beside me and contribute as the Lord enables me - all to bring glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ who saved me, made me who I am and gave me all that I have.

In a few minutes we will recite this resolution together as a sign of our commitment to the Lord and each other. Here is our summary for today.



Jesus gave everything for us. We deserved death and hell - He gave us life and heaven. He gave us Himself. He has filled us with power and given us a mission to accomplish together. Therefore we will give everything we are and all that we have in service to Him.

We are those who are **fueled by the gospel**. We have been marked by grace and in gratitude for all God has done for us in Christ, we are devoted to serve Him. We have been **formed by the master**. We are His masterpiece.

We want all of the young people at Oakwood to hear this from the Lord. You are not an accident. You are God's own masterpiece. He created you exactly the way He wanted to. He loves how you look. He designed your personality. He placed you in this family, in this city, at this time and in this place according to His perfect wisdom. There is work for YOU to do, right here and right now.

Don't be discouraged. Hear this from the Lord. "I created you exactly the way I wanted to. I saved you for my own glory. I brought you here, to this place in this time, with these other believers - because there are specific things for you to do."

Let's recite this resolution together.

As a born again child of God, bought with the precious blood of Jesus, I am a unique **Masterpiece**, planned before the world began, fashioned in my mother's womb, developed according to God's infinite wisdom and constantly being transformed by His grace.

God designed my body, experiences, family, resources, neighborhood and life stage for me to touch specific people through preordained acts of service. I resolve to use my spiritual gifts, natural abilities, physical and social resources and my life experiences to maximize my impact for Christ and His Kingdom.

As a member of the body of Christ, I will support the fellow workers beside me and contribute as the Lord enables me - all to bring glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ who saved me, made me who I am and gave me all that I have.

Let's pray.