

SALUTIS SOLA SCRIPTURA
“SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE”
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Eighteenth, “Whether souls are rescued from purgatory through indulgences, I do not know and I also do not believe it, although some new doctors [of the church] say it. But it is impossible for them to prove it, and the church has not yet decided the matter. Therefore, for the sake of greater certainty, it is much better that each of you prays and works for these souls [of the poor and needy]. For this has more value and is certain.

Nineteenth, In these points [set forth in this sermon] I have no doubt, and they are sufficiently grounded in the Scripture. Therefore, all of you should have no doubts about [them] and let the scholastic doctors alone. Taken altogether, they do not have enough with their opinions to put together a single sermon.

Twentieth, Although some (for whom such truth really damages their treasure chests) now want to call me a heretic, nevertheless I consider such blathering no big deal, especially since the only ones doing this are some darkened minds, who have never even smelled a Bible, who have never read a Christian teacher, and who do not even understand their own teachers but instead remain stuck with their shaky and close-minded opinions. For if they had understood them, they would have known that they should not defame anyone without a hearing and without refuting them. Still, may God give them and us a right understanding! Amen!

These are the final three **Articles from *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*** (*Ein Sermon von dem Ablass und Gnad*) by the German reformer, **Martin Luther**. Written in late March of 1518 and intended as a pamphlet for public distribution, Luther’s sermon was actually his first *official* publication. The infamous *95 Theses* against the sale of papal indulgences that he had nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral in late October of the previous year (1517) created a firestorm when it was translated from Latin into German, published, presumably by Luther’s zealous disciples *without his authorization* and spontaneously distributed throughout the whole of Germany.

Luther’s *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* stressed good works and sincere repentance as of greater merit than the purchase of indulgences for the satisfaction (*satifactorae*) of spiritual debt for “mortal sins” and the improvement (*medicativae*) of eternal position after death.¹ Moreover, Luther criticized indulgences as non-scriptural and accused the Catholic clergy of greed and waste in the sale of indulgences for the building of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. *If* indulgences were to be offered and purchased by penitent sinners at all, the funds should be applied instead toward the aid of the poor and needy in their own neighborhoods.

1. For explanation of the Roman Catholic sacrament of Penance read “Introduction: Luther’s First Reformation Writings” in Timothy Wengert’s *Martin Luther’s 95 Theses: with Introduction, Commentary and Study Guide* (Augsburg Press, 2015). Excerpt at http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/9781451482799_Excerpt%20from%20the%20Introduction.pdf. Luther addresses the confusing and non-Scriptural origin of indulgences in the initial articles of his *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* (1518). The full text is almost impossible to find but it has been graciously linked at the following website: <https://lutherquoted.com/2017/01/24/a-sermon-on-indulgence-and-grace/>

Like the *95 Theses*, the *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* was an instant hit and was reprinted 14 times in 1518 alone, in printings of at least 1,000 copies. The sermon swept through the major centers of the Holy Roman Empire, and the broader reading public first came to know something of Luther through it. It has been described as "the world's first printed bestseller" and, according to many historians is more rightly regarded as the true starting point of the Reformation.²

While all that background may be intriguing to history buffs like myself and utterly boring to others, it is the 13th article of Luther's sermon that should spark the interest of us all. It serves this morning as the springboard for our study of *salutis sola gratia*—"salvation by grace alone." Listen to these words, not as those of a dead historical figure or theological scholar but as those of a compassionate preacher of the Gospel who desperately wanted his people to understand for the first time in more than a century that their hope of salvation was not dependent upon anything they must or even could do. Their hope was dependent upon and securely fixed in the finished work of Christ. Luther wrote,

This is way I say: No one can defend the position [of indulgences] with any passage from Scripture that God's righteousness desires or demands any punishment or satisfaction from sinners except for their heartfelt and true contrition or conversion alone—with the condition that from that moment on they bear the cross of Christ and practice the aforementioned works (but not as imposed by anyone). For this is what God said through Ezekiel [18:21 with 33:14-16, paraphrase]: "If the wicked turn away from all their sins . . . and do . . . right, so will I no longer think on their sins." Thus, in the same way He [Christ] absolved Mary Magdalene [Luke 7:36-50], the paralytic [Mark 2:1-12], the woman taken in adultery [John 8:1-11], etc. I would like to hear who would prove the opposite—besides the fact that some doctors have made up [the sale of indulgences].

It is a tremendous error when people imagine that they can make satisfaction for their sins, which God instead always forgives *gratis* out of immeasurable grace while desiring nothing for this [grace] except that one live well from then on. Whenever Christianity demands something further, it [Christianity] may and should set such a thing aside and not impose anything heavy or unbearable." (Sixth and Thirteenth Articles of *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*, 1518)

With that admonition in mind, let us turn our attention to God's Word this morning. I invite you . . .

¹ And you were **dead in the trespasses and sins** ² in which you once **walked**, following the **course** of this world, following the **prince of the power of the air**, the **spirit** that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once **lived** in the **passions** of our flesh, **carrying out** the desires of the body and the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ **But God**, being rich in **mercy**, because of the **great love** with which he loved us, ⁵ **even when** we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ—by grace** you have been saved— ⁶ and **raised us up** with him and **seated us with him** in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus**, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable **riches of his grace in kindness** toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**. And **this** is not your own doing; **it is the gift** of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should **walk** in them. **Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV)**

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sermon_on_Indulgences_and_Grace

PRAYER

This incredible passage, like all of Paul's epistle to the Church in Ephesus, is replete with vocabulary that, when rightly understood, has the potential of stoking our devotion and fueling our praise for God for the grace He has manifested toward us in Christ Jesus. I want to examine that vocabulary in some detail this morning and I would encourage us to consider its organization under three main sub-headings. Those sub-headings are 1) the grace of God in our *Deliverance*, 2) the grace of God in His *Endowment* to us of affection and action, and 3) the grace of God in our *Appointment* to lives lived well and works accomplished for His glory.

I. The Deliverance (vs. 1-3)

A. Spiritual Corruption

- **From Deadly Identity**

First, let us consider the grace of God in our deliverance. Paul states that we were “*dead* in trespasses and sins.” The issue for us—sinners and enemies of God—was not that we were apathetic toward Him or simply incapable of a grateful response. We were not merely confused or mis-lead in life; rather we were *dead* in trespasses and sins.

John Stott, one of the most influential evangelical preachers and thinkers of the last century, who authored more than 50 devotional and theological books on the Christian life, wrote "We should not hesitate to reaffirm that a life without God (however physically fit and mentally alert the person may be) is a living death, and that those who live it are dead even while they are living." John Stott, *God's New Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979) quoted in Kent Hughes *Preaching the Word - Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*.

Moreover, John MacArthur insightfully speaks to the fact that the use of the word *dead* here in Greek has a locational sense. As sinners, we were not only dead in terms of the absence of spiritual vitality. We *dwelt in* the domain of death and so spiritual death pervaded every aspect of our lives. He writes, “We were not dead because we had committed sin but because we were *in* sin. In this context “trespasses and sins” do not refer simply to acts but first of all to the sphere of existence of the person apart from God. **He does not become a liar when he tells a lie; he tells a lie because he already is a liar. He does not become a thief when he steals; he steals because he already is a thief and so with murder, adultery, covetousness, and every other sin.** *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*

- **From Waywardness and Failure**

Paul goes on to say “we were dead in *trespasses and sins*,” each word having its only condemning connotation. *Trespasses* speaks to our perpetual waywardness from the path of righteousness and *hamartia*, the word most often employed for *sins*, conveys the well-known meaning of “missing the mark.” We might say to ourselves, “Well, that’s not sooo bad! But William Barclay writes in his commentary on this passage,

We commonly have a wrong idea of sin. We would readily agree that the robber, murderer, the razor-slasher, the drunkard, the gangster are sinners, but, since most of us are respectable citizens, in our heart of hearts we think that sin has not very much to do with us. **We would probably rather resent being called hell-deserving sinners. But *hamartia* brings us face to face with what sin is, the failure to be what we ought to be and could be.**

Is a man as good a husband as he might be? Does he try to make life easier for his wife? Does he inflict his moods on his family? Is a woman as good a wife as she might be? Does she really take an interest in her husband's work and try to understand his problems and his worries? Are we as good parents as we might be? Do we discipline and train our children as we ought, or do we often shirk the issue? As our children grow older, do we come nearer to them, or do they drift away until conversation is often difficult and we and they are practically strangers? Are we as good sons and daughters as we might be? Do we ever even try to say thank you for what has been done for us? Do we ever see the hurt look in our parents' eyes and know that we put it there? Are we as good workmen as we could be? Is every working hour filled with our most conscientious work and is every task done as well as we could possibly do it?

When we realize what sin is, we come to see that it is not something which theologians have invented. It is something with which life is permeated. **It is the failure in any sphere of life to be what we ought to be and could be.** *Barclay's Daily Study Bible* (NT)

Martin Luther spent the early years of his priesthood in soul-wracked anxiety over his utter inadequacy before God. When, through his study of the Scriptures, he finally understood the grace of God's deliverance from his comprehensive sinfulness, he yearned for his country-men and all Christians to know of the liberty that may be theirs in Christ. He wrote these words of encouragement in the face of sin and Satan's accusations in his commentary on Galatians,

The truth is, I am all sin. My sins are not imaginary transgressions, but sins against the first table, unbelief, doubt, despair, contempt, hatred, ignorance of God, ingratitude towards Him, misuse of His name, neglect of His Word, etc.; and sins against the second table, dishonor of parents, disobedience of government, coveting of another's possessions, etc. Granted that I have not committed murder, adultery, theft, and similar sins in deed, nevertheless I have committed them [the commandments] in the heart, and therefore I am a transgressor of all the commandments of God. *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (1:4a)

- **From Perpetual Degradation**

Finally Paul reminds us that our progression, or rather digression, in wickedness was active and precipitous. We *walked* in trespasses and sins and even as we walked we fell further and further into degradation. The unknown author of Psalm 1 referred to this penchant toward deepening iniquity in the first verse of his song saying, "Blessed is the man who *walks not* in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers ..."

Both John Calvin and Charles Spurgeon drew attention to this dangerous downward spiral in their commentaries on Psalm 1. Calvin's comments are worthy of quotation on this note. He wrote:

“The sum of the whole Psalm is that the servants of God must endeavor utterly to abhor the life of the ungodly. But as it is the policy of Satan to insinuate his deceits in a very crafty way, the prophet, in order that none may be unwittingly deceived, shows how by little and little men and women are ordinarily seduced into turning aside from the right path. They do not, at the first step, advance so far as a proud contempt of God; but having once begun to listen to evil counsel, Satan leads them step by step further astray until they rush headlong into open transgressions.” John Calvin

So the deliverance God has granted to us by his great grace is remarkable because it reached us while we *dwelt in death*, “in *trespasses and sins* in which [we] *walked* ...” into deeper darkness and domination by the evil one. **This Satanic oppression is the second aspect of deliverance we want to consider.** Were our own deadly inclinations not enough to worry about, Paul writes in verse 3, that we “*walked*, following the *course* of this world, following the *prince of the power of the air*, the *spirit* that is now at work in the sons of disobedience ...”

B. Satanic Oppression

- **From Worldly Deception** – “. . . following the course of this world” (vs. 2b)
First, Paul states that we have been delivered from Satanic oppression through worldly deception promoted by the “course of this world;” the cultural values and philosophical perspectives of a modern / enlightened society that is confused at best and down-right wicked at worst. We live in a culture that rightly laments the slaughter of “innocent” individuals gathered for a concert—a celebration of American values! But where? In “sin city” (of all places). Do you see the irony of that connection? As tragic as the events of last weekend are, the travesty regarding the government-funded slaughter of “innocents” is greater. Politicians and pundits decry the deaths in Vegas and the freedoms (namely the guns) that made such a catastrophe possible. Yet, they are all but silent (except in election cycles) when it comes to the annihilation of massive populations of infants over several generations largely for the sake of convenience and the promotion of an organization that has the audacity to claim it is the primary advocate for “planned parenting.”

Or, for a more benign example of worldly deception, we need look no further than the death of a man who accomplished more in making immorality mundane through his culturally iconic publication for “playboys.” Yet, Hugh Hefner’s life of perversity and usury is hailed as a liberating force in the fight for women’s empowerment. He made vulgar exposition, in what should rightly been judged as a pictorial agent of the devil, a badge of honor. You were really a star when you were asked to be the centerfold in Playboy Magazine. The reality for these cosmetically-manufactured female celebrities, however, is that they will never be considered or remembered thereafter by men as anything other than pieces of meat to be consumed with lustful eyes and then dismissively thrown out with the trash when the next issue arrives. We live in a culture of worldly deception.

- **From Demonic Dominion** – “. . . following the prince of the power of the air” (vs. 4c)
Worldly deception in issues as fundamental as life *or* death, morality *and* sexual identity (which are now no longer absolutes but choices and rights to be exercised and experienced according to one’s own whims) are the designated play-grounds of the devil. Paul next addresses the oppression directed by “the prince of the power of the air.”

Make no mistake that he has won the air-waves and radio-waves and governmental halls and school-rooms of the 21st-century American public and all-too-often, he is given access and free-reign in the living-rooms and home theaters and cell-phones and tablets of Christian and secular individuals alike. Hollywood has earned millions by its out-right partnership with and allegiance to the prince of lies and deceiver of men. However, we are to blame for our complicity as Hollywood's willing audience. We as a country and all to often, we as individuals, have afforded dominion to the evil one in our very own homes.

- **From the Spirit of Disobedience** – “. . . the spirit . . . at work in the sons” (vs. 4d)
The sense that he has “won the day” in our own American culture is evident in the sickening realization that “spirit of disobedience,” of which Paul speaks in vs. 2, is as prevalent now in our increasingly secular society as it has ever been. Open rebellion against the laws of God, the truths of His Word, religious and particularly Christian commitment and now, even the public expression of faith is becoming more and more apparent. “Don't you dare presume you may pray publically—at a ball-game, in a classroom, certainly not with a student, or proclaim the existence of God, or promote your Christian teachings or suggest your pietistic practices! That kind of behavior is bigoted, hateful, civilly disruptive and ironically now, even morally suspect!
- **From Fleshly Passion / Indulgent Desires** – “. . . in the passions of our flesh” (vs. 3b)
The lust and indulgence of our society, evident in the celebration of sexual immorality, the devotion to personal experience and independence, the neglect of fiscal responsibility, the preoccupation with comfort, leisure and wealth to the disregard of the alien, the mentally-ill and physically-ostracized, orphaned, poor, and needy of our culture and the world at large—these are all present-day indications that the corruption of which Paul spoke are as prevalent today, if not more so, than they were in the 1st-century Church.
- **From Sinful Nature** – “. . . and were by nature children of wrath” (vs. 3c)
What is truly sobering is the reminder that “we all once *lived*” in the pursuit of these passions and indulgences and “were, by nature, *children of wrath* like the rest of mankind.” If you have not recently struggled with the residual symptoms of this sinful nature and you are inclined to think you're not all that bad, I must remind you of the words of the Apostle John, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8) Perhaps you escaped our time of confession earlier in the service without honest evaluation? If so, I urge you to reconsider, now, the scope of our sin—your sin—and the desperation with which you and I needed to be delivered.

Surely there are areas of spiritual insufficiency still prevalent or perplexing in your life? What about waywardness (*trespass*) from doing what you know to be right? Perhaps you feel the failure of measuring-up; you're “missing the mark” as a disciple, a parent, a spouse, a servant of others which is what we have all been called to in Christ? Perhaps you fear progressively deepening sin in which you are *walking*? What false philosophies and / or practices, according to *the course of this world*, challenge and stifle you? Why are some of you—why do I—still yield at times to Satan and the influence of his demonic forces in the pursuit of ungodly passions (of any kind), particularly indulgences of the body and mind?

We must willingly consider our struggles with this sinful nature if we are to truly and joyfully comprehend the significance of our deliverance by the grace of God. Martin Luther certainly saw this to be the case. He wrote in his commentary on Galatians,

“Because my transgressions are multiplied and my own efforts at self-justification are rather a hindrance than a furtherance, therefore Christ the Son of God gave Himself into death for my sins. To believe this is to have eternal life.”

Let us equip ourselves against the accusations of Satan with this and similar passages of Holy Scripture. If he says, “Thou shalt be damned,” you tell him: “No, for I fly to Christ who gave Himself for my sins. In accusing me of being a damnable sinner, you are cutting your own throat, Satan. You are reminding me of God’s fatherly goodness toward me, that He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In calling me a sinner, Satan, you really comfort me above measure. Luther, *A Commentary on ... Galatians* (1:4a)

II. The Endowment (vs. 4-9)

With that incredibly encouraging quote in mind, let us consider secondly the many endowments God has given us by His grace. First of all, consider His affections: God’s Mercy, Love, Deference, and Grace

A. God’s Affections

- **of Mercy** – “But God, being rich in mercy. . .” (vs. 4a)

“BUT GOD! . . . DELIVERED US FROM ALL THE DAMNING INDICTMENTS of Spiritual Corruption AND Satanic Oppression BY THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST! Remember what was read from Romans 5 in the midst of singing this morning?

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Do you recall what we sang in celebration this morning?

“You took our sin! You bore our shame!
You rose to life! You defeated the grave”
And a love like this, the world has never known!”

Chris Tomlin, Matt Maher, Jason Ingram
(© 2012 sixsteps / worshiptogether.com songs /
Vamos publishing / Thankyou Music / Admin by EMI)

⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. **Romans 5:1-2, 6-11 (NASB)**

- **of Love** - “because of the *great love* with which He loved us ...” (vs. 4b)

How fully can you contemplate and articulate the “great love with which God loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins”? (Strive to express the extent of it!) One of the men who inherited the Reformation movement from Martin Luther was Paul Gerhardt, the German preacher from him we know most famously the hymn “O sacred Head, now wounded.” However, his text “Jesus, Thy boundless love to me” was once well known and beloved. Listen to how it expounds the great love of God for us.

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me, no thought can reach, no tongue declare;
Unite my thankful heart with Thee and reign without a rival there.
To Thee alone, dear Lord, I live; myself to Thee, dear Lord, I give.

O, grant that nothing in my soul may dwell but Thy pure love alone!
Oh, may Thy love possess me whole, my joy, my treasure, and my crown!
All coldness from my heart remove; my every act, word, thought, be love.

O love, how cheering is thy ray! All pain before thy presence flies;
Care, anguish, sorrow, melt away wherever thy healing beams arise.
O Jesus, nothing may I see, nothing desire or seek, but Thee!

In reality, however, our hearts oft grow cold and no measure of meaningful expression of adoration, commitment of devotion, fervency in prayer, faithfulness in service persists. YET, God has born with us so patiently! His great mercy and love were extended to us with unimaginable deference.

- **of Deference** - “. . . *even when we were dead* in our trespasses” (vs. 5)

The deference of God is evident in this following quote from John MacArthur, “Though greatly offended and sinned against (as depicted in the parable of [Matt. 18:23-35](#)), because of God's rich... mercy and His great love He offered forgiveness and reconciliation to us as He does to every repentant sinner. Though in their sin and rebellion all men participated in the wickedness of Jesus' crucifixion, God's mercy and love provide a way for them to participate in the righteousness of His crucifixion. "I know what you are and what you have done," He says; "but because of My great love for you, your penalty has been paid, My law's judgment against you has been satisfied, through the work of My Son on your behalf. For His sake I offer you forgiveness. To come to Me you need only to come to Him." *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*.

- **of Grace** - “By *grace* you have been saved ...” (vs. 5c)

We sang a modern paraphrase of Martin Luther’s hymn “Out of the depths ...” this morning. You may not have realized that as we sang, “By Grace Alone.” It expresses so powerful the means by which our salvation has been won. Listen to Luther’s original text that was based directly upon Psalm 130: “Out of the depths I cried to You, Lord hear my voice . . .” The second stanza of his hymn speaks particularly and poignantly to the grace manifest of Christ,

“All things You send are full of grace; You crown our lives with favor.
All our good works are done in vain *without* our Lord and Savior.
We praise the God who *gives us faith* and saves us from the grip of death.
Our lives are in his keeping.” Martin Luther (1523), trans. by Gracias Grindal

That final phrase is particularly poignant given that the hymn was sung by the masses of Germany at Luther’s funeral. It foreshadows words written by a later hymn-writer, “Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home!” John Newton So God’s gracious inclinations are clearly on display in this passage but God’s action in our behalf to bring us grace is all the more evident. Look again at what our text says,

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
Ephesians 2:4-9 (ESV)

Let’s consider briefly God’s extensive initiative toward us.

B. God’s Actions

- **of Raising Up** - “raised us up *with* [Christ] ...” (vs. 6a)

Paul will quote Psalm 68 (vss. 18-21a) later in this very epistle stating the glorious news,

“You have ascended on high, You have led captive [a host of] captives (Paul’s use in Eph. 4:8); You have received gifts among men, even *among* the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell *there*.

Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, the God *who* is our salvation.

God is to us a God of deliverances; and to GOD, the Lord, belong escapes from death. Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies ...” Psalm 68:18-21a (NASB)

Of course this passage from Psalm 68 points forward to what Paul says in Eph. 4:9,

“In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. Ephesians 4:9-10 (ESV)

How and when did accomplish and fill all things? When He finished His work on the cross and rose triumphant o'er the conquered grave and was raised into the heavens to the right hand of the Father Almighty AND, as He was seated there in authority and expectancy, we are seated there *in Him!*

- **of Seating with Christ** - “. . . and seated us with him in the heavenly places” (vs. 6b)

MacArthur, draws attention to the fact that “the Greek verb behind *seated* is in the aorist tense and emphasizes the absoluteness of this promise by speaking of it as if it had already fully taken place. That is why Paul said in the opening verses of this same epistle, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *has blessed* us in Christ with every spiritual blessing *in the heavenly places . . .*” Ephesians 1:3-4 (ESV) **Did you catch that? He “has seated us in Christ . . .!” That is past tense! Our security with Christ in heaven is sure!**

- **of Identifying in Christ** - “. . . in the heavenly places *in Christ*” (vs. 6b)

We have been identified *with* Christ AND *in* Christ as *sons of the same Father with the same promises of eternal inheritance*. Moreover, Christ *has secured* these promises *by evidence that He sat down* at the right hand of the Father never to be dethroned. Thus, our eternal fellowship with the Father is sure.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! **Romans 8:35-39 (ESV)**

- **of Showing Kindness** - “. . . so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (vs. 7)

What great kindness has been demonstrated to us in Christ to secure for us such destiny! What kindness toward you do you think might be on display in the gallery of eternity? What have you done!?! What deliverance, what unknown offense has He forgive? What will God display in the “hall of relics,” if you will, for His glory?

- **of Sending Faith** - “For by grace you have been saved *through faith*. And this is not your own doing; *it is the gift of God*” (vs. 8)

God is so possessed of mercy and kindness that He endowed us with love and life and grace and faith – *all of which are encompassed in the gift of salvation!* The grammar of the text makes clear that faith is not different from grace in the fact that God *gave* it to us. What are the dead able to believe? Nothing! Romans 10:7 says very clearly that faith must be given and it comes through the hearing of the Word of Christ.

Moreover, consider the following passages that clarify that faith is a gift.”

The apostle Peter says the following about those to whom he wrote his second epistle,

“To those who have obtained *faith* of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:1 (ESV)

Paul says the following about the nature of the Gospel and to whom it has been given,

“Consider your calling, brothers: **not many of you were wise** according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ **But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;** God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ **And because of him you are in Christ Jesus,** who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ **so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (ESV)**

Do you see? You didn't work out the faith to believe in Christ by your “infinite wisdom.” It is *because of Him*, Who became to us wisdom *from God*, that you believe. Your faith is a gift, granted graciously to you out of *His* “infinite wisdom!” Now ask yourself, “How are you growing in the faith He first gave unto salvation?” Are you deepening in your knowledge of grace and your faith? If not, why not? Have you truly been made alive in Christ Jesus? If you have not, then believe upon Him today!

- **of Fulfilling Salvation**

“... not a result of works, so that no one can boast.” (vs. 9)

If you are growing in faith, then praise the Lord! If you are and yet you doubt that the outcome of this growth is sufficient for God's final commendation, then remember that Christ *became* for us all that was needful to secure our acceptance with God. He “became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” so that our boasting and confidence are found in Him. Moreover, the growth of faith until we see God's face is His work. He is the one Who conforms us into the likeness of His righteous Son and sanctifies us by His Spirit and completes the work of His redemption in us. He will not be denied in the fulfillment of this task. That is why we may say with the brother of our Lord,

“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude 1:24-25 (NIV)

III. The Appointment

A. Masterworks of Grace

“For we are his workmanship ...” (vs. 10a)

What does it mean that we are “His workmanship”?

Kent Hughes explains, “The word "workmanship" comes from the Greek word *poiema*, from which we derive our English word *poem*. The Greek literally means, ‘that which has been made—a work—a making,’ and sometimes it is even translated as "poem." . . . But the result is misleading because the Greek *poiema* meant *any work* of art. It could mean a statue or a song or architecture or a poem or a painting.

The best translation by far is that given by F. F. Bruce: ‘his work of art, his masterpiece.’ *We are God's works of art*. I do not think there is any more exalted description of a believer in all of Scripture. You and I are God's works of art—his masterpieces!” Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word – Ephesians*

One of my favorite song-writers (whose songs we regularly sing on Sundays) is Tommy Walker. In his song “All About Your Glory” he penned a wonderful chorus, the significance of which is not readily apparent given the lively nature of its arrangement. Listen, however, to how appropriately it spells out the ramifications of Paul’s charge to us to live for God’s glory.

Make me an instrument; make me a song of praise.
Make me a shining light that radiates your ways.
Make me a masterpiece; Lord put me on display
That I may ever be a picture of your grace!

You glory, your honor,
That’s what I want my life to be all about.
Your goodness, your kindness,
Your life, in me, ever reaching out!
Your mercy, forgiveness,
That’s what I want my life to be all about.
You love and your power,
Your life in me every reaching out!
May me an instrument; make me a song of praise!

Tommy Walker © 2005 WeMobile Music

B. Manifest Works of Grace

“. . . created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (vs. 10b)

Final Charge and Questions for the Congregation

1. What good works has God called every Christian to and are you actively seeking to walk in them? If not, why not? Are you not thankful and obedient to Christ?
2. What good works has God called *you* to engage in . . . what mission field, what responsibility, what role, what work of service?
3. What one thing can you do this week to more actively engage with and for God as an expression of your gratitude by the astonishing grace with which you’ve been saved?

STUDY NOTES

In the first ten verses Paul presents the past, present, and future of the Christian: what he was (vv. 1-3), what he is (vv. 4-6, 8-9), and what he will be (vv. 7, 10). Within this framework he gives six aspects of salvation: It is from sin (vv. 1-3), by love (v. 4), into life (v. 5), with a purpose (vv. 6-7), through faith (vv. 8-9), and unto good works (v. 10). The first aspect is in the past, the next four aspects (except for the second part of "purpose," v. 7) pertain to the present, and the last aspect (including v. 7) is in the future. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary --Ephesians*

I. The Deliverance (vs. 1-3)

A. Spiritual Corruption

- **From Deadly Identity**
“you were *dead* ...”

A person who is spiritually dead has no life by which he can respond to spiritual things, much less live a spiritual life. No amount of love, care, and words of affection from God can draw a response. A spiritually dead person is alienated from God and therefore alienated from life. He has no capacity to respond. As the great Scottish commentator John Eadie said, "It is a case of death walking." **Men apart from God are spiritual zombies, the walking dead who do not know they are dead. They go through the motions of life, but they do not possess it.** *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*

The Greek case is the locative of sphere, indicating the sphere, or realm, in which something or someone exists. We were not dead because we had committed sin but because we were *in sin*. In this context trespasses and sins do not refer simply to acts but first of all to the sphere of existence of the person apart from God. **He does not become a liar when he tells a lie; he tells a lie because he already *is* a liar. He does not become a thief when he steals; he steals because he already *is* a thief and so with murder, adultery, covetousness, and every other sin. Committing sinful acts does not make us sinners; we commit sinful acts because we *are* sinners.** Jesus confirmed this when He said, "The evil man out of *his* evil treasure brings forth what is evil" ([Matt. 12:35](#)) and "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" ([Matt. 15:18-19](#)). *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*

- **From Wayward Wickedness**
“and you were dead in *trespasses* ...” – *paraptoma* meaning “to slip or fall”

The other word Paul uses, translated trespasses is *paraptoma* (<G3900>). **This literally means a slip or a fall. It is used for a man losing the way and straying from the right road; it is used for a man failing to grasp and slipping away from the truth.** Trespass is taking the wrong road when we could take the right one; it is missing the truth that we should have known. Therefore it is the failure to reach the goal we ought to have reached.

Are we in life where we ought to be? Have we reached the goal of efficiency and skill that our gifts might have enabled us to reach? Have we reached the goal of service to others that we might have reached? Have we reached the goal of goodness to which we might have attained?

The central idea of sin is failure, failure to hit the target, failure to hold to the road, failure to make life what it was capable of becoming; and that definition includes every one of us. *Barclay's Daily Study Bible* (NT).

- **From Fathomless Failure**
“and [you were dead] in *sins* ...”

The words he uses are interesting. **The word for sin is *hamartia* (<G266>);** a shooting word. **It literally means a miss.** A man shoots his arrow at the target; the arrow misses; that is *hamartia*. **Sin is the failure to hit the target of life. That is precisely why sin is so universal.**

We commonly have a wrong idea of sin. We would readily agree that the robber, murderer, the razor-slasher, the drunkard, the gangster are sinners, but, since most of us are respectable citizens, in our heart of hearts we think that sin has not very much to do with us. **We would probably rather resent being called hell-deserving sinners. But *hamartia* brings us face to face with what sin is, the failure to be what we ought to be and could be.**

Is a man as good a husband as he might be? Does he try to make life easier for his wife? Does he inflict his moods on his family? Is a woman as good a wife as she might be? Does she really take an interest in her husband's work and try to understand his problems and his worries? Are we as good parents as we might be? Do we discipline and train our children as we ought, or do we often shirk the issue? As our children grow older, do we come nearer to them, or do they drift away until conversation is often difficult and we and they are practically strangers? Are we as good sons and daughters as we might be? Do we ever even try to say thank you for what has been done for us? Do we ever see the hurt look in our parents' eyes and know that we put it there? Are we as good workmen as we could be? Is every working hour filled with our most conscientious work and is every task done as well as we could possibly do it?

When we realize what sin is, we come to see that it is not something which theologians have invented. It is something with which life is permeated. **It is the failure in any sphere of life to be what we ought to be and could be.** *Barclay's Daily Study Bible* (NT)

***Paraptōma* (trespasses)** means to slip, fall, stumble, deviate, or go the wrong direction. ***Hamartia* (sins)** originally carried the idea of missing the mark, as when hunting with a bow and arrow. It then came to represent missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. In the spiritual realm it refers to missing and falling short of God's standard of holiness, and in the New Testament it is the most common and general term for sin: ***Paraptōma* (trespasses) used 173 times. Paul does not use the two terms here to point up different kinds of wrongdoing but simply to emphasize the breadth of the sinfulness that results from spiritual deadness.**

Man's common state of sin has often been compared to a diverse group of people standing on the bank of a wide river, perhaps a mile across. Each of them is trying to jump to the other side. The little children and old people can jump only a few feet. The larger children and agile adults can jump several times that far. A few athletes can jump several times farther still. But none of them gets near the other side. **Their degrees of success vary only in relation to each other. In relation to achieving the goal they are equal failures.**

Throughout history people have varied greatly in their levels of human goodness and wickedness. But in relation to achieving God's holiness they are equal failures. That is why the good, helpful, kind, considerate, self-giving person needs salvation as much as the multiple murderer on death row. The person who is a good parent, loving spouse, honest worker, and civic humanitarian needs Jesus Christ to save him from the eternal condemnation of hell as much as the skid row drunk or the heartless terrorist. **They do not lead equally sinful lives, but they are equally in the state of sin, equally separated from God and from spiritual life.** *MacArthur New Testament Commentary--Ephesians*

- **From Sinful Damnation**

Say with confidence: “Christ, the Son of God, was given not for the righteous, but for sinners. If I had no sin I should not need Christ. No, Satan, you cannot delude me into thinking I am holy. **The truth is, I am all sin.** My sins are not imaginary transgressions, but sins against the first table, unbelief, doubt, despair, contempt, hatred, ignorance of God, ingratitude towards Him, misuse of His name, neglect of His Word, etc.; and sins against the second table, dishonor of parents, disobedience of government, coveting of another’s possessions, etc. Granted that I have not committed murder, adultery, theft, and similar sins in deed, nevertheless **I have committed them in the heart, and therefore I am a transgressor of all the commandments of God.** *Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (1:4a)

- **From Perpetual Degradation**

“sins in which **you walked** ...” – sin is always progressive or digressive

“The sum of the whole Psalm is that the servants of God must endeavor utterly to abhor the life of the ungodly. But as it is the policy of Satan to insinuate his deceits in a very crafty way, the prophet, in order that none may be unwittingly deceived, shows how by little and little men and women are ordinarily seduced into turning aside from the right path. They do not, at the first step, advance so far as a proud contempt of God; but having once begun to listen to evil counsel, Satan leads them step by step further astray until they rush headlong into open transgressions.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*

“When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely *walk* in the counsel of the careless and *ungodly*, who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they *stand* in the way of open *sinner*s who willfully violate God's commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others ...” Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*.

B. Satanic Oppression

- **From Worldly Deception**
“following the *course* of this world”

Kosmos (**world**) does not here represent simply the physical creation but the world order, **the world's system of values and way of doing things—the world's course. And as Paul makes clear, the course of this world follows the leadership and design of Satan, the prince of the power of the air.**

What we often call "the spirit of the times" reflects the wider course of this world, a course in which men are in basic agreement about what is right and wrong, valuable and worthless, important and unimportant. Sinful men have many different ideas and standards, but they are in total agreement that the network of things in this world is more important than the divine perspective of God. In this most basic world outlook they are of one mind. They resolutely work to fulfill the goals and values of their system, though it defies God and always self-destructs. Sinners are persistent in their rejection, and the worse their system becomes, the more they try to justify it and condemn those who speak the Word of God against it.

They are of one mind because they have a common leader and lord, the prince of the power of the air. Satan is now "the ruler of this world," and until the Lord casts him out (John 12:31) he will continue to rule. The power [or authority] of the air probably refers to Satan's host of demons who exist in the heavenly sphere. Paul has this in mind in Ephesians 6:12, where he warns of "the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*.

- **From Demonic Dominion**
“following the *prince of the power of the air* ...”

Revelation 12 relates events that transpired before human history, “Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. **And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.** Revelation 12:7-9 (ESV)

The Apostle Peter warns, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. **Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.** 1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)

These were the words Martin Luther had in mind when he penned the 2nd stanza of his most famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” We typically sing the following, “And though this world with devils filled, should *threaten to undo* us.” Luther knew the reality of Satan’s intentions for us were far more deadly and thus he wrote,

Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel wär’ und wollt’ uns gar verschlingen,
“**Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us,**”
“And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us.”

So fürchten wir uns nicht so sehr, es soll uns doch gelingen
“We tremble not, we fear no ill, they shall not overpower us.”
“We will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.

Der Fürst dieser Welt, wie sau’r er sich stellt,
“The prince of this world, so bitter be his skill,”
“The prince of darkness, grim, we tremble not for him;”

Tut er uns doch nicht, das macht, er ist gericht’t
“He can harm us none, he’s judged, the deed is done;”
“His rage, we can endure for, Lo! His doom is sure;”

Ein Wörtlein kann ihn fallen. Auf Deutsch
“One little word can fell him.” Literal trans.
“One little word shall fell him!” Hedge trans.³

Sinful men] “... are of one mind because **they have a common leader and lord, the prince of the power of the air. Satan is now "the ruler of this world," and until the Lord casts him out (John 12:31) he will continue to rule. The power [or authority] of the air probably refers to Satan's host of demons who exist in the heavenly sphere. Paul has this in mind in Ephesians 6:12, where he warns of "the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."** During the present age he and his demon host dominate, pressure, and control every person who is unsaved. He is the personification of spiritual death because he is the personification of rebellion against God—and so is the system he designed.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians

- **From the *Spirit* of Disobedience**

“...the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience”

The prince of disobedience works in (the use of *en* emphasizes the intimate relationship) willing followers, those who have no regard for the Word and will of God, called ***the sons of disobedience*** (a Semitic term that describes a person characterized by disobedience), of whom he is the spiritual father ([John 8:38-44](#)). Paul makes clear this identifying characteristic of disobedience to God when he states absolutely that **"you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness"** ([Rom. 6:16](#)). He then characterizes the believer as one who obeys God: "you became obedient from the heart" ([v. 17](#)). *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*.

³ An English version less literal in translation but more popular among Protestant denominations outside Lutheranism is *A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing*, trans. by F. H. Hedge (1853); this version is the one included in the [United Methodist Hymnal](#). Another popular English translation is by [Thomas Carlyle](#) and begins *A safe stronghold our God is still*.

Most North American [Lutheran](#) churches have not historically used the Hedge (nor the Carlyle) translation. Traditionally, the most commonly used translation in Lutheran congregations is a composite translation from the 1868 *Pennsylvania Lutheran Church Book* ("A mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon," which is the most literal translation). In more recent years a new translation completed for the 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship* ("A mighty fortress is our God, a sword and shield victorious") has also gained significant popularity. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Mighty_Fortress_Is_Our_God

“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” Romans 6:17-18

- **From Fleshly Passion / Indulgent Desires**

“among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and mind...”

Epithumia* (passions, lit. lusts) refers to strong inclinations and desires of every sort, not simply to sexual lust. *Thelēma* (desires) emphasizes strong willfulness, wanting and seeking something with great diligence. As with trespasses and sins, lusts and desires are not given to show their distinctiveness but their commonness. They are used synonymously to represent fallen man's complete orientation to his own selfish way. **By nature he is driven to fulfill the lusts and desires of his sinful flesh and... mind. The flesh (*sarx*) refers to the dissipation of life that comes when one is abandoned to doing whatever feels good. The mind (*dianoia*) indicates the deliberate choices that defy the will of God.** *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

- **From Sinful Nature**

“and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

Rather than all men being children of God, as most of the world likes to think, those who have not received salvation through Jesus Christ are *by nature children of wrath* (cf. [John 3:18](#)). Apart from reconciliation through Christ, every person by nature (through human birth) is the object of God's wrath, his eternal judgment and condemnation. They are characterized most accurately not only as **sons of disobedience** but consequently as children of wrath—objects of God's condemning judgment.

But though we were once even as the rest, through faith in the Savior we are not like them any longer. **Because of Christ's past work of salvation in us, we are presently and eternally under His love and delivered from the natural human condition of death, sin, alienation, disobedience, demon control, lust, and divine judgment.** *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*

“Paul draws our attention to the depth of our depravity in order to magnify the mercy and grace of God in saving us, like a black cloth on which a beautiful diamond sits. And Paul gives us the diamond of the gospel with two of the sweetest words in the Bible: "But God." Christian, behold your biography. Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus In Ephesians: Christ-Centered Exposition.*

II. The Endowment

“BUT GOD! . . . DELIVERED US FROM ALL THESE DAMNING INDICTMENTS BY THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST! Remember what was read from Romans 5 in the midst of singing this morning?

¹ Therefore, *having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ² *through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. . . .*

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

***“You took our sin! You bore our shame!
You rose to life! You defeated the grave!
And a love like this, the world has never known!”***

⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. **Romans 5:1-2, 6-11 (NASB)**

The endowment we have received is based upon four motivating affections evident in the next portion of our passage this morning: God’s Mercy, Love, Deference, and Grace

A. God’s Affections

- **“But God, being rich in *mercy* ...”**
The initiative of salvation is all of God (cf. Ephesians 1:3-13)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, ***according to the kind intention of His will***, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **Ephesians 1:3-6 (NASB)**

- **“because of the *great love* with which He loved us ...”**

Salvation for God's glory is by the motivation and power of God's great love. God is intrinsically kind, merciful, and loving. And in His love He reaches out to vile, sinful, rebellious, depraved, destitute, and condemned human beings and offers them salvation and all the eternal blessings it brings. **Man's rebellion is therefore not only against God's lordship and law but against His love.** *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.*

Let us equip ourselves against the accusations of Satan with this and similar passages of Holy Scripture. If he says, “Thou shalt be damned,” you tell him: “No, for I fly to Christ who gave Himself for my sins. **In accusing me of being a damnable sinner, you are cutting your own throat, Satan. You are reminding me of God’s fatherly goodness toward me, that He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In calling me a sinner, Satan, you really comfort me above measure.**” *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (1:4a)*

- Deference “*even when we were dead in our trespasses ...*”

The deference of God is evident in this following quote from John MacArthur, “Though greatly offended and sinned against (as depicted in the parable of [Matt. 18:23-35](#)), because of God's **rich... mercy** and His **great love** He offered forgiveness and reconciliation to us as He does to every repentant sinner. Though in their sin and rebellion all men participated in the wickedness of Jesus' crucifixion, God's **mercy** and **love** provide a way for them to participate in the righteousness of His crucifixion. "I know what you are and what you have done," He says; "but because of My **great love** for you, your penalty has been paid, My law's judgment against you has been satisfied, through the work of My Son on your behalf. For His sake I offer you forgiveness. To come to Me you need only to come to Him." *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*.

B. God's Actions

- **of Granting Life**
“made us alive together with Christ ...”
- **of Raising Up**
“raised us up with him”
- **of Seating with Christ**
“and seated us with him in the heavenly places”

The Greek verb behind **seated** is in the aorist tense and emphasizes the absoluteness of this promise by speaking of it as if it had already fully taken place. Even though we are not yet inheritors of all that God has for us in Christ, to be **in the heavenly places** is to be in God's domain instead of Satan's, to be in the sphere of spiritual life instead of the sphere of spiritual death. That is where our blessings are and where we have fellowship with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and with all the saints who have gone before us and will go after us. That is where all our commands come from and where all our praise and petitions go. And some day we will receive the "inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for [us]" ([1 Peter 1:4](#)). *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*.

- **of Identifying in Christ**
“... in Christ Jesus”
- **of Showing Kindness**
“... so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward in Christ Jesus”

Ascension. With spiritual resurrection comes ascension to the heights of Heaven: "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" ([Ephes. 2:6](#)). Though not yet there physically, we Christians are already in the heavenlies

by virtue of our union with Christ. Spiritually we are seated on the throne along with other believers. The powers of the spiritual realm have been brought to bear on our present life.

Riches. And what will be the end of all this? Actually there will be no end, because as [vs. 7](#) concludes, "in the coming ages he [will] show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." A Roman matron was once asked, "Where are your jewels?" She responded by calling her two sons and, pointing to them, said, "These are my jewels." So it is with Christ and his Church. He is going to show the all-surpassing riches of his grace to his children in the "limitless future, as age succeeds age." He will show his grace and kindness before his return, at his return, after his return, and in all ages. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Ephesians*

- **of Sending Faith**

“by grace you *have been saved* through faith ...”

This is the gospel in a nutshell—the most cogent summary of the dynamics of salvation to be found in Scripture. As such, it is a text which the Holy Spirit often uses to bring life to those without Christ. All who have not been saved, or who are not sure of their status, would do well to shut out all distractions and give attention to these words of life. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word*

- **of Fulfilling Salvation**

“*this* is not your doing; *it* is a gift of God ...”

Our response in salvation is **faith**, but even that is **not of ourselves** [but is] **the gift of God**. **Faith** is nothing that we do in our own power or by our own resources. In the first place we do not *have* adequate power or resources. More than that, God would not want us to rely on them even if we had them. Otherwise salvation would be in part by our own works, and we would have some ground to boast in ourselves. Paul intends to emphasize that even faith is not from us apart from God's giving it.

Some have objected to this interpretation, saying that **faith** (*pistis*) is feminine, while **that** (*touto*) is neuter. That poses no problem, however, as long as it is understood that **that** does not refer precisely to the noun faith but to the act of believing. Further, this interpretation makes the best sense of the text, since if “that” refers to by grace you have been saved through faith (that is, to the whole statement), the adding of and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God** would be redundant, because grace is defined as an unearned act of God. If salvation is of grace, it has to be an undeserved gift of God. Faith is presented as a gift from God in [2 Peter 1:1](#), [Philippians 1:29](#), and [Acts 3:16](#). *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*.

Paul says that grace comes *through faith*. This is the human response: belief (cf. [Eph 1:13](#)). How do we appropriate what has just been said? Faith. Faith is the instrument by which we lay hold of Christ. **But faith is not a work. It is a gift. Notice what Paul says: "It is God's gift" (v. 8); "it" includes "faith." The grammar indicates that the whole of salvation is to be viewed as a gift. Grace is a gift. Faith is a gift. Salvation is a gift. We should never think of salvation as a transaction in which God provides grace and we provide faith (Stott, *Ephesians*, 83).** No. It is all grace. We were dead and had to be awakened to believe. Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus In Ephesians: Christ-Centered Exposition*.

Moreover, consider the following passages that clarify that faith is a *gift*.”

²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. **Philippians 1:29-30 (ESV)**

¹ Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, **To those who have obtained faith** of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: **2 Peter 1:1 (ESV)**

- “not the result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Important as this reason is, there are even deeper reasons why salvation is not by works—namely, the utter sinfulness of humanity contrasted with God's transcending standard of righteousness. God is radically righteous ([Romans 1:17](#); [3:21](#)). His righteousness of being is his standard, and no human can attain this because we are all radically sinful beings. The word *radical* comes from the Latin word *radix*, which means "root." The very root of our being, every part of our person, is tainted with sin. This is the foundation of the Apostle Paul's devastating litany of condemnation in [Romans 3:10-18](#) where Paul employs the rabbinical technique of *charaz* (Hebrew for "string of pearls") in putting together an overwhelming list of evidences which prove the universally corrupt *character* ([Ephesians 2:10-12](#)) and *conduct* ([Ephes. 2:13-18](#)) of man. He concludes there that the entire human race—Jews and Gentiles, religious and irreligious, pious and pagan—suffers from a radical inner corruption. Even our very best works are colored by sin and can never approach the radical righteousness which God demands. No matter how high we climb our moral ladder, it is not high enough. Salvation is "not by works." *Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word – Ephesians*

III. The Appointment

A. Masterworks of Grace

“we are his *workmanship* ...”

It is from *poiēma* (**workmanship**) that we get poem, a piece of literary workmanship. Before time began, God designed us to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ ([Rom. 8:29](#)). Paul could therefore say to the Philippians, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" ([1:6](#)). MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

The word "workmanship" comes from the Greek word *poiēma*, from which we derive our English word *poem*. The Greek literally means, "that which has been made—a work—a making," and sometimes it is even translated as "poem." In one of Sir Walter Scott's novels he has one of his characters say to another who has just given a beautiful description of a city, "Aha, so thou can'st play the maker yet?" Then Scott adds a footnote explaining that the ancient Scottish word for "poet" is the word "maker," which is the literal translation of the original Greek. Because of this some have tried to replace "workmanship" (as the NIV renders it) with "poem"—"we are His poem." But the result is misleading because the Greek *poiēma* meant any work of art. It could mean a statue or a song or architecture or a poem or a painting.

The best translation by far is that given by F. F. Bruce: "his work of art, his masterpiece." *We are God's works of art.* I do not think there is any more exalted description of a believer in all of Scripture. You and I are God's works of art—his masterpieces! (Kent Hughes)

B. Manifest Works of Grace

“*created* in Christ Jesus *for good works* which God prepared beforehand ...”

But once we are saved and become his "workmanship," we must work. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" ([Ephes. 2:10](#)). Works are a sign that we are his workmanship! "No one more wholeheartedly than Paul repudiated good works as a ground of salvation; no one more strongly insisted on good works as a fruit of salvation." Authentic believers, those made by God's hand, work for him.

Not only are we, as God's workmanship, to work, says Paul, but we are to realize that we are "to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" ([Ephes. 2:10](#)). Each of us has an eternally-designed job description which includes the task, the ability, and the place to serve. You may prefer Jerusalem, but you will glorify him more in Babylon if he has called you there. And whatever the task to which he has called you, you will be equipped for it as surely as a bird is capable of flight. And in doing the works he has called you to do, you will be both more and more his workmanship and more and more your true self. *Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Ephesians*