

The New Creation & The New Life

Series – Ephesians (2014)

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Bible Text: Ephesians 2:10

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Ephesians 2 is where we will be this evening in our study of God's word. We have been studying our way through this wonderful section that begins in verse 1 and we have made our way down to the 10th verse and that's where we will set our attention this evening. But I want us to begin reading in verse 1 of Ephesians 2.

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.

Again, verse 10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Let's go to our God together in prayer.

Father in heaven, we thank you this evening for the time that we have together in fellowship with you and with each other around your holy word. Lord, I know that we come into this room tonight from different places across the city, different circumstances going on in our lives. We face different things from Monday till tonight and, Lord, I'm so grateful that you know each and every one of us perfectly and you are able to take your word and apply it to each one of us in such a way that we are refreshed and encouraged and corrected where we need it, built up, edified, fed and we ask for this. We ask that you

would powerfully work in this next hour in the hearts of each one who will be listening and, Lord, do your good work in us. Let us see you clearly. Let us see our Savior clearly. Let us see your work clearly so that we leave here tonight grateful, thankful and praising you for who you are and what you have done. Lord, I pray for the person who is wrapped up in sin who has come in here tonight, Lord, miserable in their sin. May you set them free. May you set them free as they look to your Son. We ask you for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

What we have in this 10th verse is simple. It is straightforward but it is sweet. It is profound and it is weighty and impactful and powerfully important. Doctrine is the most powerfully practical life shaping thing in the world. Doctrine. People sometimes talk about doctrine in a way that would indicate that they believe that it just belongs to the realm of ideas like doctrine somehow belongs to the realm of philosophy or it's the realm of theory. They say something like, "I don't concern myself so much with doctrine but what really matters to me is experience. What really matters to me is what we do." That mindset has sort of characterized a generation that now evaluates churches and gravitates to churches not so much based upon what is being preached or what is being taught as what the church offers. So what a church teaches, what the health of its pulpit is, is secondary to the programs they offer or to the relationships that I find there. "Well, what's really important to me would be the relationships," someone would say. People of course qualify it and they'll say things like, "Don't get me wrong, I mean on the big things they have to be sound. They have to be sound doctrinally in general. They have to preach Jesus. They have to preach the Gospel. But I don't get bogged down in all the extra stuff. I just want to live for the Lord. I want to find a place where they love the Lord, live for the Lord and love me." Doctrine then is not primarily. The ministry of God's word is not primary, it's not preeminent. It's important in their way of thinking but it's not necessarily the main thing.

When people think that way, what they miss is the priority of the word of God to the whole of our lives. I heard John MacArthur recently. I was listening to a sermon of his. He didn't preach it recently, he preached it many years ago. But my heart resonated with what he said in the midst of the sermon. I think he had been there about 15 years and he was sort of setting forth what the trajectory of the church in the future and I'm not quoting him, I'm paraphrasing but I do know that I captured the essence of what he said and he said this: I hear people talk about fellowship, go find your fellowship, we're going to give you another sermon. He said the sweetest fellowship that I have ever known has been around the word of God. I say to that amen. I'm not saying fellowship isn't important, it is, but the sweetest fellowship I have ever known is around the word of God. We live out our doctrinal views every day. Most people are largely unaware of it, unconscious of it, but it's still true. Today you have lived out doctrine. We live what we believe and so what we believe, how we think, what we understand the word of God to teach and how we arrive at our understanding and the way that we process our understanding of God's word is not just important, it's crucial both to now and to eternity.

I bring that up because we don't have time to do this tonight but if we were to take verse 10 of Ephesians 2 and ask how many of the sort of lively, current controversies going on

within evangelicalism, if we took those controversies and we just brought them here to verse 10 and we said, "Now, will you just believe what verse 10 says," I wonder how many of those controversies would be solved. The debates, the controversies, that people go back and forth. If we just believed what verse 10 teaches and we just embraced the doctrine of verse 10, I wonder what practical effect it might have in all of these debates. Debates between talking about what's the relationship between justification and sanctification? Debates about legalism and Antinomianism. The Lordship debate. The debate about fruitless believers. We can go on and on. How many of these debates that have gone on for the last 30 years would be settled if we just embraced in an unvarnished way what verse 10 teaches? So tonight I want us to hear what it teaches. I want us to embrace what it teaches.

We were here two Sundays ago and we've already noted that in this verse there is a relationship that exists between justification and regeneration. Verse 8 says, "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 being right with God is not a matter of works but we are declared right with God on the basis of faith, faith in his Son, faith in all that God has done by his grace to save us, faith in Jesus. "It's not a result of works so that no one may boast." Then he says in verse 10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." So every Christian is the workmanship of God. Every Christian is a new creation in Christ Jesus. That means the people who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ are these same people who have been renewed by the powerful working of God. Regeneration and justification exist in the same case. All of those who have been justified by faith in Jesus have been made new by the power of God. New birth has resulted in faith and by faith in Christ, God has declared us to be made right with him based on the finished work of Jesus. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore having been justified by faith we now have peace with God." Who are those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? According to verse 10, those who are God's workmanship, those who have been created in Christ. These are the ones who have been saved.

So there is this unbreakable relationship between regeneration and the new birth and justification. The late James Montgomery Boice, he had this to say, "Justification, though it aptly describes one important aspect of what it means to be saved is not the whole of salvation." God justifies but that's not the only thing he does. He also regenerates. And there is no justification without regeneration just as there is no regeneration without justification. You see, wherever regeneration has occurred, there is life and there is light. That means there is faith so anyone who has been regenerated, they believe. Anyone who has believed, it's because they have been regenerated. He goes on to say this, "Regeneration is the theological term for what Jesus was talking about when he told Nicodemus, you must be born again, John 3:7. He was telling him that he needed to have a new start as a result of the life of God being placed within him. It was what Paul was talking about in Ephesians 2 as he described how God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions, verse 5. It is even what Paul is talking about in our text for he does not merely say that God commands us to do good works or even urges us to do them, he says rather that God created us in Christ Jesus to do good works adding that these were specifically prepared in advance for us to do. Clearly, if a person has been

created by God specifically to do good works, he will do those good works even though they have nothing to do with how he was saved in the first place." Now that quote actually gets a little beyond where we are, we're going to deal with this tonight. But not only is their relationship Boice is saying between regeneration and justification, there is a relationship between regeneration and sanctification. We'll talk about that more in just a moment.

So what we have here is regeneration. We are God's workmanship. We are created, those who have been created in Christ Jesus, which we also talked about last time we were here, not only the relationship between justification and regeneration but salvation in Christ because note in verse 10, we were created in Christ Jesus. There is no Christian apart from regeneration. There is also no Christian apart from union with Christ. The Gospel of Christ by the power of God was brought to us in a way that it resulted in regeneration, faith in Christ, whereupon we were united to Christ. Now we have the life of Christ. We are in union with Christ. United with Christ. So there is in this verse the truth that regeneration is tied to justification and salvation is in union with Christ. Now we move on to the next statement in verse 10, "for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. A relationship here between regeneration, we're God's workmanship, and sanctification, we have been created in Christ Jesus, that's regeneration, for good works, that's sanctification. Which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Now, what I want to do is just take note of what he says and then I'm going to present to you three principles that emerge from what he says. What does he say? As I said, it's simple, it's straightforward but it's profound. It's profoundly important to our everyday life and to some of these issues that people debate about in the realm of soteriology, the realm of salvation. It's so important.

Notice the first thing he says: we, that is believers, we were created for good works. Created in Christ Jesus for good works. It speaks of the purpose of this new creation. For, unto good works. When he talks about good works he's talking about good from the standpoint of what has been official and from the standpoint of what is morally and spiritually acceptable. Good works are works that proceed from the right motive. Good works are works that have the right goal ambition. Good works are those works that are done in the right power. We were remade, we were made new creations in Christ Jesus and God did it so that we would live out good works. Beautiful. Good. Beneficial. God honoring. Reflective of salvation.

How does that work out in our lives? How are these good works the result of regeneration? The Bible says a lot about this. Philippians 2:12. You may want to jot these references down. I want you to look at them more in your own time and really think through these. Philippians 2:12 and 13, let's know what it says. "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." You work out your own salvation with fear and trembling knowing this: God is working in you, giving you the desire, that's

the will, and the ability, that's the working. He's giving you the desire and the ability to do what pleases him. Now listen: in the realm of justification, we are always pleasing to God in Jesus Christ. If you have been justified, you can't be more pleasing to God than you are but in the realm of sanctification, there are things the Bible says, things that we do that please God and things that we do that displease God. In the midst of the family of God, in the midst of the people of God, God is at work producing a desire and an inability to do that which would please him. That's why Paul is able to say in 2 Corinthians 5:9 he has this as his ambition, to be pleasing to God. "Wait a second, Paul. Aren't you already pleasing to God?" Yeah, in the realm of justification I am but in the realm of my every day life, in the realm of my sanctification, I strive to be pleasing to him. I want to please him. There are things that please God and there are things that don't.

I think it's vital that we don't confuse these two realms and I think believers unfortunately commonly do confuse those two realms. They take justification to mean, "Now it doesn't really matter how I live because no matter what I do, I'm always pleasing to him." Or they begin to pursue sanctification in a way that is not grounded in their justification so they live with constant feelings of guilt and failure because they are not understanding how this thing works out, how it is lived out. Sanctification flows out of justification. "I pursue the things that please God knowing that I am pleasing to God in Jesus Christ." Both at work at the same time. It may seem confusing but that's exactly how the Bible presents it. I am pleasing to God in Jesus Christ but I strive to please him as I live my every day life in the power that he supplies with the desire and the ability that he gives.

Hebrews 13:20 says this, "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant," may he, there's the thought, he is continuing his thought in verse 21, may he, "equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever." He's addressing believers whose lives are in Jesus Christ, who have been raised from the dead and he's saying, "May the Lord equip you now with everything good so that you may do his will," and he's working in us that which pleases him. He's doing this through his Son. Never apart from his Son. Never apart from his Son but through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. That's Hebrews 13:20 and 21.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul writing, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." Paul, you sound like a spiritual schizophrenic and on the one hand you say that you are working at this thing. You work harder than anybody but then on the other hand you say it wasn't you, it was God. Was it you or was it God? We'll talk about more about that in just a moment. Colossians 1:28 says this, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." Listen, "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." We have to admit that that is some strange language, isn't it? I mean, I am toiling, I am struggling with his energy that he powerfully works within me.

What do you see in all of those passages about the believer's good works? You see that they are synergistic works. The new birth is what we refer to as a monogistic work which is that God did it all by himself. You had nothing to do with your new birth. Nothing. He granted regeneration but ongoing progressive sanctification, that's a synergistic work. That's you working and that's God working. That's God working within you and you working out of that which he works within you so there is both human responsibility and divine activity at the same time. These are synergistic works and yet we can say they are grace works. These are grace works because they are made possible by what God has done; made possible by what God is doing, what God supplies. It's interesting isn't it that in one sense we already have everything that pertains to life and godliness. On the other hand, Paul is saying, "Lord, equip them. Equip them with what they need, everything good, that they may do your will." Grace works. The source of what we need to live the life that pleases God in the realm of sanctification, comes from God and it's found in and through his Son.

We can also describe these works in other ways. Synergistic works, grace works, we can save they are faith works because we experience this grace, we experienced this powerful working of God as we go on believing God and believing in his Son and loving his Son and resting in his Son. You see, we rest as we labor. We know the truth of justification as we are engaged in sanctification. We rest and rejoice in what is finished as we pursue what is being done right now. So these are faith works. Grace works, synergistic works, they are faith works. Without regeneration, there can be no sanctification. Regeneration explains sanctification where we are his workmanship, we have been created in Christ Jesus for what? For good works. God made us as he has remade us in Jesus Christ, made us new in Jesus Christ, he has made us new creations for the purpose of good works.

Notice the second thing that he tells us here: God not only made us for good works, God made good works for us. "Created in Christ Jesus for good works," God made us for good works. Next statement: "which," the word "which" there refers to good works, "which good works God prepared beforehand." God made you for good works, Christian. God made good works for you. So what does that mean? Well, if you ask what does it mean when it says that God made good works beforehand, I think the answer is that good works that we now are walking in are the good works that we find on the pages of Scripture. For example, just go to chapter 4, verse 1 and notice what it says. Ephesians 4:1, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." You say, "Paul, what is that walk about? What is a worthy walk?" Well, read chapters 4 through 6 and there are the good works that God has made ready, the way, the pathway, how relationships work, how speech works, how thoughts work, how motives work, how deeds work. "This is what I'm going to be pleased with. This is what I require of you and desire from you. These are the good works that I prepared, I foreordained beforehand for you to walk in these things." What that means is: these good works, you and I don't have to dream them up. We don't have to speculate about them. We don't have to say, "Now, I wonder what God really wants? I wonder what would please him? What would be pleasing in his sight?" He is working in us to produce that which pleases him. He is giving us a desire and an ability for that which pleases him but what pleases God? Answer: he has told us what pleases him. He

has prepared these things beforehand. Before we were ever born, these things were already prepared by God and he tells us what they are in the pages of his word. We can say it this way: if you are a new creation, you desire to walk in the word of God. If you are a new creation, you desire to walk in the works that God has prepared beforehand for us and those works are expressed on the pages of Scripture.

Which leads to a third thing that he tells us and that is: God prepared the good works in order that we should walk in them. Do you see that? "Created in Christ Jesus for good works," so God made us for good works. "Which," good works, "God prepared beforehand," so the good works were made for us. Next statement, "that," that's a hina in the Greek text, it's a purpose clause, so that, in order "that we should walk in them." Precisely so that we would walk in them. So when someone talks about a view of salvation that doesn't necessarily result in good works, they are arguing against the very purpose that God has revealed to be his purpose. Why did he save us? Why did he create us in Christ Jesus? For these good works and do you know what? Not just for the good works but he ordained that we would walk in them. I can ask it of you this way: the pre-ordained plan of God for your justification come to pass? I mean, God chose you for salvation before you were born. He preordained that you would believe in his Son. Did he bring that to pass? This same God tells us right here that he preordained works so that we would walk in them. What do you think the chances are that that will come to pass? How about 100%?

Now, the plan of God is not that we would all perfectly walk in these things on this side of glorification. Jesus made that plain: some 30 fold, some 60, some 100. We have different levels of fruit bearing among believers but there is no such thing as someone created in Christ Jesus for good works, works that were prepared beforehand for them to walk in those things, that they just don't walk in those things. It does not happen. I say to you that this is simple, this is straightforward but this is profoundly important and many of these controversies that swirl around in evangelicalism, if we just believe what this verse says, they would go away. Do you have fruitless Christians? Not according to verse 10. Is a believer made in such a way, created in such a way in Christ Jesus that they want to walk in the word of God? Yes. Absolutely. A sovereign God has ordained it and a sovereign God's power guarantees it.

So let me put this into three principles. Principle number 1: the believer's good works are the product of God's work. The believer's good works are the product of God's work. To put it simply, it is regeneration that explains sanctification. The reason why you, Christian, love the word of God, love the church, love the Lord Jesus, want to walk in the word of God, the reason why, not perfectly but as a pattern that begins to express itself in your life, the reason why before you knew Jesus maybe you knew some sort of external power or whatever it may have been that put pressure on you to do what was "right" but now it's been replaced by an internal desire, the reason why that is true is that you have experienced the new birth. You are God's workmanship. You are God's creation and he created you for these good works that he prepared beforehand for you to walk in those things. So God's work explains your works. I say to you that it's limited to that. Sanctification is limited to regeneration. You cannot have sanctification where there has

not been regeneration and if you want to talk about a miserable person, it's someone trying to live out the commands of God's word, trying to live in a way that expresses conformity to Jesus but they don't have the life of Jesus. You can't be conformed to Jesus if you're not in union with Jesus. You cannot be conformed to Jesus if you don't share the life of Jesus. No new birth, no sanctification.

The believer's good works are explained by God's work. A product of God's work and even now this is a faith walk so that God's working explains our working. He works in us, giving us that the desire and the ability to do what pleases him. He equips us with everything good so that we can do what pleases him. We always please him in the realm of justification but we're learning to please him in the realm of sanctification and the God who justified us is sanctifying us. He is at work in your life.

The second principle: the believer's good works are the purpose for God's work. It would be one thing to just say, Yeah, you know, you see someone living out good works, well you know this, regeneration explains that." That would be true and that would be profound but how about this: and that's what God ordained to happen long, long ago. This is the fulfillment, the necessary fulfillment of God's sovereign will. This is the purpose for God's work. This is why he saved you. He saved you so that you would walk in these works he prepared. He saved you for this very reason. Romans 6 puts it this way, Romans 6:1 through 14, listen to what it says. Why don't you look there with me so that you are seeing and not just hearing it. Look at verse 1. Will sanctification follow justification? Will believers, true believers, grow in the faith? Is there a real freedom that has occurred? Is there a real change in the life. We can say it this way: does the new creation necessarily result in a new life? Does new creation mean new life? A new way of living? Look at Romans 6:1, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Does grace mean Antinomianism? Does grace mean lawlessness? "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" You see, there is a real union that has occurred. We have died to sin. Our relationship to sin has forever been changed by our relationship to Jesus.

Next verse, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." My walk, you see, walk in newness of life. New life means a new walk. "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." I would argue that this entire passage is not placing an emphasis on future resurrection although that's a reality, but on a current spiritual resurrection that results in a new way of living because look at the very next verse, "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves," these are the conclusions you must draw from that truth. "You must consider yourselves

dead to sin." When? Right now. "And alive to God in Christ Jesus." When? Right now. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God," get this, "as those who have been brought from death to life." You see, the resurrection he's talking about here is resurrection in terms of new spiritual life. You're not dead, you're alive and this means a new walk. Walk in newness of life. Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life "and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." You are not under the condemning sentence of God's law. Jesus died to set you free from that condemnation. You now live in the grace of God. Justification is the foundation for the sanctification that you are experiencing but get this, sanctification will happen. It will happen and that's how good works are actually a proof of salvation. It's understanding that where there has been justification, there will be sanctification so that now with all of our imperfections and all of our failures and all of our shortcomings, we still see the signs of life. We have not yet been glorified but the signs of life are there. There is a life that we live now that was not possible without the life of Jesus. But where there is the life of Jesus, there is a new walk however imperfect it may be and however at times it may seem doubtful. Sometimes the fruit may seem small but nonetheless there is a life that is not possible without the life of Jesus.

James Boice said this, "In my opinion, this is one of the most neglected yet most essential teachings in the evangelical church today. At the beginning of this study, I contrasted sound Protestant theology with traditional Roman Catholic theology showing how Protestants," this is very important, listen to this folks, "showing how Protestants teach faith equals justification plus works, the view that I've just been expounding while Catholics teach faith plus works equals justification. Do you understand that difference? Would you say amen? Faith means I am now right with God resulting in good works where as a false Gospel teaches that faith plus good works will make me right with God." Now listen to what he goes on to say though. "Clearly Catholic theology is wrong but what are we to say of a theology that has no place for works at all? What are we to say to teaching that extols justification divorced from sanctification? Forgiveness without a corresponding change in life? What would Jesus himself think of such theology? Yet such teaching prevails among evangelicals today." Spot on, he's right.

So what we are seeing in Ephesians 2, the entire section that really focuses here on verses 8 through 10, is that these people who have been saved by God's grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone, it's not their doing, it's not their works, it's a gift of God. These same people are new creatures. The workmanship of God and they have been created for something. They have been created for good works and there are good works that have been created for them and the purpose for it all is that these new people walk in those good works and they will. And they will.

So the believer's good works are the product of God's work. Regeneration explains sanctification. And the believer's good works are the purpose for God's work that they will necessarily follow because this is God's purpose. So this is the last principle: the believer's good works are to the praise of God's work. You see, this means that when we

now walk in good works, who receives all of the praise and the honor and the glory and the thanks and the worship? Listen, who receives it rightfully so? I mean, truthfully so? You know what it felt like to me for many years as a believer growing up in some of the churches I was in? It felt like this: we do what we do and then we give God credit for it. We do what we do. We do what's good and then we say, "I thank God for it. I couldn't have done it without him." Do you understand what this is teaching us? What you do in the Christian life is not you doing it and then giving God credit, it is what you are experiencing truthfully because of what he has done. He made you for this. He made the pathway that you now walk in and he's the one who by his grace and by the principle of faith, fuels your life with everything you need and the power that drives it to live out what he made you for so that as you live it out, it really is him working in you. It is synergistic. You have a responsibility. You are not passive in the matter but nonetheless, it is human activity and divine activity at the same time and what you're living would not be possible without the life of Jesus so that all praise, all glory, all credit, all thanks goes to God.

In other words, verse 10 explains verse 9 and how did verse 9 end? "Not a result of works so that no one may boast." There is no room for boasting here. There is no room for boasting. You say, "Well, what about my good works? Yeah, the Lord saved me by grace but now I'm living for Jesus. How can we say there is no room for boasting because after all, some of us live for Jesus more than others. I mean, we're living for Jesus, how is there no boasting in that?" Because don't you realize this, Christian, you are a new creation made by God for what you walk in and what you are walking in was made for you and it is God's purpose that has determined that you now walk in it. There is no room for boasting, not even in your good works as a believer. Your good works are the result of God's good works so that your good works are to the praise of his work. That doesn't diminish our responsibility in the matter of sanctification. It informs it. It informs my responsibility. I'll tell you what it does: it fills our hearts with joy and hope because for all of my failures, for all of my stumbling, for all of my weaknesses, for all of my fears, for all those things, I know this: the Lord will see to the finish what he has begun in every single one of us. He will do it. He chose me for regeneration which would result in my faith in Christ and there I was justified and he made me for good works which he prepared beforehand for me to walk in those things, that's sanctification. It's all ultimately explained by his work. That means he gets the praise. Not a part of it, but all of it. I'm confident that the one who began this good work in us will finish it. Philippians 1:6, Paul wrote, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." From beginning to end, this is his plan.

So let me just ask as we finish tonight: are you one in whom God's work of regeneration has been accomplished? You see, what I'm asking is are you a new creation? Have you experienced the new birth? To try to live a life that is conformity to Jesus without the life of Jesus is not only impossible, it's destructive. Let me say it again: to try to be conformed to Jesus without Jesus is impossible and it's deadly, it's dangerous. It blinds you to what you really need and who you really need. Are you born again? Do you have new life? Can it be said of you, "I'm a new creation in Christ Jesus," 2 Corinthians 5:17? Now I would ask you because this is the result of regeneration, have you trusted in

Christ? Have you completely rested your eternal case on his perfect merits and his perfect person? Have you trusted in Jesus for salvation? Have you been justified by faith in him? You can't rightly approach sanctification until you are clear on justification. "Nothing do I bring, to his cross I cling." If Jesus doesn't save sinners, I am lost because I can't do anything to save myself.

Third I would ask: does your life bear out your claim? Where there is justification, there will be sanctification so is your life bearing out your claim that you've been justified by faith in Jesus? Are those necessary good works showing up in your life? I think I've already described clearly we're not talking about perfection, we're just talking about the reality of the presence of these things that God produces. Can you see evidence in your life? I mean, do you love the Lord? Do you love his people? Do you love his word? Do you desire to do what pleases him? Do you want to learn what pleases him? Do you desire to put away sin and pursue righteousness? When you do sin, does it break your heart? Do you confess it? Do you depart from it? These are signs of life. Are they present in you?

Then I would ask: do you give God praise for this? Do you bow low and thank him that you are who you are, living like you are living because you are an object of his saving mercy? Do you put away all manner of boasting and realize it is all of God, all of grace and he has had great mercy upon you and you give him praise? Do you have confidence that even when you are stumbling greatly and your heart and mind would condemn you and the enemy of your soul would condemn you, do you cling to Jesus and know that he will finish what he started? Do you know the joy and peace that is found in believing?

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this tremendous section that tells us our story, written to believers about what you have done in saving us. I thank you particularly, Lord, for the 10th verse tonight that teaches us about the relationship between justification and regeneration and sanctification. Help us, Lord, to have clear in our minds the difference between justification and that ongoing progressive work of sanctification. Help us to understand how we are always pleasing to you in one realm but striving to please you in another. Teach us by your Spirit, Lord, how to connect these things, to strive with all of our might by the energy that you supply, to pursue grace works and faith works as we pursue your Son. We love you, Lord. Thank you for loving us. In Jesus' name. Amen.