

Pastor Lenard Tavernelli--2-16-25---Union with Christ Ephesians 2:8-10--Saved by Grace for Good Works

Main Idea: Rely on God's grace alone to save you and walk in the good works God prepared for you.

Sermon Summary: Many believe in "moralistic therapeutic deism": God exists but is distant—comes when called upon. The purpose of life is to be good to each other, be happy / feel good, and good folks go to heaven. The bible paints a very different picture. We are sinful to the core and utterly spiritually dead. Dead. We cannot save ourselves. We all deserve hell. But God, solely in His mercy and grace, saves us thru faith in the person/work of Christ. God is near and active. For Christians—the source of every good thing is God. All personal boasting excluded—a humbling reality. This is the true gospel.

1. We are saved by God's grace alone (Eph. 2:8): Salvation from:

- Persuasion of sin—we were blind to sin, unaware of its impact. 2 Cor. 4:4: "...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...". I once was blind but now I see. This means I was born again, regenerated, made new.
- Power of Sin---We don't always see it externally (swearing, anger, cheating, etc) but hidden sins like pride, lust and more live inside us. Eg: removing layers of rotting floor in bathroom—worse corruption as you go deeper. Same with us. The smell of death is down deep within us.
- Penalty of sin—The entire penalty of sin is removed from believers. Not the part—but the whole. And its replaced with the righteousness of Christ—the great exchange!
- Practice of sin--- True Christians are becoming like Jesus (with ups and downs). Called progressive sanctification. Phil 2:12-13; "...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." This verse is to saved folks. Become who God saved you to be. You play a key part.
- Presence of sin---Called glorification. The Day will come when you never sin again. Won't be capable of it.

2a) You are saved through faith in Jesus (2:8-9): Saving Faith must include all three of the below:

- Notitia (knowledge/facts): You must know you are a sinner and that God has provided one way of salvation.
- Assensus (belief/agreement): You must believe the facts about sin, hell, Jesus, salvation, gospel as true.
- Fiducia (trust/reliance): But knowing and believing are not enough—even Satan knows / believes every word of the bible is true (James 2:19). You must also place all your trust in the finished work of Jesus—trust in a Person: the Son of God.

2b) Works:

- Cannot make you alive—You are utterly dead in your sin.
- Cannot pay for your sin—Good deeds do not somehow outweigh or cancel out our sins. We are unworthy servants.
- Cannot help God save you—You don't do good works and God provides the grace. No self-reliance at all.

3. You are saved for good works (2:10): 2 Cor. 5:17 " if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

- Rely on God's grace alone to save you and walk in the good works God prepared for you to do.
- "Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is never alone" (true salvation is always followed by good works).

Questions (select some to discuss):

- Do you buy into parts of “moralistic therapeutic deism”? Explain. Would you say our culture buys into it?
- Is there something in us (in you) that seems to default to performance based works? Why is it so appealing?
- In short, does it seem wrong to you that we are not saved thru our good works?
- Deep, deep down do you still believe that you contribute a small amount to your salvation—its why God chose you?
- 1 Cor. 1:23; “...we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles...”. The term “stumbling block” is the word *skandalon* from which we get scandal—a trap, snare, obstacle or sin that causes someone to stumble or fall. How is the gospel a stumbling block—even today?
- Pastor Lenard said we are not saved by faith—but by Christ. But faith is the means God uses. Explain.
- If Eph. 2:8-9 is truly to be believed----why do you think God chose and elected you (and not others)?
- Why does God not want anyone to boast (Pastor Lenard called it a “safeguard” for the church)?
- Some unbelievers sacrifice their lives to great causes (egs: Jonas Salk to polio vaccine, Mahatma Gandhi to social justice and civil rights in India). What’s the difference between pagan’s devoting their lives to good works and Christians?
 - Why does it seem a good number of Christians do not produce good works?
- As a church, we want to “practice” and “go.” These are ways we walk in good works. What good works can you walk in this week: at home? At work? In your community? In the church?