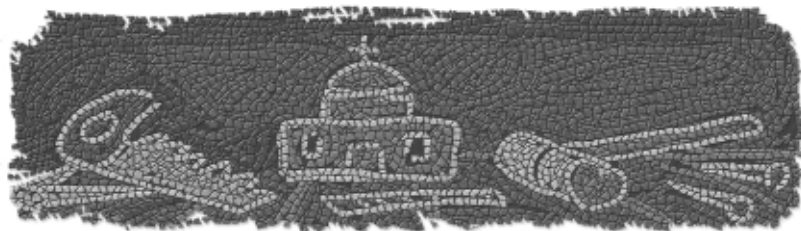


# The Church: God's Workmanship (Project)



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 22

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Romans 3:24-28; Romans 6:8-11; Ephesians 2:1-10; Ephesians 2:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Colossians 2:12, 13.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “God’s grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn’t [does not] come from anything you do. It is God’s gift. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag [boast] about earning it” (Ephesians 2:8, 9, NlrV).

**A FRENCHMAN NAMED MICHAEL FOUCAULT** once suggested tearing down all prisons and letting the prisoners go free. Why? Foucault believed that ideas about right and wrong, good and evil, were just human inventions (ideas) created by government to keep other people down. He said that even the idea of doing a crime was a human invention. So all prisoners should be set free.

Foucault’s idea goes too far. But it is a good example of the many people who think there is no such thing as sin. Many people think that ideas about right and wrong are just opinions, nothing more.

Paul does not believe in such foolishness. This week’s lesson shows that sin is very real. Sin leads to death. And death is not just someone’s opinion. Death is very real. This week, we will study what Paul has to say about sin and how to solve the sin problem.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S LESSON:** Before Christ, what was our condition like? Why did God show us grace and mercy?<sup>1</sup> How did He show us grace and mercy? What does being God’s project involve? How are we saved?

\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 29.

<sup>1</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

**SUNDAY—OCTOBER 23****DEAD IN SIN (Ephesians 2:1-3).**

Adam and Eve chose to follow their own will instead of God's will. Since then, sin has been the problem of all people. "Sin entered the world because one man sinned. And death came because of sin. Everyone sinned, so death came to all people" (Romans 5:12, NIV). Sin is worldwide (Romans 3:23). For this reason, death comes to all people.

**How do the following verses help us understand the nature of sin?**

1 John 3:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

James 1:14, 15 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 59:2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 14:23 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 2:2, 3 tells three things about unbelievers. First, they live "like the rest of the world" (Ephesians 2:2, NLT) because they disobey God and quarrel (argue) among themselves. To be a friend of the world is to be God's

enemy (James 4:4). As enemies, unbelievers live a life of darkness. They are separated from God.

Second, unbelievers follow "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2, NKJV). The prince is Satan. Jesus called Satan "the prince of this world" (John 14:30). Some might think of Satan as a myth.<sup>2</sup> But the Bible tells us Satan is real. He is "a roaring lion, out to devour [eat, destroy] God's people" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is an "accuser of our brothers and sisters" (Revelation 12:10, NIV). He leads us to disobey God (Ephesians 2:2).

Third, unbelievers are sinners. "God is angry with us [sinners] because of the kind of people [sinners] we are" (Ephesians 2:3, NIV). Sin pollutes (stains, makes dirty) the mind, our thoughts, actions, desires, and will. Unbelievers are so sunken in sin that there is always a struggle within their minds. There is no peace for them. They are children deserving God's judgment (Ephesians 2:3).

So, what is the condition of unbelievers? They are dead in sin. They have sealed their future by choosing to "satisfy what our [their] sinful nature wanted to do" (NIV). They are becoming children ready for God's punishment. They are spiritually dead!

**What does it mean to be "a friend of the world" (James 4:4)? To be a friend of the world is to be God's enemy. So why does John 3:16 say**

<sup>2</sup>myth—a story or person that is not true.

God loves the world? Prepare to discuss your answers in class.

### MONDAY—OCTOBER 24

**“BUT GOD . . .” (Ephesians 2:4).**

Paul was an expert in bringing God's great truths to people. In Ephesians 2:1-3, he describes the sad and terrible condition of unbelievers. They are dead in sin and slaves of Satan. They walk according to the desires of the flesh. They are hopeless and worthless, and unable to save themselves. But in Ephesians 2:4, Paul introduces a better and more glorious plan to unbelievers in two words, “But God . . .”

These two words may be among the Bible's most beautiful words. We were dead, *but God*. We were rebels, *but God*. We were under judgment of death, *but God*. We were strangers, *but God*. Satan may seem victorious, *but God*. As long as we have these two words in the Bible, we have hope.

**Notice how the words “but God” are used in the following verses (use a King James Version, a New King James Version, a New International Version, or a Today's English Version): Psalm 73:26; Romans 5:7, 8; Romans 6:16, 17; Acts 13:29, 30; Philipians 2:27. What hope do you find in all of**

**these verses?**

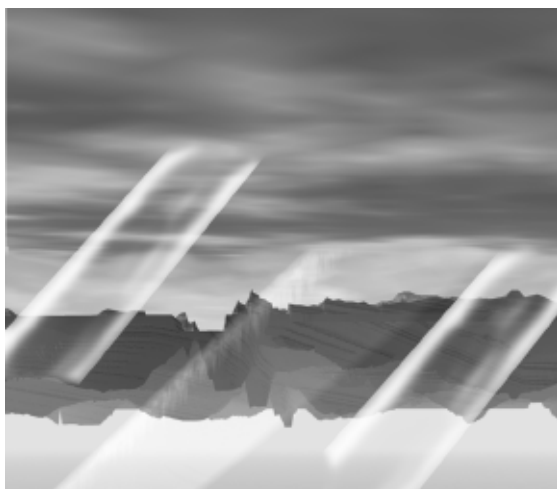
Why did God free us from the slavery of death? Why did God choose to rescue us from the trap of sin? Why did He not let Adam and Eve die? Why did He not make new people who would love and follow His way?

Paul gives two answers. First, because God “is rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4). Mercy is an important part of God's nature: “The Lord your God is tender and loving. He won't [will not] leave you or destroy you” (Deuteronomy 4:31, Nlrv) because “He is good! . . . His mercy endures [continues] forever” (Psalm 106:1, NKJV). Mercy is an important part of salvation. For this reason, saved people are called “vessels [receivers] of mercy” (Romans 9:23, NKJV).

Second, God freed us “because of His great love with which He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4, NKJV). God's love is unselfish.

But we do not deserve His love. God's love is the reason why He gave “his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him [God's Son] will not die but will have eternal<sup>3</sup> life” (John 3:16, Nlrv). God's “gift of mercy and love is as unlimited as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that make the earth fresh again.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.



God's mercy and love are as unlimited as the light.

Write a paragraph that begins, "I [your name] was [talk about your spiritual and mental condition before you knew the Lord]. But God . . . [now write what He has done for you through Christ]."

## TUESDAY—OCTOBER 25

### "MADE US ALIVE" (Ephesians 2:5, NKJV).

Paul speaks of God's grace, love, and mercy toward sinners. Paul often uses such positive words as "riches," "rich," "great," and "exceeding" (very much) when he talks about God's mercy, grace, and love. Paul's use of these positive words shows how much he values salvation as God's gift. Salvation is not a result of human works. Ephesians 2:1-8 clearly shows how sinners move from death to life.

<sup>4</sup>prefix—a word or letters put in front of another word to change the word's meaning or to make a new word.

<sup>5</sup>resurrection—coming back to life after dying.

Notice three things God does for us in Christ. Ephesians 2:5, 6.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

In the Greek language, each of the sentences that tell us the three things God does for us in Christ begin with the prefix<sup>4</sup> *sun*. *Sun* means "together with." This shows that all church members will share these blessings with one another and with Christ.

First, God "made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5, NKJV). Those who believe in Christ and die with Him share His resurrection<sup>5</sup> power. They become spiritually alive in the risen Christ (Romans 6:8-11).



Baptism is a symbol of dying in Christ and sharing in His resurrection.

**How have you experienced being made alive in Christ?**

Second, God “raised us up” (Ephesians 2:6, NKJV). We are raised up in Christ so we can live for Him. Our new Christian life must show the power of Christ’s resurrection. We show Christ’s resurrection by developing the character of Christ.

**How have you experienced being raised up by Christ?**

Third, God “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). The Christian’s greatest honor will be that of sitting with Christ and reigning (ruling) with Him (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 22:5). Even now we can be examples to the universe of Jesus, continuing love and justice (fairness). Even now we can sit in “heavenly places” with Jesus when we, by faith, live in a close relationship with Him.

**How have you experienced this sitting together with Jesus?**

**WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 26**

**BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH**  
(Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 3:24-28;  
Titus 3:4-7).

Read Ephesians 2:8, 9. These two verses summarize the heart of salvation. Paul’s theme is that grace is God’s part in salvation and faith is the human part. The entire salvation experience comes by grace through faith. Salvation is a gift of God. We are not saved by works.

“Grace” and “faith” are the key (important) words here. How do we understand “grace” and “faith”?

*Grace* points to God’s part and the basis of our freedom from sin. As sinners, we deserve death. But God offers us life. We are separated from Him and from one another. But He offers us reunion with Him. We are slaves to sin and judgment. But God gives us freedom. We do not deserve any of what He gives us. This is because we have sinned and stand in rebellion against Him (Colossians 1:21). So grace is God’s free favor to us.

Grace is God’s own act for the salvation of sinners. This grace appeared at the right time (Galatians 4:4) through the act of Christ on the cross. We have no part in salvation. Salvation is God’s gift to “whoever believes” in Jesus (John 3:16, NKJV).

**How does 2 Corinthians 5:18 help us understand what grace means? Who did the reconciling,<sup>6</sup> and for whom?**

*Faith* is the human answer to God’s

<sup>6</sup>reconciling—being brought back to God.

grace. Faith is not something good we develop on our own. Faith is our admiration (respect) at what God has done to save us. Faith is our acceptance of the result of His work in our lives. Faith is a change of loyalty, from self to God. Faith opens the heart to Christ's work in our lives. So, faith cannot start in the sinful human heart. Faith is "the gift of God. But the power to use faith is ours. Faith is the hand the soul uses to take hold of God's grace and mercy."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 431.



Ephesians 2:8 is the heart of salvation.

**How would you help someone who says, "I am so weak in faith." What useful things can we do to make our faith stronger? How does what we read, think, and say strengthen or weaken our faith?**

**THURSDAY—OCTOBER 27**

**"WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP (PROJECT)" (Ephesians 2:10).**

**Paul makes it clear in Ephesians**

**2:8, 9 that we are not saved by works. In Ephesians 2:10, he says "God created us to belong to Christ Jesus" so we could do good things (works) (NIV). If we are not saved by good works, why does Paul say we belong to Christ Jesus so we can do good works?**

Paul's salvation story closes with the positive announcement that "God made us. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good things. Long ago God prepared them [good things] for us to do." As Christians, we owe our life to God's grace. We are His workmanship, His great work of art, created in Christ Jesus.

We should not brag (boast) about this. Paul has warned against such bragging in Ephesians 2:9—"It [salvation] is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it" (NIV). Our works may be very good. But our works cannot save us. In salvation, pride has no place. God expects only self-denial so Christ alone may rule in our hearts. "Christ alone can give us the right covering (robe) to help us be ready to appear in God's presence. . . . This robe, woven in heaven, does not have one thread of human planning. Christ as a man worked out a perfect character. And He offers to give this character to us."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 78.

Christians must guard against two false ideas. The first false idea is that we need to add something of our

own to God's grace. The second false idea is that freedom in Christ means we do not have to obey His commands.

Yes, we are His workmanship. We are a new creation by His grace through faith. But we are new creatures (people) in Christ "to do good works, which God prepared in advance [ahead of time] for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10, NIV). Does this mean our works are required for our salvation? No! But our works are a sign that we are saved. Paul is saying: "Yes, you are saved by faith. You are saved by the free grace of God. But you are saved to live. Faith is not just about what we believe. Faith is not just who we believe in. Faith is also about what we do. Faith requires obedience, the same as Jesus obeyed. He obeyed even to dying on the cross (Philippians 2:5-12). So, your Christian walk is your responsibility. No one else can do it for you."

### FRIDAY—OCTOBER 28

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** *Righteousness (holiness) by faith alone:* "Let it be very clear that it is not possible for any person to earn salvation through good works. If faith and works could buy salvation for anyone, then Jesus, the Creator, would be under debt to the people He created. This is an opportunity for a lie to be accepted as truth. . . . Man cannot earn salvation by his good works. It must be wholly of grace that man receives salvation when he accepts and believes in Jesus. Salvation is completely a free

gift. Justification (righteousness) by faith is without argument."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, pp. 19, 20.



**We cannot earn salvation.**

*On fruit-bearing:* "People who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. These fruit are 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance' (Galatians 5:22, 23). People who become new creatures will no longer be controlled by past lusts. By faith they will follow in Jesus' steps. They will show His character and make themselves pure even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now love. The things they once loved they now hate. Proud and ambitious sinners become meek and lowly in heart. Vain and proud people become serious and humble. Drunken people will become sober, and the wicked people become pure. The proud habits and fashions of the world are put aside."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 58.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Discuss in class the question asked at the end of Sunday's lesson about friendship with the world. What does friendship with the world mean?
2. As a class, discuss the two Ellen G. White quotes listed above. How do you compare<sup>7</sup> her ideas with this week's lesson?
3. Can some things be wrong some-  
times and right at other times? Is it right for some people to do something, but wrong for another person to do the same thing? Is sin a matter of opinion? Discuss these questions in class.
4. What can you do as a class to help everyone in your local church better understand the great truth of salvation by faith alone?

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<sup>7</sup>compare—show how two things are the same.