Opening Words

God does not use us and squeeze the most out of us like a hard-hearted owner of slaves who tosses them aside after they are no longer useful. No, God is writing a beautiful poem through us that he wishes to read to the world so that the world will see his glory in us.

30 Eph Salvation is the Craftsmanship of God

> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; [9] not as 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 so that we would walk in them.

Salvation is not a result of our good works. Salvation is a result of Christ's good works. We are his workmanship Paul tells us! After Paul tells us that salvation is by grace through faith, he then reinforces this with four key statements. Salvation is not from ourselves. It is the gift of God. It is not a result of works, and God arranged it this way so that no one would boast because boasting and pride is what got humanity into trouble in the first place.

Then, it is as if Paul draws a circle around these truths and he reinforces them with one huge statement – we are His workmanship. We are his craftsmanship. Salvation was not crafted or created by us. Salvation was crafted and created by God. We are his workmanship.

Here are eight reasons why.

1. Let's start with creation. God is the one who made you. When we say that God made us we mean that God set up the system of procreation by which children are conceived. And in our day, with our knowledge of DNA, we can marvel at our development in the womb. Don't you love David's verses in Psalm 139 when he said, "For You formed my inward parts. You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well."
2. Second, God placed us in a perfect environment in which to live and work. As we learn more about the universe we discover that it is not a human friendly environment. But earth is – it is the beautiful planet, the privileged planet and the perfect place for us in which to dwell. God is one who made this. It is a result of his craftsmanship.
3. Our right standing with God is totally the work of Christ. It was not we who overcame Satan. It was not we who obeyed all the way to the cross. It was Jesus. Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is not the work of man but the work of God.
4. When God saved you, he gave you at least one spiritual gift. We are going to discuss spiritual gifts when we get into chapter 4, but for now, we need to realize that God has given all of us special grace to serve him. He has given us a special capacity to work with joy and with power that will affect other people to love him more. This capacity is what Scripture calls spiritual gifts. They are given freely to us by God. It is not like he gave us a catalog and said you can special order what you think is best for yourself. Instead, he carefully selected what

he knew would be best suited for us and the reason he did it this way is that salvation is His work and not ours.

5. God gave you a special heart of love to show his love to the world. God made each of us with a unique expression of his love to the world. Let me give you some examples. All of us should love God's word and we should learn it and obey it. But some of us have a unique gifting to spend much time in the Word, to see how it all connects, and to share it effectively with others.

   All of us should love children, but some know how to connect with little minds and reach their hearts. Do you know anyone like that?

   Some of us have a special love for the lost. Again, all of us should love the lost and reach out to them, but some have a special God-empowered ability in this area. I have a friend who once spent all night in prayer for the lost. This is his passion.

   What is your passion? Is it for the lost? Is it for children? Is it for the elderly? Is it for the handicapped? Is it for teaching God's word?

   It could be any one of dozens of things – but whatever it is – it was planted in your heart by God, the great gardener. and it is his desire to cultivate this in you, to nurture this in you and to express his love through you in a special way. This is part of your salvation and salvation is not a result of your works. Rather, salvation is His works, his craftsmanship in you.

6. God has given you special abilities. This is a little different than passion. You may have a passion for children, but your passion may express itself in your special ability to build homes for children. You may have a passion for children but that passion may express itself in your ability to speak to them on their level and to care for them so they know they are loved. It is very important that we learn what our abilities are, and are not. I know what one of my abilities is not – I know I don't have much ability in working with my hands. And so, I try to stay away from those kinds of jobs as much as I can, although yesterday I had to add siding to our deck because we keep getting critters under our deck like raccoons, possums, and skunks! What would have taken a skilled craftsman, like my son a couple of hours, took me all day, and am I sore!

   Let's learn what our abilities are and put them to use for God. He is the one who gave them to us because this is part of our salvation and our salvation is his workmanship.

7. God is the one who has crafted our personality. I tend to be quiet (believe it or not) and contemplative. I prefer solitude to social gatherings and reading to going out with some of the guys. My wife is the opposite. She loves a good party and loves to hang out with friends. Both are gifts of God. And while sin can distort our personality – I can be alone too much, and she can get so wound up at night she has a hard time winding down and going to sleep – God wants to refine us so that in a special way we interact with the world, with friends, and

with work according to the way God made us. God wants us to do this. God made us one way and not another. God did this. Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is not from us. Salvation is not from our works. Salvation is his workmanship.

8. Finally, number eight. God takes our life experiences, the bad as well as the good, the disappointments as well as the delights, the tragedies as well as the triumphs and shapes them to make something beautiful in us.

Our creation, the creation of the world in which we live, our right standing with God, our spiritual gifts, our passion, our abilities, our personality, and our life experiences. These come from God and God can take them and make something beautiful in our lives.

Now with this in mind, let's listen again to Ephesians 2:8-10

> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; [9] not as 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 so that we would walk in them.

We are his workmanship. We are his creation. God prepared the good works ahead of time so that we would walk in them. Salvation is of the Lord. How can we even begin to boast? Well, we can boast and should boast but our boast is in the Lord for the great things he has done for us.

One of the greatest peace-taking steps in my life has been to discover who I really am. I don't mean this in a humanistic, self absorbed way, but I mean this in a humble God-glorifying way. After all, if God made me in a certain way, it is my responsibility to learn that and to cooperate with him in the way he has made me. God made all things with a certain purpose in mind and part of God's commission to us is to cultivate the earth, to explore and discover how he has made things and to use those things for his glory. Think of the different minerals in the earth that he has made. God's desire was for us to discover those minerals and develop them for the good of all mankind. Think of growing food. God's will was for us to discover how crops grow, when they grow, how to make the most of certain kinds of plants in certain kinds of soil so that we may benefit from them. All these things are gifts of God to discover and develop.

Friends, God has uniquely made you and he wants you to discover all about your salvation and all about how he has made you so that you will cooperate with him and walk according to good works which he specially prepared for you.

As I said, this has been a great peace-taking step in my life because I have learned I don't have to be like someone else who I may admire. I should imitate their faith and love but the way that faith and love expresses itself will be a unique expression through me just as it is through you. I can relax and let God shape me as He wishes and I can relax and let God shape you in the way he wants to shape you. Let God lead you and shape you and he will bring all the components of the body together for his glory.

I want to share one more thought with you from this passage. When Paul says we are his workmanship, the Greek work he uses is poema, from which we get the word poem. We are God's poem.

You see, God does not use us and squeeze the most out of us like a hard-hearted owner of slaves who tosses them aside after they are no longer useful. No, God is writing a beautiful poem through us that he wishes to read to the world so that the world will see his glory in us. And this is a wonder of the spiritual world!