

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Grace Unleashed

PART

7

TITLE

We Are Saved

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:8-10



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For those of you who call Providence home, welcome. We are thrilled that you're here. All the venues where we're at this morning, welcome; we are really thrilled that you have joined us, joined your family this morning, to sing to the Lord, and to learn of Him, and to love one another, and so we're really grateful that you've joined us. And for those of you who are guests here, welcome; we're thrilled that you are here. If you know Christ, we're glad that you could come and worship him with us, and if you don't, we're really glad that you came to learn more of Him.

Just a few words in terms of where we're at as a church family. You guys know, we're about four and a half months into building a new worship center, and so we're in lots of different rooms all morning long, and I just want to commend you, and then exhort you to excel still more. You see, God's word tells us these words; he says "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love [inaudible 00:00:53]," not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some. And we're in this process, and in some ways, I've been really urged many times by lots of people to be careful how I use any word picture that deals with pregnancy, because I've been told that I really don't know what I'm talking about there, which is probably true from an outsider's perspective, right? This project is probably going to take eight, nine, ten months, something like that.

And in the early months of a pregnancy, and of a project like this, there's a lot of enthusiasm; everybody's really happy and everybody's ready to serve and give. There's some sickness, and so there's some things we have to kind of manage and work out, of how we sort of move along, and then we get into the stage where we're at right now, where we start to feel just some strains. Fortunately we still have good weather, it's not winter yet, and when we have to walk down here, we're ... But we're sort of in that period.

And then you get to the last period, which is harder I've been told, and ... But it culminates in blessing, right? So much joy in a baby, and so much joy that God is going to take us as a church family, back into one central place where we can worship all together as a family. We're excited about that day, but during that time, I just simply want to encourage you and exhort you with how you're living. When I drive in and I see progress, it makes me encouraged, but it makes me exceptionally encouraged, much more so than brick and mortar, to see your faith, to see your love, and I just want to encourage you in this time; keep worshiping. I realize, even this morning, there's several people who are listening to me right now on a screen. We have screens all over the place, all over the building, there's a lot of people that watch from home, and from various places. And what I want to encourage you is to lean in in your worship; to come. Don't just watch and observe, but participate. I want to encourage you to keep loving one another, keep meeting three.

So meet three, what is that? It means when you walk in this place and you look around, most of us have several minutes before we get started. And you look around, and you see people you don't know. I want to encourage you to go up and meet three people. Just to keep being hospitable, keep being loving, keep praying for one another.

Here at Providence, you know this if this is your home, but we love the Bible, and we love to walk through it. And what we're doing right now is walking verse by verse through this amazing book of Ephesians. We're up to chapter two, verses 8, 9, and 10. So if you have a Bible, if you want to head there, and if you don't have one, there's lots of Bibles in the room and the various chairs near you. And if you don't have one at home, we would love for you to take that Bible home with you; you can just have that as a gift. But we really are glad that you're here.

I'm excited about this passage, but I'm also very conscious that I don't have the ability to persuade you to believe what it says, and so we need God's help. So if you would, let's bow. Let's pray together. Father in Heaven, we're grateful. We're grateful for the grace that we've heard about, we're grateful for the grace that we've sung about, and now we're grateful for the grace we're about to read about; grace that has come to us in Christ. And God, I pray today Lord, that you would use this passage literally to unveil the insufficiency, the mirage, of our works and how we contribute to saving ourself. God, we know your word says here, it's so clear, and yet our heart continues to drift to want to contribute. And so would you help us, Lord, to rejoice in the grace that you give us? I pray for those in the room who may not know you as Savior and as Lord, who are not leaning on your accomplishments. Today, I pray God, that you ... Would even if they feel far from you and their sin is great like a mountain, and they think there's no way for them to be forgiven, would you help them to see just the magnitude of your grace that can be poured out, that overpowers all of our sin?

And for those in this room who for so long in their life, they've been near church and near religion, and yet they're still banking, they're still trusting, in what they have accomplished, God I pray that you would unveil the insufficiency of that path, and help each and every one of us to walk out of these doors today trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We are grateful. I ask that you would speak through weakness and bring glory, to Christ alone. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, a few years ago, we were in search of a dog, so I went on one of these websites, these dog rescue websites to see if there was a dog that was there that might be right for us. And I'll just be honest with you; for a guy who loves a book, the Bible, whose central message is rescue, that's like a really, really rough thing, to go to one of these websites, because you want to bring home about ten of them. And what's interesting, you know if you go there, they have this really, really sad music playing as you're looking at all these pictures of sad dogs, like this one here. Here's Gracie, she's so sad, I know. She's in prison, she's in need, and the fact is, is that under each of the pictures, there's a little caption; there's a little write-up about who they are, and it's always in first-person. And so it's like, "Hey, I'm Gracie. I love kids and Frisbees and Jesus, and I have until Tuesday unless you save me." And a little paw, and a little tear coming out of his eye. That's really, really sad.

You go there, and the fact is, is that we have a bent towards rescue; we want to be rescued, we are sympathetic towards the idea of rescue. That's why we appeal to it. It's why we cheer it when we see it in first responders or soldiers. It's in our blood, which is why the heart of God and the story of the Bible is so appealing, because

you see that the whole Bible is a rescue story, and it's led by the rescuer, who is God. It's an amazing portrait.

And here in Ephesians, chapter two, verses 8, 9, and 10, Paul summarizes literally the entire Gospel into just three sentences, three verses for us. And he does so, so that we would be happy. He's writing to believers in Jesus Christ in a city of effaces. They've already trusted Christ, and so the verbs, they're all past-tense. This has already happened to you, and he knows it's already happened to them, and yet he's laying it before them in order to stir up gratitude in their heart, in order to stir up passion for the mission, in order to stir up thanks-giving and admiration to the rescuer.

This is what he says, verse 8: "For my 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 that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." So what I want to do right now is to show you the big idea, one sentence, and then the three sermon points, the three little things that sort of unpack this sentence. The thesis or the big idea of what he's saying here is this, is that we are saved by grace through faith to do good works. We are saved by grace through faith to do good works. And so, if you want to take notes, you write that down. The first point is the first few words there, is we are saved by grace. We're saved by grace.

Now when a firefighter runs out of a blazing house with a little girl in his arms whom he has rescued, and passes that little girl who maybe has smoke in her hair, and soot on her face, and she's well and she's alive and she's been rescued, and the firefighter takes the little girl and passes the little girl to her mother. And her mother exclaims, "You have been saved!" She's praising the rescuer, and she's also inviting her daughter who has been rescued to admire the one who's done the rescuing. It's an invitation to everyone who can hear these words; she's saying you couldn't save yourself, you were in peril, you were in need, and yet somebody with courage and strength used their courage and strength in order to rescue you. And this is exactly Paul's desire when he says to us, "You have been saved." You have been saved. It's a remarkable thing, that he's wanting believers to well up with a sense of relief, with a sense of memory, with a sense of gratitude, and appreciation, and admiration for the one who came to rescue us.

But you have to ask the question, well saved from what? You have been saved; what was the burning building that we were in? And for those of you who have been with us, who were here last week, Ephesians chapter two, versus 1 through 7 of course is not a different thought from versus 8, 9, and 10; we kinda broke them in two simply because of emphasis and time of how long we could actually talk about those verses. But you can't divorce verse 1 through 7 from verse 8, 9, and 10 because it's the exact same thought. And what we found there is in verses 1 through 7, is that Paul the writer, is he's unpacking the peril that surrounded us, each and every one of us, before we came to faith in Christ, or if you have not yet come to faith in Christ, the peril that you are now in.

And what he says there is three things. He says that “You were dead in your trespasses in sins.” You see, Romans chapter three, verse 23, says “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” God has a holy standard, and what he says is for those that miss that standard, that falls short of that standard, the wage or the penalty is death. And what we looked at last week was this death from the Garden of Eden; we sort of looked back, of what did that actually mean, because they kept living. So what was this death about? You’re still alive and I’m still alive, so what is the death about? And what we looked at is there’s really three different kinds; first of all, there is a relational death, there was a separate in the relationship first noticed between the man and the woman, not even between God and man. Is that they covered up, they felt shame from one another. They had to hide because they felt separated, they felt alone. What we looked at last week is every time you see strife in human relationships, whether it’s on the playground, whether it’s in wars, in nations, or whether it’s in your marriage, or friendship, what you’re seeing there is literally the shadow of death; it wasn’t supposed to be like that.

We also saw that there was a spiritual death, spiritual meaning between man and God, is that we hid from God. That relationship was broken, so broken that literally it was severed. You see, God tells us that when we sin, we literally severed the tubes of oxygen, the spiritual oxygen going to our soul. And that led to a third death that awaits every single one of us unless Christ comes back to rescue us beforehand, and that is a physical death. For one day, our body is going to wear out to the place where it will no longer carry life, and we will be separated from our people, separated from our things, separated from our home, our family, from this Earth.

Sin separates. You see, you’re sort of like a cellphone; a cellphone is not an independent thing that can just survive on its own forever, it’s a dependent thing that needs regular charging. It needs to be connected to a source of power, of life. And the same is true of you and of me. We’re not independent creatures; we’re dependent creatures. And when we unplug our life from the source of life, we die.

The second thing that Paul said of us that was true before we came to faith in Christ, he says that we were captives. We were captives to sin, we were captives to Satan; literally following the prince of the power of the air. And he says that we were literally enslaved to the passions of our flesh. You see, you look around the world and everybody seems to be floating, almost like a float trip. Now you’ve been on a float trip, maybe one like this. There’s lots and lots of people, everyone has a tube, and life is like a float trip in some ways, right? You got some people who want to go really fast, and some people who want to go really slow, and they’re bumping into each other, and that causes strife. And then you got some people on a tube and they live it under the influence of alcohol, and you have some people who are really having a fun time, some people just can’t wait to get over with the whole thing.

And life is like this, but here's the reality; what he's saying is this, is that every single one of us, we were in lockstep with the world. We were on this float trip and yet none of us knew the peril that was just around the bend. None of us knew that we were just floating towards a waterfall that would lead to our demise. And this is what he says to us, is that you and I, we were held captives, and then he says the third thing; he says is that we were by nature children or objects of God's wrath. And we looked at Psalm chapter seven, verse 12, and there it tells us that God literally has a bow and arrow, that it's pointed at each and every person on the Earth, and that bow has an arrow, and that arrow is his wrath.

And some of you last week, and some of you now, are saying "Well you're just trying to scare us." I'm not trying to scare you; God is trying to do that, okay? He's the one who wrote this down and I'm just reading it to you. And what you have to understand is that God speaks of his wrath in order to create urgency in those who are apart from Christ, and gratitude for those who are in Christ. And so Paul, he comes to us, and he says, "You have been saved out of all of this." This is no longer where you're at. And we looked, and it says, "You're alive, and you're now rescued; you're delivered from this prison, and now you're not an object of God's wrath, you're an object of his kindness," where he substituted the arrow. The wrath comes out, kindness goes in, and he keeps firing arrows at you, but now it's kindness, it's blessing, it's provision, it's promise.

And Paul wants us to know, those of us who are Christ, that we have been saved. We have been saved, but you have to ask the question how. How have we been saved? And this is what he says, he goes, "We've been saved by grace and not by works." And tragically, our heart as people, constantly leads towards works; we want to contribute to this thing. You see, instinctively we know that there is a God, but we feel distant from Him. Each and every one of us, Romans two, says that God is literally etched within our conscious; etched within our soul, a category for the existence of God. We look up, and we look around, and we say, "There's a creator, there's a designer, there's an engineer to all of this." Our heart, whether we like to believe it or not, wants for there to be a God, and that desire is in accord with what the etching is on our heart; that there is a God, and God wants us to know him, and seek him, and be with him.

But you see, the Bible says we also know guilt. Every single one of us knows that death awaits, and most of us know that on the other side of death, God awaits. And because we know this, and because we know guilt, it's just out go-to; instinctively we think, "Well we need to clean ourself up a bit before that meeting, before that encounter with God." And the Bible calls this desire works. You see, this is why every single religion that's ever been created, except for Gospel-based Christianity, demands works with absolutely no surety that we can ever do enough within that system.

You think about all the different systems of thought. In Buddhism, the work is ceasing to have desire; talk about an impossibility. In Islam, the work we're supposed to do is a holy life. For the Jews of the Old Testament and even now, those who are Orthodox, their work is in obeying the law. You see, the fact is, is that even in Jesus circles through time, where people, at least they go, "Okay, well there's Jesus and he's the son of God, and we believe in what he's done," it's interesting that even Jesus people, they get sidetracked in time. And there are groups through history, and some of them are still existing today, to where they say, "You know what, yeah it's Jesus, but you also have to belong to this body of believers, and you have to be baptized in this kind of church."

And all of these things, the Bible says all of this is works. You see, grace plus anything is no longer grace, because grace is unmerited favor. As you look at ... Even Jesus, when we was on the Earth, one time he was with a bunch of people, in Romans chapter five. He sits down ... He actually walks up a mountain, everyone sits down, and he starts teaching them, and in the context of his sermon, this is what he says: He goes, "Now unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and the scribes on the wall, you won't go to Heaven," and the reason is because they're not going to Heaven either. This was the most religious, the most outwardly righteous, the most spiritual people that anybody knew, and Jesus categorically said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds theirs, you can't go to Heaven."

And then he tells us, 28 verses later, why. He sums it up and he goes, "No this is why, now get this straight." He says, "You therefore must be perfect, for my Father in Heaven is perfect." The demand of God to get to Heaven is perfection morally. Or you have to go with someone who was. Those are your options; this is what Jesus said. You see, the Gospel is like a big nine inch nail that pierce through the mirage of all of our works. Listen to me, grace plus anything is no longer grace. Even Jeremiah the Prophet, hundreds of years before Jesus was here, he lays out it in very simple words, and this is what he says: He goes "Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt still before me, declares the Lord." You wash yourself, you cleanse yourself, you've asked God to forgive you, everything you can possibly ... You go to work, you go to church, you pray; everything that you can do in order to clean yourself up, and God says it's not enough.

We cannot save ourself, we cannot clean ourself. The Bible's message is we need a rescuer, and the only way to be saved is for God to save us by his grace. So the question then is this: He's writing this to believers; how did that come to us? And if you're not a believer today, if you're not a Christian, how does that come to you? How does this salvation by grace, how does it collide with us personally so that we are saved? And that's where we get to the second point, and that is that we are saved through faith. We're saved through faith.

You see, when the Bible speaks of works, it refers to our resting in our own accomplishments. When he says we're not saved by works, what he means is that we cannot rest in what we have done in our resume. And when the Bible speaks of faith, what it's speaking of there is resting in Jesus' accomplishments, and so what he says to us is that "You have been saved through faith."



So what does this mean? It means that you and I are saved when we reject all of our attempts to save ourselves and we rest in what Jesus has provided for us. You see, knowing how much we want to contribute though, and then to boast in our contribution, he even makes a point to say, "Oh and by the way, even your faith is a gift." Salvation is a gift and grace is a gift and faith is a gift. It's all a gift. And what you have to understand, this is so important, is that your faith does not save you; your faith in Jesus Christ does not save you. This is why: When you go to a bank and you deposit money to them, your faith in them does not keep your money safe. When you stand on a ladder in order to elevate yourself from the ground, your faith in the ladder's strength does not keep you upright. The bank keeps your money safe, the ladder keeps you off the ground.

So when he says to us, "You've been saved through faith," our faith does not save us. The object of our faith saves us so long as the object is able. And we believe in Jesus Christ, our faith is in Jesus Christ, and the Bible is emphatic in his ability to save. Hebrews chapter seven, verse 25 says, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him." When he adds in there "to the uttermost," what he's saying is this: You add up all the obstacles, all the hurdles, everything that you would think "Well there's no way ... I don't know about that, God; look how far along he's gone." And he's saying, "Look, Jesus can save him to the uttermost." He can save her to the uttermost.

And so if our faith in Jesus Christ is what allows God's grace to collide to where we can be saved, then you have to ask the question, what did Jesus Christ accomplish that invites and welcomes our faith? You look at what the Bible says, and it's the most remarkable thing that you'll ever read; it's un-invent-able. It says that Jesus Christ, literally one day, says in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ stood up in Heaven and left the unceasing adoration of all the redeemed. Jesus Christ laid aside his kingly garments, and he took on the clothing of a servant, and he came to this Earth and instead of adoration and worship, he endured unbelief, and scorn, and criticism. After three decades of perfection in love, and righteousness, and purity, Jesus Christ took upon himself all of our sin and died for it on the cross. When we talked about Psalm chapter seven, when it says the arrow of God's wrath was pointed at us, that arrow was unleashed, but Jesus stood in the way and received it for us. After his righteousness, he paid our penalty.

Then the Bible says that he was buried in a grave that was made out of rock that he created when the world came into existence. But the amazing thing is that his incorruptible life couldn't be held down by death, and so God, the Father, raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand. And the Bible says, what we looked at the last two weeks, is that for everyone who would trust in Jesus Christ, that we would receive the same victory. I want to show you, once again, so that you can see with your own eyeballs, so that your heart can be amazed at this.



Look back at chapter one, verse 20; one page back. This is what he says. He says, “According to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seeded him at His right hand in the Heavenly places.” But then if you look at chapter two, verses 4, 5, and 6, notice what it says of us; it mirrors what God did to his son. He says, “But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you’ve been saved and raised us up with him, and seeded us with him in the Heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.”

So do you see what’s happened? What we talked about last week was that Jesus becomes our federal head, federal meaning that a lot of people are represented by one, and so the skill and the accomplishment of the one accrues for the many. And this is what it says here, is that “Jesus’ Father becomes our Father; his righteousness becomes our righteousness.” He was made alive and those who believe in Jesus Christ are made alive. And all of his exaltation, it even accrues to us, so that we are raised and seeded with him in Christ already. Not physically, but legally; these things are true of us in Jesus Christ. You see, his exaltation, his victory came from merit and ours comes from grace.

And those of you who are here right now, some of you have never trusted Christ. Actually in two years, I’ve never done this, we’re gonna pray right in the middle. There’s one more point that I need to get to, because I’m supposed to finish verse 10 today, but before we do that, when we think about this reality, I would be amiss to not give you an opportunity right now while you’re sitting that if you believe in Jesus Christ, and want to trust in him, and literally lean upon his accomplishments. Maybe you’ve been religious your whole life, maybe you are a member here at Providence, but you are banking and resting ultimately, end of each and every day, that your right standing is on how good you are, and how frequently you are here. Some of you, maybe your life is in shambles; you’re not a religious person, you stumbled in here, maybe you were invited here by a loving friend, and God right now, he’s giving you an invitation.

Listen to what it says in Romans chapter ten, verse 9; he says “If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” You can be forgiven today. His Father can become your Father; his perfect righteous can become your righteousness. It’s all available in those who lean on him, those who trust in his accomplishments. All these gifts are given to us.

So what I want to do right now is pray. He says confess, and so this is what I want to ask you to do: Those of you who already know Christ, I simply want you to pray for people that you know, maybe even in this room, that “God, if there’s anybody here that is wondering or contemplating, pray and receive Christ right now”; that you just pray for them. Just say “God, would you open up their eyes and help them to see Jesus?” And for those of you who are here who have never trusted Christ, but right now you’re sitting there ... “I do trust Christ, I do believe this. I do believe he rose from the dead.” And I want to give you an opportunity to do just what it says, and that is to confess him as Lord.

So if you would bow, let's pray. If you are believing in Christ, you want to be forgiven of your sin, you want to lean on him, the words are not magical; they just must be sincere. You could pray something like this: Father in Heaven, I admit to you that I'm a sinner. I admit to you that I have not been righteous in my life; I have not been perfectly righteous. I have fallen short of your glory. And I acknowledge what your word says to me, that I'm living in peril. But I believe in your son, Jesus Christ. I believe that he came to this Earth and lived a righteous life. And I believe that he died on a cross for my sin, and I believe that he rose from the dead, and right here, right now, I confess you as Lord. Would you forgive me of my sin, and would you save me by grace? Thank you, thank you for rescuing me. Father, I pray for those who are here that that's true. I pray that you would encourage them right now with your spirit, that they've been forgiven, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

So we are saved by God's grace, we're saved through faith in the one who has the ability, the capacity, and the strength to save us. But we're also saved to something, and this is the third, is we are saved to do good works. We're saved to do good works. In verse 10, he says that we ... He says "For you believers [inaudible 00:31:01], you believers at Providence, are his workmanship." Workmanship comes from a Greek word that is translated "poem" or "masterpiece"; it's like an art project that God creates, and he says, "Let me show you the glory of my wisdom by painting a picture." And he says, "We are that picture." The only other time this word is used in the entire New Testament is in Romans chapter one, verse 20, when he speaks about the physical creation; that God created seas, and shadows, and waterfalls, and mountains, and sunsets, and sunrises in order to point our eyes to look and go, "Wow. God is powerful and God is wise."

And here Paul says, "You are added to the collection of things that God has created in order to display His glory." That we are his workmanship, and he tells us why he did it; he says "We're created in Christ Jesus to do good works." And somebody's like, "Wait a minute, I thought the whole thing was no works, no works, no works, and now all of a sudden works." The key is to get the works in the right order. So here's the order: Jesus works for us to save us, and then Jesus works in us in order to bring about good works through us. It's sort of like a branch that's been grafted to a vine. The Bible uses this illustration frequently in the New Testament, where Jesus looks at us apart from him, and he says, "You're like a branch that's been broken off of the vine; it can't bear fruit, it has no capacity to graft itself back into the vine." And so it says that God takes the vine, gives us faith, we place that faith in Christ, and suddenly he grafts us back so that now the sap, and the energy, and life becomes through that vine; it begins coursing through the branch, and what happens to the branch is it begins to bear fruit.

Now no branch, when we really understand what's taken place, can ever boast in the fruit that comes out of us even after Christ, because we were just a dead branch on the ground, and God is the one who's doing all these things. And that's why he says we can't boast of these things, even of the works, the obedience, the righteousness that comes out of our lives after our faith in Jesus Christ. And what we find in Ephesians is really a beautiful blueprint of the whole Christian life. In chapters one, two, and three what we find is how we come to faith in Christ; what God did in unleashing his grace in us, and then in chapters four, five, and six what we see is a description of God's grace that comes through us. In other words, chapter four, five, and six is Paul's description of what a workman and what God's workmanship looks like.

And what we're gonna find, I just want to give you a snapshot of what it looks like, in chapter four what we're gonna see is that some of the things that flow out of a vine into the branch that's been connected to Him, is Christ-like character. Christ literally wants to download his characteristics, his character, how he lived his life, in the life of his followers. Second thing we're gonna see in chapter five is that he wants to download loving relationships; he wants to display his love for people through our love for people/ And so we're gonna see it in the context of a home, of a marriage, of parent and child, and friendships. And then the third thing we're gonna see is faithfulness with our responsibilities. You see, Jesus wants to display his faithfulness through our faithfulness, so that people can see how we are excellent with our work, and it points to his excellence in his work.

You look at the 33 years of Jesus, and 30 years he built chairs, and 3 years he built sermons. And what we find in both cases was this, is that work didn't become Christian, when the carpenter etched a cross hidden behind the door of a cabinet; it becomes Christian when the Christian builds really good cabinets for the glory of God.

And then the fourth thing that we're gonna see is making disciplines. Literally we're going to be sharing our faith and going to people, and it's because Jesus wants to display his saving power in people who hear the Gospel from our lips. And so, what do we do with this as a church family? What do we do with this truth, that we are saved by grace, through faith, to do good works? Two things: I would encourage you to spend some time today examining two different things in your life and praying that God would bring both, if either are missing.

First is that God ... Let's examine a heart to see if faith exists. Ask yourself, what am I relying on when I stand before God? And then the second thing is let's examine our lives to see where good works exist. Specifically this point is to those who have trust Christ. If faith in Jesus Christ exists, we should then ask ourselves, of those four categories; character and love, faithfulness and sharing the Gospel, are these things being seen in my life?

As we get ready to shut down, I would be amiss if I didn't end with encouragement, specifically encouragement to you. Because I want you to know that I see your love for Jesus; your leaders at Providence see your love for Christ. I hear your faith as you sing, I see your love for people, I see spouses within our body forgiving their spouse for the glory of God. I see parents laboring to instruct, I see children laboring to honor, I see grown children laboring to care for aging parents. I see you planting your lives in this church, and how you connect and worship, and how you're serving, and how you're going. I see an army of faithful professionals outside of the church family that come here and you serve; you utilize your strength and gift humbly to serve other people. I see your generosity, and because of your generosity, we're able to do amazing and special things that God allows us a special privilege, and it's because of your generosity.

See a few weeks ago, actually a few months ago, we talked about that we authorized to send \$25,000 that wasn't within the budget, because you've given up over and above the budget, to people in our own country to help with the flood reliefs. Just around our country. Just a few weeks ago, we also authorized a second \$25,000 to actually go to people around the world. You see, over in Southeast Asia, you can actually see a slide right here. There was 1,200 people who died in the floods, and there were 40 million people affected. And so that \$25,000 that went to some of our Baptist partners all around the world, you have to understand it's because of you.

You see, it's true, we are trying to save money here at Providence so that we can reduce the debt on this building. But the fact is, there's still needy people all around the world, and so we're seeking to look for opportunities just like this, and this is only possible because of you. You say, "Well 40 million people, what in the world can \$25,000 do?" And let me just tell you what it did: It repaired homes for 40 different families, it provided food for over 230 families, new clothing for the same families, reseeding fields and health camps. And in addition to this, it helped support the various team leaders who were actually doing this work, [inaudible 00:38:47] people who are church planners that were partnering and supporting. It really is an amazing thing, and all this is because of your generosity; it's God's workmanship literally in you.

We see you planting the Gospel. We see you planting the Gospel in the city, you know, in just the last few months. Just in the few that we know, we know that there's been 31 different people here at Providence had the privilege to lead someone to faith in Christ. It's an amazing thing, it is. It's an amazing thing, if you think about it. And God is doing that through your life, and I see you planting churches in the world.

This morning, we get to commission, we're gonna do that right now. A team going to South Africa, so the team, they're in the back, if you want to come forward at this time. As they come forward you'll see their names on the screen, they're gonna have the opportunity to go overseas to South Africa in order to share the Gospel, but what you have to understand is this: Is that they could not go if the body, if you, were not faithful. I just want you to know that I see Christ in you; I see good works taking place after believing in Jesus that are coming through you. And as the church family, we simply want you to know that we're incredibly grateful.

So this team has the opportunity ... There's actually eight going, not all here, who'll be flying to South Africa. They're gonna be building a daycare, that's their platform in order to go and share the Gospel with people, tell people about Jesus. And so what we find in the New Testament is a practice, and that is that the church would literally lay hands on the people, pray for people, as they send them out. Now I know this is really weird, because there's some people not even in this room, you're gonna point your hand to a screen. Now I realize that's weird, but just in faith, lean in, embrace the awkwardness right where you're at there in the fellowship hole, prisms, and the amphitheater, and just symbolically place your hand on one of their shoulders as we pray together and send them out, okay?

Father in Heaven, we thank you for your grace in our life, we thank you for your kindness that comes to us through Jesus Christ. For every single one of us that's been saved, we give you praise and glory. And God, I pray for our team; we, as a church family, pray for our team. As an extension of who we are, as an extension of our generosity, as an extension of our prayers, an extension of our love, we pray that you would fill them with their spirit, that you would give them unity, that you would give them protection, that you would give them wisdom and understanding. We pray that you would help them to do good work, faithful work, excellent work, and God we pray that you would give them many opportunities to share the Gospel with people. And as a result of their going, we pray. We pray that real people would place trust, that you would give the gift of faith, and that people would be forgiven of their sin and saved. That is our prayer, and we know you can do it. We pray that you would. Oh God, we are so grateful for you. We love you and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hey Providence, aren't you grateful for our teams? Praise God for His grace. We'll be praying for you as you go.



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