

## ▼ Welcome

- ▼ My name is Dave Ainsworth.
  - I'm one of the pastors here.
  - If I've never met you, welcome to Citizens.
- ▼ We'll be in Ephesians 2 this morning.
  - If you don't have a Bible on hand and would like one, you can raise your hands and Keane/Shep will bring one to you.
  - If you don't have a Bible at home either, then please take this copy. We've got plenty and we'd love to give them all away.
  - And Ephesians 2 is on Page \_\_\_\_\_. We'll be covering vv. 1-10.

## ▼ Introduction

- Most of you know that I have three school-aged kids — Shepherd, Trinity and Lucy.
- ▼ One of my kids doesn't sleep well.
  - And because she doesn't sleep well, I don't sleep well.
  - For the past seven years, in general, I have been tired.
  - And the thing is, Maggie and I have tried to find a solution.
- ▼ We have spent so much energy and money trying to get this girl to sleep.
  - Melatonin.
  - Benadryl.
  - Essential Oils.
  - Hemp Oil.
  - Weighted Blankets.
  - Special Kid Clocks.

- Pediatricians
- Occupational Therapists
- Naturopaths
- Gymnastics Classes.
- A huge \$100 stuffed bunny named Tanny.
- A real live dog.

▼ After the sermon, someone here is inevitably going to come up to me with a suggested fix.

- They have the one solution we haven't tried.
- And it might be the right one, and so I don't want to discourage you from coming to tell me what it is.
- But, as a warning, I'm going to have a hard time taking your suggestion seriously.
- We've just tried so much and dealt with this for such a long that it's going to be hard for me to believe.
- Hope for sleep doesn't come easy to me anymore.
- We've had our hopes dashed too many times.

- Do you know what I mean?

▼ Have you felt that way before?

- Some circumstance or problem that you've grown cynical about.
- You're not opposed to finding a solution, but you've stopped spending energy hoping for one. Maybe even stopped praying about it.
- You're at the point where emotional and spiritual health is not getting past this thing but living with it.

▼ Some of us hear the promises of God in the Bible this way.

- That's how we read the Book of Ephesians.

▼ **Ephesians 2:1-10 teaches amazingly that**

- before Christ, cut off from the gospel, we are dead in our sins, slaves to our passions and subject to God's wrath.
- But since Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead.
- When we believe the gospel, when we trust Christ in faith, we are joined to Christ and made alive.

▼ **Last week, CJ helpfully pointed out how this message is challenging both for the non-Christian and the Christian.**

- Many non-Christians will be taken aback, thinking "How can you say I'm dead? I feel alive."
- Many Christians will also be taken aback, thinking "How can you say I'm alive. I feel dead."
- **I believe in Jesus. I trust in Jesus. But the promises just don't seem to work for me like they work for other people.**

▼ **Like us with sleep, you've tried almost everything.**

- You've read your Bible.
- You've cried out in prayer.
- You've made New Years' Resolutions (and even kept some)
- You've tried holy yoga, therapy, exercise, 12-step programs, medication, cold showers, and silent retreats.
- You've joined small groups and smaller groups.
- Maybe you've changed churches.
- Maybe you've changed cities.
- In an attempt to start over, to find and experience resurrection, but you still feel dead. Or at least seriously wounded.
- **So that by the time you start talking with me or CJ, there's nothing we can tell you that you haven't already tried. There's nothing we can tell you that you haven't already considered.**
- **You're like me with sleep: "Forgive me for being cynical, but it's been a long time."**

▼ Well, some important things you should know about Citizens.

▼ **First, you're in good company here. We understand. We've been there. We are there. Spend some time with us and you'll hear about it.**

- We can't understand fully the particular circumstance that you find yourself, but in the common experience of doubt and resignation, we get that.
- That feeling that this sin is too strong. This pain is too deep. This struggle too old. This problem too complex.
- So that over the years, you've already figured out that you're not enough, but you're increasingly concerned that maybe Jesus isn't enough either. Or that your hold on Jesus isn't enough.
- If that's you, it's a hard place to be, but there's not a leader in this church who doesn't wrestle at times with those same fears.
- We understand. You're welcome here. Invited even, because we value honesty. So stick around.

▼ **Second thing to know about Citizens, there's no rush.**

- Because we understand how you feel,
- We understand that you can't just snap out of it.
- It's not a matter of brainstorming until we find the right fix.
- It's not a matter of memorizing a Bible verse or singing a song or a praying a lot.
- We're not going to try and fix you.
- ▶ We will surely offer help as the Spirit leads us to, but we won't pretend that any of our advice is a silver bullet and so we won't be mad at you if you just can't right now.
- There's no rush.

▼ **Last thing about Citizens, though, is that we will tell you the truth.**

- ▼ Insofar as we're able, sensitive to the Holy Spirit, we will tell you the truth: mainly about ourselves and about Jesus, but in time, with humility and love, we will also tell the truth about you.

- Generically, for sure. the Bible says a lot about you without all the particulars.
- But we also might speak rather pointedly.
- You should at least hope so.
- ▼ Because there's no flourishing apart from truth-telling.
  - We cannot flourish in relationship if we do not tell each other the truth.
  - We cannot flourish as individuals if we do not tell ourselves the truth.

### ▼ Cynicism feels like truth-telling, doesn't it?

- Especially in this day and age.
- Unbelief and hopelessness and skepticism and pessimism are given a premium in our generation as more serious, more weighty, more mature, more honest, more truthful.

### ▼ But cynicism is none of those things.

- Cynicism is not truth-telling.
- Because it decides what the truth is before it even hears it.

### ▼ The pessimist is no more realistic than the optimist.

- It's just another form of self-protection.
- One person decides to protect themselves from the truth with rose-colored glasses. The other decides to protect themselves with extra-dark glasses.
- Neither person is truly seeing the world, though.

### ▼ Cynicism is like walking around with a cast when your leg's no longer broken.

- Maybe it was broken, but it's healed now.
- I understand that you're scared you might break your leg again and I understand that walking without the cast feels funny. Your muscles don't work that well and it's maybe still painful. It's not like what it used to be.

- But just so we're clear the only way to move forward is to remove the cast and walk in faith.
- I'll wait for you, but I won't stop calling you to believe the truth.

▼ **We want to be truth-tellers at Citizens.**

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

(1 John 1:5–7 ESV)

- Christians tell the truth.

▼ I promise to not be inordinately optimistic.

- If you know me, you know I'm no hype man.
- I will not say, “Peace, Peace,” when there is no Peace. That's one way the Bible describes wicked shepherds.
- Neither am I going to sell you any snake-oil, pretending that if you just join our church and do these things, everything's going to be great.

▼ But just as strongly, I am committed to not be overly pessimistic.

- I will tell you the truth.
- And do you know what's amazing about the truth?
- It's good.

▼ The truth is good.

- And not just good.
- But Amazing. Awesome. Breathtaking. Breath-giving.
- And it might be hard sometimes for you to hear that the truth is good, but it's the truth.

▼ The truth, in the end, is good.

- I'm not talking about optimism.
- I'm not taking about hype.
- I'm talking about cold, hard facts.

- Unflinchingly honest reality.
- **When you see the world with crystal, clear vision, you see what Paul sees in Ephesians 1:**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

(Ephesians 1:3–14 ESV)

▼ **Nothing in your life can ever make Ephesians untrue.**

- **No decision.**
- **No detail.**
- **No relationship.**
- **No failure**
- **No doubt can make Ephesians 1 untrue for those who believe in Christ.**

- **I quoted Romans 3:4 to a friend this week,**

“Let God be true though every one were a liar”  
(Romans 3:4 ESV)

- ▼ **It’s not like Paul view us with rose-colored glasses. Paul is not ignorant of the seedy details of our lives.**

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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—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.” (Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV)

- **God doesn’t sugarcoat the depressing situation of fallen man.**
- **Outside of Christ, we are dead men walking.**
- ▼ **But the Ephesians’ hopelessness, my hopelessness and yours, only serves to highlight the ultimately good, good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.**

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7 ESV)

- ▼ **Again, nothing in your life can ever make this untrue.**
  - No decision.
  - No detail.
  - No relationship.
  - No doubt.
  - No failure can make the gospel untrue for those who believe in Christ.

- Christ is alive. Christ is in the heavenly places. Christ is seated at God's right hand. God is making his enemies, our enemies, Christ's footstool — ready to be crushed under the heel of Christ at the end of time.
- This is the gospel and it is always true.
- And we must always tell it, to the world, to each other, and to ourselves.
- The question for today is how will what is cosmically true in the gospel become personally true for you and me.
- Christ has accomplished salvation. How will it be applied to me? How can I access it?
- Paul gives a succinct answer to the question in Ephesians 2, in one of the most important phrases in all of Scripture.

## ▼ Text

### ▶ Ephesians 2:8-10

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 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.”

(Ephesians 2:8–10 ESV)

- Prayer

## ▼ “By Grace Through Faith”

- ▼ “By Grace Through Faith” is a powerful phrase that is essential to understanding the gospel.

- How can we be saved by God from sin and death?
  - “By grace, through faith [in Christ], not of works”
- ▼ Four prepositional phrases that everyone should memorize as a rule of life. “By grace, through faith, in Christ, not of works.”
- It is the mechanics of salvation. The science of flourishing
  - Not just for the beginning of our salvation when we first trust Christ, but from now into eternity, we are saved and have eternal life by grace through faith in Christ, not of works.

▼ Colossians 2 says,

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 2:6–7 ESV)

- How did you receive Christ? “By grace through faith in Christ, not of works”
  - How then should you walk? “By grace through faith in Christ, not of works”
- ▼ Christians have historically added the phrase “in Christ” to this mantra in order to capture the wider context of Ephesians and emphasize that the object and content of our faith matters more than the act of faith itself.

- Apologies to George Michael, but generic faith does not save.
- Even the simplest of faith believes in something.

“Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

(Hebrews 11:6 ESV)

- ▼ **Faith without content is meaningless, like taking a capsule with no medicine inside.**
  - We have these vegetable capsules at home that my wife uses.
  - They are pointless by themselves, but she adds some essential oils voodoo to them to help fight her seasonal allergies.
  - Now, there's a chance that, if she didn't add the oils and only took the pill, she would obtain some placebo effect.
  
- ▼ **And, indeed, placebos have been proven effective to a degree.**
  - Faith without an object and without content can tend to make you feel better.
  - More confident. More hopeful. More in control.
  
- ▼ **But one group the placebo effect have never worked for is dead people.**
  - You can shove vegetable pills down the throat of a corpse all day long and you won't ever make it alive again.
  - And that's what the gospel calls people left in their sin.
  - Our problems, our traumas our crisis, runs deeper than the need for positive thinking.
  - You can go through the motions of faith, experience all the energy and enthusiasm of "believing in something," but you will never move yourself from death-to-life.
  - Empty pills don't save.
  
- ▼ **And, incidentally, the faith-pill you are taking is never empty.**
  - It always has something inside of it — and that something is mostly likely yourself.
  - And, take it from someone who's tried and still tries, self-salvation is worse than worthless.
  
- ▼ **In the Bible, faith, in itself, is not saving. Faith is the means that joins us to Christ, who is our salvation.**
  - **Strictly speaking, we are not saved because we believe. We are saved because we are united to Christ through belief.**

- **It's the vessel, the capsule that takes Christ into us and takes us into Christ.**
- **Paul makes very clear that faith itself is not a work.**

“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 that no one may boast.”

(Ephesians 2:8–9 ESV)

- **The theologian Thomas Torrance explains,**

In faith we flee from our *own* acts—even our acts of repentance, confession, trust and response—and take refuge in the obedience and faithfulness of Christ... That is what it means to be justified by faith. (Thomas F. Torrance)

- **God forgives us of our sin and counts us righteous, not because he has found faith in us, but because he has found Christ in us.**

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

(Galatians 2:20 ESV)

## ▼ **The salvation that Paul describes earlier in Ephesians 2 hinges on our connection with Christ.**

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”

(Ephesians 2:4–6 ESV)

### ▼ **Paul felt this with-ness so important that he actually created three brand new compound words**

- Made-alive-with
- Raised-with
- Seated-with
- Those are all single, unique compound words in the Greek.

- ▼ The only kind of salvation is a with-Christ-salvation.
  - I cannot be resurrected apart from Christ.
  - I cannot be raised apart from Christ.
  - I cannot be seated in the heavenly places apart from Christ.
  - There is no salvation apart from being joined to Christ, and the way we are joined to Christ is by grace through faith, not of works.
- ▼ Why is it, how is it, that “by grace through faith” is the means of salvation?
  - Is it an accident or a quirk or an incidental detail that we are saved “by grace through faith in Christ not of works?”
  - How come God did not choose to save us by works?
  - Even if it were just the simple work of believing?
  - Why is believing itself not a work we can be proud of?

## ▼ Three Reasons

- There are three reasons that salvation must be “by grace through faith in Christ not of works.”
- Knowing these reasons helps us to hold both more tightly and more joyfully to grace and faith in Christ.
- ▼ First, salvation is by grace through faith because we are sinners.
  - ▼ If salvation came by any other way, by anything close to a merit on our behalf, it would be impossible.
    - Like telling a poor man that he could be rich if only he had money.
    - Like telling a barren woman that she could have her own child if only she were pregnant.
  - It's a cruel offer. If those are the terms of salvation, we would be better off if it were never made.

▼ **And yet the world makes these offers all the time.**

- We love stories of folks pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps.
- We tell children from the projects, you can do anything you want. Just get an education and try not to die before you're 18, and then once you're an adult try and contort yourself through racist and classist systems, and you can do anything you want.
- Is that not salvation by works? And is it not cruel?
- We tell lonely people to get out there and make some friends.
- We tell depressed people to cheer up.
- We tell anxious people to shake it off.
- And we wonder why people are still stuck.
- **For salvation to reach sinners, especially the salvation offered by Jesus — life everlasting and abundant — God cannot require anything of us.**

▼ **For if he did, we could not obtain it. That's why the Psalmist pleads with God,**

“Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.”

(Psalms 143:2 ESV)

- Surely the Psalmist was a highly religious, highly devoted follower of God (way more so than any of us).
- But even this is not enough to bridge the chasm between God's righteousness and our sin.

“By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight”  
(Romans 3:20 ESV)

“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, but “The righteous shall live by faith.”” (Galatians 3:10–11 ESV)

- And Ephesians says that even that faith is a gift.

- Because dead people can't even begin to believe without the animating, enlightening work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Salvation has to be by grace through faith because we are sinners.**

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:3–7 ESV)

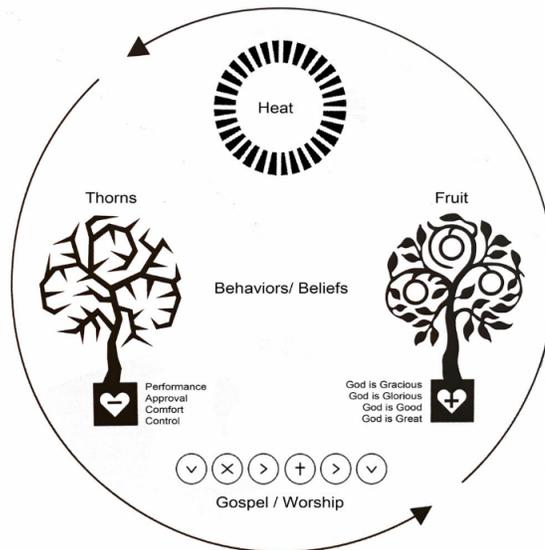
- **This reason for grace and faith is obvious to most Christians.**
  - **First, salvation must be by grace through faith in Christ not of works because we're sinners.**
- ▼ **Second, Salvation must be by grace through faith because we are human.**
- **Even apart from sin, being right with God would require grace through faith.**
  - **Humans are religious creatures.**
  - **As creatures, our very existence is gifted to us. It's a grace.**
- ▼ **And as religious creatures (created in the image of God), our existence is always based in faith.**
- We aren't animals who are led through life by instinct.
  - We aren't robots who make all our decisions rationally.
  - We aren't social constructs who's future is determined purely by our environment.
  - We are humans who are moved by what we love and what we worship.
  - Faith drives what we do.

- ▼ **There is no human who does not operate from some kind of faith – whether true or false, a faith, a deep trust which is more than just a worldview, but is a posture of conviction, love and worship.**
  - Some people worship the Triune God.
  - Some people worship other gods.
  - Some people worship family, country, security, comfort, the opinions of others.
  - Some people worship themselves.
  - No one worships no one. No one believes in nothing.
- ▼ **Whatever and whomever we believe in, trust in, and worship – that drives our behavior.**
  - Our faith drives our behavior.
- ▼ **Our faith is the way we answer the big questions in life**
  - Why am I here? Why is anything here?
  - What’s wrong with me? What’s wrong with the world?
  - How can I be made right?
  - What is the purpose and goal of life?
  - What does flourishing look like?
- ▼ **False beliefs drive false behavior. True beliefs drive true behavior.**

“For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”  
(Romans 14:23 ESV)

- Meaning that even the right action stemming from the wrong faith is sin.
- ▶ So that any real and lasting salvation from death must reach us at the deepest level, in what we believe. It has to come through faith.
- If God desires to save us and change us, then he has to save us by grace through faith in Christ.
- He has to open our eyes and open our ears. He has to give us new hearts. He has to put his Spirit within us.

- Behavior doesn't come first. It comes last, as the fruit of a changed heart.
- ▼ This truth, that true salvation comes through faith, is fundamental to living out the Christian life.
  - It's not that works and behavior aren't important. They are.
  - But their importance is as indicators of faith.
- ▼ At Citizens, CJ and I encourage DNA groups to become fluent in going from "Fruit to Root"

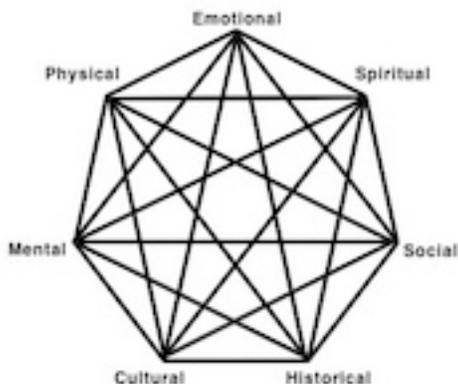


- You can the handout on each chair.
- This diagram and this practice is an outworking of our salvation by grace through faith.
- ▼ Because real, lasting change doesn't happen at the level of our circumstances (the heat). That's God's domain — the work of his sovereignty.
  - Neither does real, lasting change happen at the behavior level of our lives — the fruits and thorns.
  - Real, lasting change happens down in the root system — in our hearts.
- ▼ Paul Tripp says only changing our behavior is like stapling apple branches on an orange tree and calling it an apple tree.

- We can do that, but no wonder that type of change never seems to last very long.
- For true change, we need change by grace through faith.
- Because the roots—our faith, our allegiance, our deepest trust—this is what makes us who we are.

▼ I do want to acknowledge that we are complex creatures.

- While faith is fundamental to who are as religious creatures, we are more than what we believe.
- The gospel is believed in context, and people are very complex contexts. (The next slide gives us an illustration of our complexity.)



- Real people are physical-emotional-mental-social-cultural-historical-spiritual people, with all points influencing the others.
- Our faith increases and decreases in this context.
- So if we are going to grow in Christ, and if I as a friend and pastor am going to encourage your growth in Christ, we must take into consideration all these facets of your personhood.
- But none of these facets of your personhood will save you.
- None of these unite you to Christ.
- Only faith in Christ saves, because at our deepest level, we are people of faith.

- **Salvation and Growth** come not simply when we repent of behaviors, but when we repent of false faiths, false stories, false worship, false allegiances, exchanging them with the gospel of Christ.
- **We are saved** when we give up our own ways and trust exclusively in Jesus Christ.
- **First, Salvation** is by grace through faith because we're sinners.
- **Second, Salvation** is by grace through faith because we're human.
- ▼ **Last, salvation** is by grace through faith because God is God and he wants everyone to know it.

- ▼ **Remember God's whole project from Ephesians 1 — the Father's predestining work to adopt for himself children was all done why?**

“to the praise of his glorious grace.” (Ephesians 1:6 ESV)

- **In Christ, we have redemption the forgiveness of sins, why?**

“That we who hope in him might be to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:12 ESV)

- **Then he sealed us with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, why?**

“to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:14 ESV)

- **Only faith guards God's grace and God's glory.**

Faith is the God-appointed means of [salvation] because, better than any other act, it fits with the grace of God and magnifies the grace of God. (John Piper)

- **Why? Because faith, by its very nature, points away from myself and my works toward God and his works.**

- **This is what Paul says in Ephesians 2. What is salvation?**

“it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

(Ephesians 2:8–9 ESV)

- **Salvation is by grace through faith why? So that we would not boast in ourselves, but boast in God.**

“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong... so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.””

(1 Corinthians 1:27–31 ESV)

- ▼ **Which is why when we focus on the act of faith itself, when we stress over whether we are believing enough or not, we turn the gospel on its head.**

- We are magnifying ourselves and not God in Christ.
- God is not asking from you a faith big and strong and pure enough to replace or rival the glory of his Son.
- Neither is God asking you to depend on him now in hopes that one day you won't need to depend on him but can stand on your own.
- **Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not of works so that no one can boast. Ever.**
- **Even the good works that spring from our faith: they don't spring from how good we are at believing, they spring from Christ in us.**

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10 ESV)

- **Piper again,**

Faith is the act of our soul that turns away from our own insufficiency to the free and all-sufficient resources of God. Faith focuses on the freedom of God to dispense grace to the unworthy. It banks on the

bounty of God... Whatever goodness faith sees, it sees as the fruit of grace. (John Piper, *Future Grace*)

- **When Paul looks at his life, he sees grace.**

“In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me”  
(Romans 15:17–18 ESV)

- **When Hebrews encourages the church toward holiness, the author is really asking God to work.**

“[It is God who] equips 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.”  
(Hebrews 13:21 ESV)

## ▼ Conclusion

- ▼ This is the truth, and nothing you can do or think or feel or experience will undo this truth. Which is why it's such good news.
  - **God the Father, desiring to adopt a people for himself, sent His Only Son to become one of us, the man Jesus Christ, that he might purchase our forgiveness with his own death.**
  - **By the power of God, he defeated death and lives eternally, sitting at God's right hand awaiting the day when he will finally defeat Satan, sin, and death and make the world new.**
  - **We are saved not by any work of our own, but when we are united to Christ — so that everything that is his becomes mine, and everything that is mine becomes his.**
  - **This union happens by grace through faith in Christ, not of works lest anyone should boast.**
- ▼ If you struggle to believe, that's okay.
  - **Join the club. So do I.**

▼ There's no rush, so take your time.

- Jesus is gentle and patient.
- A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
- He expects and we expect to grow little-by-little.
- Paul describes it as “from one degree of glory to another.”

▼ But this is the truth. Amen.

- Only this truth can quiet your fears and hurts.
- Only this truth has the power to cast out all your demons.
- And only this truth can save you, can change you, can give you peace and joy and love and satisfaction.
- Only this truth honors and respects who and what you are, as a human being created in the image of God.
- Only this truth honors and respects who and what God is — as great, good, glorious, and gracious.

• Prayer