

Not only does He have a plan, He crafted you perfectly to fulfil that plan.

*Ephesians 2:10 NLT - 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

You are a masterpiece, fashioned by God's had for His purposes. The term good works refers to something that is beneficial (agathos) and primarily refers to our employment or business (ergon). This isn't referring to doing a good deed for someone, it is more about living out your life in a "vocation" that fits you, helps others and glorifies God.

Did you ever consider that God's calling might be something other than a position in ministry? It might be as a chef or gardener, a doctor or a receptionist. Maybe even a stay-at-home parent. It is the place that brings you peace and honors God.

*Have you ever had a vocation that felt like the job had been created just for you – like how can they pay me to do what I love so much? If not, what would you describe as the perfect vocation for you?*

## WRAP-UP

There are some things in scripture that simply aren't up for debate- you were dead in your sins, God is gracious, merciful, and loving. God's salvation is a gift we don't deserve and cannot earn. He has crafted us as His masterpiece, and we can serve others and honor God by doing the work He calls us to do.

## MEMORY VERSE.

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

- *Ephesians 2:10 NLT*

**PRAYER (20 MIN)** Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

*Challenge.- Do you know what God's calling is for you? God for opportunities to do the work He created you for, either in your 9-5 vocation or as a volunteer. We have a variety of opportunities at New Life- ministry with kids, doing repairs or projects at church, serving coffee, writing encouraging notes, making blankets, stocking the pantry... there may be a perfect fit for you.*

<https://nlcn.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/102/responses/new>

## ***“But God...”*** **Prison Letters- #2**

### INTRODUCTION

In the second chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul gives us some rock solid, undisputable facts. He says, “This is the way things are, period! No if, ands or buts.” So, as we read and study this passage of Paul's prison letters, we find some foundational truths about sin, ourselves, and our God.

### Ice Breaker

*Did you parents have a favorite comeback when you tried to argue with them, like “That's not up for debate.” Or “Did you hear what I just said?” or something else that ended the argument before it began?*

### Key Passage

*Ephesians 2:8-9 NLT - 8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### 1. You were Dead- period.

*Ephesians 2:1 NLT - 1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.*

*Romans 6:23 NLT - 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We really don't like to own up to being sinners. In fact, we make all kinds of excuses and look for more palatable terms like, mistakes, slip-

ups, issues, problems. It feels like we can admit to lots of problems or mistakes, but nobody wants to admit to sinning. However, Paul puts a big “period” at the end of his statement- “you were dead because you sinned”. He didn’t say, “you needed to do a little bit better to be good enough”, he said you sinned, and you were dead.

*If you don’t believe it is difficult to admit we are sinners try this exercise. Turn to the person next to you and say out loud “I have sinned.” Ouch.*

*Ephesians 2:2-3 NLT - 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil--the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.*

Paul continues to clarify the issue. We have a choice of who to obey or disobey.

*When we sin, who are we obeying? Maybe you thought you were the captain of your fate, but in reality, the devil is the commander of the powers enticing you to disobey God. What should we expect as a result of choosing to live this way (v. 3)?*

## **2. God is Gracious, Compassionate, Merciful and Loving.**

*Ephesians 2:4-5 NLT - 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)*

Although we may have overestimated our own goodness, we likely underestimated the goodness of God. It is not true that “all we need is a little enhancement from God to improve our generally good life.”

Here are the facts about us-

- we have sinned,
- we deserve death,
- we should expect God’s wrath and judgment

Here are the facts about God-

- He sees us, dead in our sins
- He offers us life
- He extends mercy (not giving us the death we deserve) and grace (His unearned favor)
- He loves us

*What is it that motivates God to extend mercy and grace to us? Is it because we have been good or is it something about the nature of God himself?*

But God is also righteous and just, so He can’t just ignore the cost of our sins. That is why Jesus took on our sin and paid with His life. He satisfied the penalty due for our disobedience.

*Ephesians 2:6-9 NLT - 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. 8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

*How does Paul explain how and why Jesus’ resurrection also frees us from the power of sin and death? When did God save us? Should we take credit for the faith we have in Christ?*

Now reflect on what basis we deserve salvation, and how much we owe to God. We didn’t earn our salvation, and we can’t earn God’s love. Both have been graciously offered to us though we don’t deserve them. It is the incredible depth of God’s grace, mercy, and compassion that should motivate us to give our lives to Him daily. He doesn’t love us because we do good, we do good because He loves us.

## **3. You Are God’s Masterpiece.**

You’ve probably heard someone say “God has a plan for your life.”