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Ephesians 2:4-7: THE ROCK OF AGES

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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Let's turn to Ephesians 2 and look at our great salvation. I want to entitle this study, **The Rock of Ages.**"

Have you ever wondered why God has done everything He's done for us? Why, from eternity, has chosen us to be holy before Him? Why did He do that? Why has He made us accepted in the Beloved? Why when we were dead in our trespasses and in our sins did He raise us and seat us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus? Why did He do that?

Well, if you will look at Ephesians 2:7, we have a little purpose phrase there, "in order that." That tells you why He did it. Let's read the whole statement there. We know that verses 1, 2 and 3 describe our sinful condition at one time. Then Ephesians 2:4; 2:5; 2:6 read,

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus."

Do you realize that as believers, we are the living portraits of God's grace and His kindness? You see, heaven applauds and glorifies the Lord for what He has done for us, not just now, but forever more. They stand in awe. We are living portraits, examples of His grace and His kindness. That's what salvation has done for you and for me. That verse grabbed me because of a phrase in there: "in the ages to come." I got to thinking about that. "The ages to come" signifies that there are more ages to come. There is not just an age to come which is spoken of many times in scripture, but there are ages to come. I wonder if you know what it means when Paul says "ages to come."

What is an age in scripture? What is it referring to? We all know what age is. Recently Stephen, my youngest, turned 20 years old. I no longer have a teenager in my house. We can't stop it folks. It creeps up on all of us.

What does it mean when he speaks of **'ages to come'**?" The word for age is **aion**. It's the word that refers to an age or a particular time. As a matter of fact, a form of it is used in the word "eternal." When you see "eternal life," that comes from this word **aion**. It's talking about the ages to come. It's talking about something being ageless and eternal. What does it mean when you refer to an age? Let's look at this term, "the ages to come," in reference to the fact that He, our Lord, is the Rock of all Ages.

First of all, let me just tell you this about an age: a specific age may consist of many ages. In other words, we are living in an age right now that began at creation. It hasn't ended because human life is still on this earth. God has not yet judged it by fire. There are other things coming. In this age that we are living in, there are many ages with beginnings and ends to them.

Look with me in 1 Corinthians 10:11. You realize in this verse that we are living in the last days, the last of this age.

Hebrews 1:2 says

"in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the world."

We know the last days began when Jesus came to this earth. The last days of what? Of this age. This age has had many ages within it. 1 Corinthians 10:11 says

"Now these things happened to them as an example [referring to Israel in the Old Testament], and they were written for our

instruction, upon whom the ends [plural] of the ages [plural] have come."

In other words, it's not just the end of the age. When it comes to an end, it will be the ends of ages coming to a completion.

Let me explain it to you in a little bit different way. I was born July 27, 1943. An age began for me that I am still living in because I am alive. If I die today or if the Lord Jesus comes and changes me and takes me up to be with Him, that age is over. The age that I am living in now that started then has not come to an end. There have been ages with beginnings and ends in this age. For instance, six years later, in 1949, I started a new age called elementary school. On the first day of elementary school in Grandon Court Elementary School in Roanoke, Virginia, I went home with a friend of mine who lived five or six miles away. It took my parents until almost midnight to find me. That was the beginning of an age.

Exactly six years later, in 1955, another age began for me. One age closed. Another began. Elementary school stopped. Junior high school began. Well, that age ended three years later in 1958, and I started my tenth grade year in high school. That age ended in May of 1961. That's when I graduated from Jefferson Senior High School in Roanoke, Virginia.

Now I could go on and on and on. I am still living in an age. In this age, there have been ages. There have been beginnings and ends to the ages within this specific age. So you must remember that any one specific age may have many ages within it.

THE AGE OF GRACE

We are living now in an age that I call the church age, the age of grace. This is a time the Old Testament saints knew nothing about. I believe that it is the Laodicean age that the book of Revelation talks about. One of the churches it was written to was Laodicea. I believe there are churches to describe the church age, and we are living in the Laodicean age. If that's correct, then it is distinctly different from other ages. However, within one age since creation there have been many ages.

So therefore, the first thing we learn is, when you start comparing ages, be careful. Make sure you know exactly what you're speaking about. We are living in one age, but in this one age there have been many ages.

There is a second thing I want you to see about that word "age." I think it will help us. Each age has its own particular characteristics. Now again, be real careful when you start comparing ages. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit of God was with the people. In the New Covenant, which is another age within an age, we have the Holy Spirit living in us as believers. In the Old Covenant, the Law was the standard. In the New Covenant, it's been written on our hearts. We obey a person, not a set of rules. The Law is being fulfilled as we obey the Word and live surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me give you some examples of how each age has particular characteristics. For example, from the time of creation we have been living in a specific age. However, this specific age is characterized by something. It is characterized by marriage. Since the time that God initiated it until today, men and women get married. We have families. We have children in this age.

Turn to Luke 20:34. Let's just simply take the word "ages" and run it through the New Testament.

"And Jesus said to them, **The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage.**"

Marriage is God's design. It is a characteristic of the age that we live in. We are in an age where men and women marry. We are going into another age that is going to be different. Look at Luke 20:35:

"but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage."

Ages have different characteristics. We'll not have the need that we have now as we move to another age. Ages are always characterized specifically.

For example, the age that we are living in, from creation until now, especially since the Fall, has been characterized by a secular wisdom in this world. It is secular humanism, and it's in this world. It pervades this world. It's a characteristic of the age in which we live.

Look at Luke 16:8. This is that wonderful passage about Lazarus and the rich man. In verse 8 it says,

"And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light."

The word "shrewdly" there is a Greek word that has to do with the way one thinks and governs himself. In other words, it refers to the way he acts as a result of the way he thinks or the wisdom that he has.

The same idea is in 1 Corinthians 1:20. It is talking about the age that we live in. Paul says something there that gives us the same

idea we saw in Luke. He says in verse 20,

"Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

Even though it is characterized by a secular wisdom, it is a foolish wisdom in God's eyes. You see this age we live in as believers is characterized by a secular wisdom. However, we can live uncharacteristically wise in this age that is characterized by this stuff.

Look in 1 Corinthians 2:6-8. This will help us. Paul says it again. He says

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

There is a secular wisdom. There is a secular humanistic wisdom that characterizes this age that we are living in. It started way back in creation when man fell and continues all the way until now.

In fact, the only way for a Christian to become uncharacteristically wise is found in 1 Corinthians 3:18. He says,

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise."

Do you realize what he is saying? Paul is saying that you need to come to the point of saying, "I don't know anything. God re-teach me in your Word. I want to be uncharacteristically wise in this age."

Verse 19 says,

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness'."

The wisdom of this world is manipulatory and always self-beneficial. God gives us an uncharacterized wisdom, not according to this age, but according to the wisdom that He has.

So this age is characterized by people marrying, husbands and wives. Men and women marry in this age. Children are born. That is the propagation of the race. That's this age. The next age is going to be different. Each age has its own specific characteristic. This age is also characterized by secular wisdom, a way of thinking that does not involve God. Therefore, we have to become uncharacteristically wise.

This age is also characterized by ungodliness. If you'll turn to Titus 2:11-12 Paul brings it out so very clearly here how we are to live. The way we are to live is the reverse of the way the world lives. This age is characterized by ungodliness. That's why we are not to be of it. We're in it, but not of it.

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."

In other words, others are not living that way. We are believers. We are to live differently, radically apart from what characterizes this age.

For the believer there are differences in the ages. First of all there are differences in the blessings of God.

Turn to Mark 10:29-30. The way God blesses us in this age and the way He'll bless us in the next one are different because the needs of both are different. Each age has its own specific characteristics. Jesus gives a wonderful, wonderful promise here. So many people are afraid to go on and surrender to Jesus and live godly in this world. They are afraid they are going to miss out on something. Look what he says,

"Jesus said, **Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions.**"

I love how he throws that in. Jesus says, "While we are at it, along with those you also get persecutions." He is not saying, "You get right with God, and He'll give you three new cars." That's not what He is saying. What He is saying is, "Anything you need in this life God will supply you one hundred fold to get the job done. Along with it will go persecutions, because as you seek to obey Him, and He provides for you, you will be persecuted by the world."

Jesus is talking about farms and lands and anything you need. When you obey the Lord Jesus Christ, He will provide for you the needs of this age. There are certain needs that this age demands. God says, "I'll provide." He says, "Your pursuit is Me. I'll care for you as you go. You'll have brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers for My sake and for the sake of the gospel."

Then he goes on and says something in the same passage. He says,

"...and in the age to come, eternal life."

We are not going to need houses and lands and farms. The word "eternal" there means "ageless," and the word "life" means "the essence of life." It's going to get better. That life fuels me daily to live the Christian life. It's going to get greater and stronger and stronger and stronger. When I move into the next age, I can eat from the Tree of Life, and I'll live in the provision of His life forever. I won't need farms and lands. There is a mansion already prepared for me. All those things are taken care of. In that age, the characteristics are different than in this age.

Ages have their own particular characteristics when it comes to the blessings of God and the revelation of God. God has chosen to reveal some things in one age that He hasn't chosen to reveal in other ages.

Look in **Ephesians 3:9; 3:10**. There is one thing Abraham didn't understand. He understood the blessing of Jesus coming, the gospel. He understood that, but he didn't understand the church. Moses didn't understand the church. Joshua didn't understand the church. Habakkuk didn't understand the church. God chose not to reveal it them, but He has revealed it in this age to us.

Ephesians 3:9; 3:10 says,

"and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

God has chosen to hide some things in one age that He reveals in the next age. **Colossians 1:26** says almost the same thing.

that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints.

What he revealed in one age is not what He reveals in the next age.

Titus 1:2 says,

in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.

In the blessings and the revelations of God, even to believers, each age has its own specific characteristics. In each specific age, there are many ages. In each age, there are specific characteristics to that age. In this age, people marry. There is secular wisdom that has infected us. Even the believer differs in this age as to what was revealed in the past age. I want you to see that. They are different.

Well finally, there is one last thing I want to share with you. Not only are there many ages in each age, and each age has its own specific characteristics, but in all those ages God has not changed. He is the Rock of All Ages!

I want you to see some things here. First of all, God was before any age. An age is a period of time. It has an ending, and it has a beginning. Look in I Corinthians 2:7 again:

"but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory."

This tells me that God was around long before there ever were any ages. Ages are periods of time that have a beginning and an end and specific characteristics. Before there was ever one of them, God existed. Not only that, He has ruled and will rule in every, every age.

We know that **Ephesians 1:21** says that Jesus has been raised up...

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

We know that whatever age you are talking about, whether you go all the way back to creation or if you go all the way over here in the new ages to come, we know that He rules over all the ages, and He has not changed. He may have acted differently in some than He did in others, but His character has never changed. He has ruled over every age.

Not only that, He has promised to be with us until the end of this age. Look in Matthew 28:20. This is a comforting thought to me in

these days when there is a lot of discussion about when this age is going to end. How far into it does it go until the next age promised in Daniel begins? I don't know. Does it end, and then a new age starts as it's hanging out there? I don't know. Jesus says in verse 20 something that blesses my heart. He says,

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age

In other words, if this age goes into that seventieth week, and that seven years, that's all right. That's the most comforting thought anybody can have. If Jesus is with me now, in me now, around me now, He'll be that way then. It doesn't really matter when that time comes. He is my life now. He will be my life then. He promises to be with me until the end of the age.

There is a thought in this that I want you to see. Look what he says in **Ephesians 2:7** again. He's speaking of the fact that God is the Rock of All Ages. He rules over it; He reveals Himself differently; He blesses in all ages; but He has certain characteristics to these ages. He has not changed. The way He deals with people may have. In verse 7 it says,

"in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Now, I don't know about you, but that just grabs me.

Now I know one age. I know that's going to be the time when we are in heaven while the Day of the Lord is going on down here. I know that's an age. It's different, different, different than anything we have ever experienced before. He's the Rock of All Ages. Not only that, there is going to be an age when He rules and reigns on this earth. I believe that with every fiber in my being. I don't see how you can believe the Word of God and not believe that. For one thousand years He will rule and reign on this earth. That's another age.

We also know from Revelation 21 there is going to be a new heaven one day and a new earth. There is going to be a Holy City, a New Jerusalem. That's going to be a new age. That's going to be brand new from anything we have ever experienced before. From what I understand from Scripture, it just keeps getting better and better and better. I believe for a million years after we enter into that new heaven and new earth, God is still going to be revealing Himself afresh in a way that we've never understood before. He's still going to be blessing in ways which we cannot understand right now. We will be praising Him on an elevation that we've never understood down here in this age, because of what He has revealed to us in that age. I think a million years past that we'll walk by praising Him, and God will look at us and wink and say, "You haven't seen anything yet. We've got more to come." Two million years from then, we will be doing the same thing. That will continue for eternity, from age to age to age.

It is overwhelming the characteristics of God that will be revealed to you and me. Folks, do you realize living down here on this measly earth for this little small amount of time, all the wonderful victories we are having in Jesus right now are nothing but the earnest of an inheritance that is yet to come? The full payment has not even begun. In the ages to come He is the Rock of All Ages. He is the one who rules. He is the one who blesses. He is the one who reveals. Every age has its own characteristics. Every age has a beginning. It has an end. In one age there may be many ages. He says, "in the ages to come."

I don't know what we've got in store one of these days. Somehow in verse 7, it seems like He is going to continue for the ages to come to reveal His grace and His kindness in you and me. The best for the believer is always yet to come. Just the term "ages" itself tells us that there are going to be ages that we don't even understand. God is going to reveal Himself in ways He hasn't revealed before. God is going to bless in ways He has never blessed before. They are going to go on and on and on.

Ephesians 2:7-10:

MADE IN HEAVEN BY THE GRACE OF GOD Pt 1

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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Turn with me to **Ephesians 2:7**. I will entitle this

"Made in Heaven by the Grace of God."

When I got on the plane on the way home recently, I was looking for an illustration for what I believe Paul is doing in chapters 1 and 2 of Ephesians. I found it in a very unusual way. A man got on the plane, and I noticed him right off. He wasn't as tall as I am, but he was three times as big. He had huge shoulders and a huge barrel chest. He was wearing a blue suede sports jacket. Well, he was taking his jacket off. He pulled it open, and that label stuck out. It was in big red, white and blue letters. The label said, "Made in the U.S.A."

Now that made a statement to me about the coat. That made a statement about the manufacturer of the coat, and that made a statement about the man wearing that coat. He was an American, and he was proud of it. "Made in the U.S.A." I got to thinking,

"Isn't that exactly what Paul is saying?" Isn't he trying to tell the Ephesian believers that they are made in heaven by the grace of God? They ought to be wearing a label wherever they go. They are not man made, they are God made. A label should be on every one of us. We are made in heaven by the grace of God. Both Jew and Gentile who have received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are made anew in heaven by the grace of God. He is telling them that they are products of God.

One of the greatest pictures of the love of God, the grace of God, and the mercy of God is in verses 4-6. Remember verses 1, 2 and 3? Man is dead in his trespasses and his sins. There is no hope for man. He cannot even come up with a way in which he might be saved. You come through those awful first three verses of Chapter 2, then in verse 4 he says,

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,..."

Oh, folks, if you are doubting the character of God and the fact that He loves you, listen. He does not have to do another thing to prove that He loves you and me. Some people say, "You don't know my experience. You don't know what I am going through. God couldn't love me." Oh, friend, God has already proven to you and to me that He loves us.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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."

I don't have to do one thing to get God to love me and neither do you. God already has proven that He loves me and you.

A great theologian went to a school of higher learning. He spoke one morning. He opened it up at the last of his message for a few questions. One student stood up and said, "Sir, you are a theologian. You are a scholar. What is the greatest truth in scripture that you have ever come across?" He looked down very humbly and said, "Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak, but He is strong."

Folks, God has so proven His love to us and in that love is His grace and His mercy. We are made in heaven by the grace of God. Salvation is God's idea. God has done that for you and me. Paul is wanting these Gentiles to know. You can't read it without seeing that they have nothing to do with their salvation. They were without hope. He even tells them they were of the uncircumcision. They were without the covenants of promise. But God, being rich in mercy, reached down to them just like He did to Paul on the Damascus Road. That salvation is God's plan. Salvation is God's idea.

Well, verse 7 sort of culminates the thought from verses 4-6 in the fact that God wants to demonstrate in you and me His love and His grace and His mercy through all the ages. After talking about what He did for us when we were dead in our transgressions, it says in verse 7,

"in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Have you ever thought about the fact that you are living proof that God loves His creation? The very fact that you are a believer, the very fact that you wear the label "Made in Heaven by the Grace of God" is living proof to this world that God loves His creation. That word there when he says "He might show" is the word that means to prove something or to demonstrate something. It is used twice in the New Testament, **2 Corinthians 8:24** to prove something and **Hebrews 6:11** to demonstrate something. So we see Paul is saying,

"You are the living proof. You are the living demonstration of God's grace in kindness towards us."

He wants to demonstrate this from age to age. Every believer ought to have a label on him. It ought to be "Made in Heaven by the Grace of God." That label ought to be on what He is and that label ought to be on what He does. We are not a cold, calculating organization that functions like the world functions. We've been made by the grace of God. You know I think more so in our generation than any other time, we see on one hand believers who are just humbly grateful that they have been made in heaven by the grace of God. They get up daily saying, "God, I want Your label on me as who I am. I want Your label on me in what I do." On the other hand, you've got people who don't give God the time of day. They have joined the church. They think that they can do something for God, and they are cold, calculating, manipulating, programming. People who think they can help God out. People who come up with a better idea. On the one side, people overwhelmed by the grace of God. On the other side, people proud and arrogant, being religious and holding to a form of godliness, having denied the power thereof. Quite a distinction.

Paul says to those Ephesians, "Friend, when we get to heaven, there are not going to be any Baptists, Methodists, or Presbyterians. There are going to be people covered by the blood of Jesus standing there overwhelmed by the grace of their salvation. There, for sure, we will realize that we have been made in heaven by the grace of God." The label that is on us should be just simply, "Jesus." That's it. Wherever we go, whatever we do, when people look at us they ought to see Him. When they hear us, they ought to hear Him. When they watch us, they ought to see Him. You see, in everything that we do, that label ought to be upon us.

Well, let's look at the fact that we are made in heaven by the grace of God.

In **Ephesians 2:8; 2:9; 2:10** we are the living demonstration of God's grace. First of all, look at this thought in verses 8 and 9, by the grace of God. We are what we are by the grace of God. Verse 8 says,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

In other words, I am a product of God and His grace. It is a gift of God. Paul is telling the Gentile believers that they are what they are because of the grace of God. If somebody gets up to testify of their salvation experience, they have not one right under heaven to say they had anything to do with it. Grace is what only God can do to a man, for a man, in a man and through a man that a man could never do and on this earth will never deserve. It will never be deserved in any way. It is what God has done for you and me. A believer cannot take any credit whatsoever for his salvation.

Paul says in **Ephesians 2:8**,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves.

It kind of tickles me sometimes to say that there are two "not's" in Greek, but there are. The first one is *isme*, which is a relative "not", and means sometimes, sometimes yes, sometimes no. It always is subjective to whatever you are talking about. However there is another not in Scripture. It is the word *ou* and it means absolutely not in any way, shape or form. Paul says, "We are saved by grace, not in any way, shape or form, of yourselves. It is the gift of God."

Now I can hear somebody saying, "You said not of anything of man and yet you say, we must believe. How do you reconcile that?" Well first of all, let's see if we can explain it. The word "faith" there is the word *pistis*. It means to put your trust in and to obey. That's exactly what the Ephesians had done. Look back at **Ephesians 1:13**. It is the same form of the word. In Ephesians 1:13 Paul writes,

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise."

There has got to be belief. When the gospel is presented, revealed to the human heart, there has got to be a response of faith, of receiving of trusting in, of being willing to obey what the gospel has said. There is one thing we tend to overlook, lest anybody think you did anything to get saved: it is all God's idea.

Turn to **Philippians 1:29**. I want to show you something. Not only is our salvation by the grace of God, even the way we receive it is by the grace of God.

"For to you, it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

Now if you jump to the suffering, you pick up the fact that Paul is in prison. He is talking about that, but he said something else there. You have also been granted, it is given as a gift, to believe in Him, which is in the present tense.

By the way, there is a difference here. When God enables a person to see the gospel revealed to him by the Holy Spirit and be convicted of his sin by the Holy Spirit, He also enables him with a different kind of belief than what man calls belief. Belief is not static. That's human belief. "Oh, I understand. I think I know what you are talking about. I'll do what you say." It stops right there. With God, when He quickens belief in a person's heart, when he is responding to gospel of their salvation, it is a belief that starts and never stops. Oh, it may wane for a while. It may even be little for a while. It might be like the centurion, "Lord, I believe, help me in my unbelief." But that spark is still there. That flame is still there. You see, what starts by God continues.

That is why the Apostle John over in I John doesn't say, "Did you get saved back here?" Every time he says, "Those who believe," in the present tense. Listen, it is no good to go back and say "I believed back then" if you are not believing right now. God quickens that measure of faith that He gave to all men on this earth. When that is enacted, when they respond out of the grace of God to the gospel of their salvation, it is something that starts and it never, ever, ever stops. It has been granted to you to believe in Him. So, yes, we must respond. Yes, it must be a response of faith. But my friend, God gave you the faith to respond, and it is God who, when you do respond in His power and by His grace, enables that belief to go on and on and on and on and on. There is one thing then we must remember: our salvation is by the grace of God.

Going back to **Ephesians 2:8; 2:9** say,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Now what does he mean, the result of works? Well, it is a deed. That word is used three times in the book of Ephesians. Let's just find out how Paul wants us to see it used. First of all, it is in **Ephesians 1:11**. It refers to that which someone does, a deed that a

person does:

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.

Who does something? You see, a **deed** is something you do.

It is used again in **Ephesians 2:10**.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

So it is not only what somebody does, it is what they are supposed to do. It is a deed, something you do.

In **Ephesians 3:20**, it even conveys the idea of the energy of that deed.

"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."

That's energy. That word is the energy behind a deed that one does. Now you say, "Why are you laboring the point?" Well, anything that a man does in his own energy is not and cannot be the basis for his salvation other than activating the faith that God has already given him to respond to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is from God alone. We are products of His grace, made in heaven by the grace of God.

Now, what work could anybody attach to being saved? Some people say you have to be baptized to be saved. Have you ever heard that? There are some people who say, "Hey, it is not even the baptism. You've got to believe, when you are being baptized, that the water cleanses your sin and washes away your sin, so that you can be regenerated. If you don't believe that when you were baptized, then you aren't saved when you are baptized." Some people say, "You have to be baptized by a minister of a particular church that holds to that creed. You can't just be baptized by anybody." Folks, how does that match up with what Paul says here? Not of works, in no way of yourself, not of any energized deed that you do can you be saved. In no way can you be saved.

You see, salvation is that which God does. We are what we are because of the grace of God. He is telling these Ephesians, "The Jews can't take any credit. You can't take any credit. We are all what we are by the grace of God."

Secondly, His label should be on what we do. We should do what we do by the grace of God. Now that is different. We are what we are. Yes sir, I'll wear that label. But on what I do, I put my own label because I'll do it and ask God to bless it. Is that what **Ephesians 2:10** says? Let's look at it. He says,

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Uh oh. "Beforehand" in the context of Ephesians means before the foundation of the world. You mean only God knows what those good works are? Well, that's the thought I've got. They are in Christ. That is the only way they can be accomplished, and we are to walk in them. Not only are we to have His label on who we are, but we are to have His label on what and how we do what we do.

Notice I said we should do what we do by His grace. We have a choice here. You say, "Wait a minute, you're confusing me. I'm to walk in these good works, I am not to come up with them; He has already predestined them before the foundation of the world. How in the world can I walk in something if I don't know what they are?" Well now, many of them we do know. They are right here in the Word. You need to remember we are only in Chapter 2 of Ephesians. We're laying the ground work for chapters 4-6. We haven't gotten to the instructional part. We are in the doctrinal part right now. Now the instructional part makes a lot of sense, if you understand the doctrinal part.

How are we going to walk in those works? It's not going to be because of our own self-effort or our own creativity. We were saved by the grace of God, therefore, what we do should be by the grace of God. That is only what God can do in a man, to a man, for a man and through a man. **Ephesians 5:18** says,

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

The tense here means "being at all times." That's the Spirit-filled life. How do I walk in those works when I don't know what they are apart from His intervention in my life? I simply am being filled at all times with the Spirit of God. What does that mean? Listen, it doesn't mean I get something new every day. It means I've already got what I need. I bow to that every day. I am submissive to Him, yielded to Him, and overwhelmed that this is His idea and not my idea. In other words when I understand this is God's work, when I am yielded to His Word and His will, then His Spirit within me begins to produce, with my cooperation, through me works that are good and have His label on them. It is not my label. His label is on them.

As a matter of fact, in Galatians 3:1ff Paul writes

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

"You got saved in the Spirit. You wore His label of salvation. Now are you going to be sanctified by the flesh?" You know, a lot of people are hung up in that. They don't mind wearing the label and saying, "Hey, I didn't have anything to do with my salvation." But they take on the responsibility that they have everything to do with their sanctification, as if they have got to work their way into perfection.

Philippians 1:6 says,

"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

It is all Christ and what He does in our life. We simply line up. We simply cooperate with Him. What comes out of that intimate relationship with Him in His Word is called the good works.

Do you want to see what the deeds of the flesh are, what we can do, what we will end up being, what the root attitudes are? In **Galatians 5:19; 20; 21** Paul tries to warn them. He tells them if they live this way, they can't even be saved. If they start acting these ways nobody will ever know they are even Christians. Verse 19 says,

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing.

He doesn't even finish the list. He says,

I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **Galatians 5:21**

In other words, you don't want this stuff to get in your life. You don't want the flesh to control your life. These things will start coming in your life, and people won't know if you are saved or if you are lost.

It says in **Galatians 5:22; 23**,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

In other words, I want you to see there is a difference in what comes out of a person when he is in tune with the One who lives in him. There is a difference when he does it himself and when God through him does a work. He has done a work to us. That is the label we wear, "Made in heaven by the grace of God."

Now He wants to do a work through us on earth by the grace of God. That's what He wants to do. Look at **2 Timothy 3:16; 17**. I think this explains it even better. The first part of chapter 3 is about loving self. A lover of self is one. The first characteristic is a lover of money. In Verse 10 he switches to people who love God. In that context we find verse 16.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every **good work**.

Now wait a minute. Which comes first, the work or the word? You see what happens is, we get saved by grace. I'll wear that label. Then we jump into the work. No. We must surrender to the Word so then we are equipped for every good work. His label should not only be on what we are, but it should be on what we do.

Well, I could have added another one. One day we will be what we will be by the grace of God. We are what we are by the grace of God. We should do what we do by the grace of God, and one day we will be what we will be by the grace of God. His grace continues to be demonstrated in us from ages to ages, to ages to come of His love and mercy towards His creation.

That's what Paul is saying. You are saved by the grace of God. You are made in heaven by the grace of God. Wear His label on who you are and wear His label on what you do. Don't you dare take an ounce of credit for any of it.

Ephesians 2:4-10; Isaiah 6:1-8:

MADE IN HEAVEN BY THE GRACE OF GOD Pt 2

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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I want you to turn to Ephesians 2:7-10 as we continue the thought that we began in the last study. We saw last time that we are made in heaven by the grace of God. We didn't pull ourselves up by our boot straps. We didn't discover that we were lost one day, and then we found something. Oh, no. We were found. He came to us. Our salvation is totally of God, even when we received by faith what He offered. The faith was given to us as a gift of grace. Verses 1-3 are the sad state of mankind before Jesus came and did what He did. That is the result of Adam's sin in Genesis 3. Let's just read together Ephesians 2:4-10:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

How do I walk in these good works prepared beforehand? Well, Ephesians 5 says I must be being filled with the Spirit of God. You see, God's mark, His label, on me should not just be in who I am or what I am as a believer, but in everything that I do. I am what I am by the grace of God. I ought to do what I do by the grace of God.

Let me show the result of that. If I do it by His grace, daily seeking Him, yielded to what His Word has to say, then the Holy Spirit of God begins to manifest in and through me the very character of the Lord Jesus Himself. The deeds that He raises up and initiates in my life He anoints and puts His hand all over them. The difference is, I put Him on display by what I do. If I don't go that route, if I choose to bear His label on who I am, but do what I want to do and ask Him to bless it, then I put myself on display.

May I ask you a question? When you look in the mirror in the morning, who is it that you are putting on display by your life? Are you displaying your own creativity? Are you displaying your own goodness and your own righteousness? Are you displaying your own productivity? Or are you displaying the One who wants to be displayed in your life? Paul says in **Galatians 2:20**,

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

It is not me living for Him, putting my efforts, putting my tireless energy on display. It is Christ living His life in and through me.

There are two ways to live this life. If grace is that which God can only do in a man, to a man, for a man and through a man, that a man on this earth could never come up with and a man on this earth could never deserve, and if I am what I am by the grace of God, I ought to do what I do by the grace of God, daily surrendering so that Jesus can be Jesus in me. Who are you displaying? Are you displaying yourself or are you displaying the Lord Jesus? I want you to turn to Isaiah 6. Somehow when I grew up, I thought Isaiah and all the prophets were somehow on a rank with God Himself. Did you do that when you were growing up? I thought, "Abraham. Why nobody is like Abraham." Then I read where Abraham lied and told them his wife was his sister. I thought, "How did that man lie? That man is perfect. He is like God." I thought Habakkuk, Jonah, and all the prophets were just equal with God. Oh no, folks, they had hearts of iron, but they had feet of clay. They made the same mistakes that you and I make. I am so grateful God not only puts in there what they did right, but He puts in what they did wrong so you and I can learn from them. They were just one of us.

Isaiah had a pride in his life, a pride that could only be seen and recognized when God chose to show up in his life. You know, that is my prayer, that God would just show up when we meet together. Do you know what happens when God shows up? People start confessing sin and calling it sin just like God calls it. They get down off their little pedestal that they have put themselves on and all of a sudden, they stop judging everybody else in the church. All of a sudden the finger is not pointed towards their brother. It is pointed towards them. When God shows up and we are in His presence, we haven't got time to worry about somebody else. Oh, folks, when God shows up, we see what He has been seeing all along, and we are willing to do something about it.

First of all, there is a prelude to **Isaiah 6** that I want you to see. In **Isaiah 6:1**, we have a key statement that we need to focus in on.

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne.

Now, who is this Uzziah? Most scholars believe that the prophet Isaiah and King Uzziah were dear friends. King Uzziah was a good king for most of his life, and somehow they had become very close. God had been trying to show Isaiah something about himself for a long time through his friend Uzziah, but Isaiah was too proud to listen to what God was trying to say. He was too proud to see what God wanted him to see. In the year of King Uzziah's death, he finally saw what God had been trying to say for a long period of time in his life. That is something God was doing before Chapter 6 ever happened.

Now to understand that, you've got to go back to 2 Chronicles 26. I want to show you the historical report about Uzziah. If you don't know this, you tend to read Isaiah 6 and miss the fine points that are in this beautiful picture in the Old Testament. I want you to see what kind of king Uzziah was. This is something God had been trying to get across to Isaiah through what he does with Uzziah, but Isaiah somehow missed it. In **2 Chronicles 26:3** we read that

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem. And he did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. And he continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him.

So you see all the way down through verse 15 that King Uzziah had been a good king. He had sought the Lord. God had prospered him. There was a point in his life when he was doing it the right way, but something happened in Uzziah's life. One of the saddest stories in the Old Testament was what happened to King Uzziah. If you will look in verse 16 it says,

"But when he became strong."

Oh, if we could just hear what this tells us. You see, he made a mistake. He thought he was doing it, and he left God out of it. Oh, no. It was God doing it as a result of his willingness to seek the Lord in his life.

"But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense."

Now you know that only the priests were allowed in that tent of meeting. There were two compartments. There was the Holy Place. There were three articles of furniture in that Holy Place. There was the show bread, which is the picture of Jesus being the Bread of Life. There was the golden candelabra or the candlestick, which is the picture of Jesus being the Light of the World. There was a golden altar of incense that sat right in front of the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The veil was six inches thick. Two oxen could not pull it apart. No man could go beyond that veil. No man except a priest could go into the Holy Place.

Actually, the High Priest was the only one who could go into that Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. He would take blood in a basin. They would tie a rope around his ankle. He would go in and that rope was there because if he had a heart attack in the Holy of Holies, no one could rush in and get him. They had to pull him out by the rope. It was a very sacred, pure, holy place. No king, no one except the Levitical priest, was allowed in that Holy Place.

The people were allowed into the court area, into the outer court where they had the laver and where they had the altar, but not in the Holy Place. King Uzziah felt like since God had given him strength and he had begun to think he had become strong, he felt like, "I can go in there. I can offer something on the golden altar of incense." Well, it didn't work that way.

Beginning now in **2 Chronicles 26:17-21** we read:

Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. And they opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful, and will have no honor from the Lord God.' But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the Lord had smitten him. And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD.

You must know that about Uzziah. It was in the year of King Uzziah's death that Isaiah finally saw the Lord. God had to show up in his life. God had been trying to get his attention. The prelude in his life was he was trying to say, "Isaiah, don't you see in your friend, Uzziah? Don't you realize I am opposed to people who are proud?"

Oh, folks, we have no trouble talking about being saved by grace. People jump up and down and shout and say, "Amen!" But when it comes to being labeled in what you do, there are a lot of folks who haven't got a clue as to what we are talking about. People are

working, working, working for Jesus. You see, folks, a lot of people think that it is in human effort. We have already seen we are created by His workmanship. We are His product, and the good works are not what we come up with. They were predestined before the foundation of the world, and we are to walk in them. How do we walk in them? 2 Timothy says very clearly, we are to put the Word into our life before the works are ever even possible. We are not equipped for the good works until we are profiting daily by being taught and trained by the Word of God. You see, if a person is not living a surrendered life, he can be just like Isaiah, a proud man. God is trying to say to him, "You are not displaying me, you are displaying yourself because you have not been willing to listen to what I have tried to show you."

Who do you know right now who is a Uzziah in your life? Oh, he's a good guy. He comes to church with you. Young people, it might be one of your best friends. Oh, this man loves Jesus. He must love Him because he comes every Sunday night and Sunday morning, and sings in the choir with me. Well, let me ask you a question. Is God trying to say something to you through your friend as you watch him make proud decisions and you begin to watch God begin to bring him down? You think about it.

What has God been trying to say to you? What are you aware of in your life? Who are you aware of in your life? God is saying, "Do you see how I worked in his life? I'm trying to tell you something, and if you don't listen to me, I'm going to show up in your life, and when I show up, you are going to see what I am trying to say."

First of all there is a prelude in Isaiah's life.

The prelude is He has been trying to speak to him through his friend Uzziah.

Secondly, there is a problem in Isaiah's life.

What is the problem Isaiah has? If you will study Isaiah chapters 1-5, you will find that Isaiah has got a big problem. He is always pointing his finger at everybody else. He is never willing to look at himself. That is one of the quickest ways you can find out whether or not your service is displaying God or displaying yourself. It's that judgmental attitude that always festers with people who are filled with pride. In the first five chapters He drops a woe on everybody but himself.

Now in Isaiah 6 he is waxing eloquent. Oh, he enjoys this. You don't think so? Read on. I'll show you.

You are going to see he enjoyed bringing judgment on other people, but he didn't want to say anything when it came to himself. In Isaiah 3:9 he says,

Woe to them that display their sin like Sodom.

In Isaiah 3:11 he says,

"Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he deserves will be done to him."

In Isaiah 5:8 he says,

"Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until there is no more room."

Isaiah 5:11 says,

"Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink; Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them!"

Isaiah 5:18 says,

"Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of false-hood."

Isaiah 5:20-22 reads,

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness." He is waxing eloquent. The problem is he sees everybody else's sin, but he hasn't seen his own.

Let's read the text in Isaiah 6, and you will see what God does.

"In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.'"

Now watch who this woe is pronounced upon. It is not pronounced upon the people. Oh, no. God had to show up in his life, and when God showed up in his life, he didn't have time to judge anybody else. Continuing with verse 5:

"Then I said, Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips."

You see, that's a problem to proud servants of Christ, to people who don't seem to understand we wear His label. We are saved by grace, but we wear His label on what we do, that which He initiates in our life. If we are not putting Him on display, all we are doing with our tireless efforts to serve Him is displaying the proud self in our own life. What does God have to do to help us see that kind of service is not pleasing in His sight? There was a problem with Isaiah. He knew how to judge others, but wasn't willing to look at himself.

I think it was Freud who had the projection theory: when you see somebody else you are really judging what you see in yourself. Freud didn't come up with that, that's Romans 2:1:

"Thou that judgest doest the same thing."

We live in such a proud time. I am sick of the pride in my own life. Sometimes I need to get away for a while. I need to see Wayne like God sees Wayne. You need to see yourself like God sees you. That's why 1 Corinthians 11:27-28 Paul says,

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

In other words, "When you partake of the Lord's supper don't be caught in the position of judging the guy sitting in front of you. You examine yourself. Examine yourself." Find out the pride that is in your own life.

Well, there was a prelude. God had tried to say this to him a long time. He could have avoided a lot of pain in his life if he'd gone on and learned his lesson from Uzziah, his friend. It took until the year of King Uzziah's death for the problem in Isaiah to finally surface. He was quick to judge everybody else, but he wasn't quick to judge himself.

Finally, God had to draw him a picture.

I love Isaiah, because he is kind of like me. God had to draw him a picture. God had to show him the throne. It wasn't just the one on the throne that I want you to see here. The picture that God drew for him is incredible. Verse 1 says,

"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne."

Remember, John, the apostle? John saw that in the book of Revelation. Paul saw it and couldn't say anything about it. He said, "I saw what I saw, and I can't even talk about it. I don't even know if I was in the body or out of the body." Here is a man who saw it and recorded it. He said,

"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple."

Do you know what the temple is? That's the Holy Place. That's the heavenly Holy of Holies. That's where He rules and reigns. Isaiah saw it, but he saw something else, and I think this is what got his attention. Oh, yes, seeing the Lord certainly got his attention, but I think it was not just seeing the Lord in His Holiness. I think in seeing the seraphim, the closest ones ministering to the Lord there, God had to draw a picture for him to help him to be willing to see himself. Let me show you.

"Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.'"

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Let's go back to those seraphim. What were they doing? Folks, the most beautiful angels I know anything about in scripture are those seraphim and they hovered right over the throne. These are angels who are somehow created to serve right in the presence of God sitting on His throne. What is the agenda of those angels? They had six wings. What are wings for? Well, that's what you use to serve, to do whatever you are designed to do. What was their agenda with those wings? With two, the most beautiful angels ever created, with two, they hid their face. With two they hid their feet and with two they served, they flew. Do you know what the agenda of the angels was? Not to detract in any way from the one who was sitting upon the throne. Their agenda was not displaying their beauty. Their agenda was hiding themselves in the presence of God so that the display would not be of them, but would be of Him.

Think about that, because I think it's got something to say as we get down to verse 5. Isaiah was absolutely overwhelmed. Look at what he says.

"Woe is me for I am ruined!"

Do you know what the word "ruined" means? I am destroyed. Everything I have ever done is nothing more than an abomination to God. Come on, Isaiah. You are the prophet, man. You are doing good in the Old Testament. No, he was full of himself, and everything he had done now is ruined, utterly destroyed. Look at what he says,

Because I am a man of unclean lips."

Now it is so important that you see this. Why would that be a problem to Isaiah? Well, the lips, even James 3 tells us this, always reveal the heart of someone. Now he knew his people were a people of unclean lips. He said, "You don't even hide your sin. You can listen to yourself and know what your sin is." "I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips." Oh, folks, you see, this meant more to Isaiah than it would be to the normal person.

Everything he did to serve God was with his lips. My lips are my means of service. Oh, he saw it. He saw God in all of His glory. He saw the seraphim hiding themselves so that nothing would detract from that glory. He said,

"Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips. All of my service has been from a proud heart."

Finally he says,

"For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts."

It takes a lot sometimes for God to finally break through. I can stand up and preach, and I am not even hearing what I am saying. Most of the time, nobody else is hearing it either. But when God shows up, something happens with the Word. All of a sudden, it is not you looking at your brother. All of a sudden it begins to reflect the ugliness that is inside of your own life. I don't like what I see in myself when God begins to reveal that in my life. Do you like that in your life? Folks, when God shows up, that's when we finally see that we are either displaying Him, His mark is on us, His label is on us and on our service, or we are displaying ourselves.

Where are you right now? Who is displayed in your life? Do your children come to you and say, "Dad and Mom, if Jesus is like you, I want to know Jesus." Are you displaying Him? Are you displaying yourself? "Oh, I have been faithful to this church for years. I mean, everybody knows that. Why, I've been on every committee. I work hard. I sweat. You know good and well I'm doing that for Jesus."

Let me ask you a question. How do you feel when nobody appreciates you for what you are doing? "Rotten." Then you weren't doing it for Jesus! You were displaying yourself.

In Ephesians we are seeing that everything we are, everything we do ought to be of Him, through Him, by Him and to Him, as Romans says, so He gets the glory, not man. I don't know how to get it across, because evidently Isaiah was in the same problem we are in. We get so proud and deceived by our own flesh that we can't even see that we are a people of unclean lips. Our service is nothing more than energetic flesh that God will never bless.

Well, if you understand self, and if you are going through that, there are three things about self that might be important to you. Number one is self-will. That's when you know self is involved: I will initiate it, and God better bless it. Self-will. Have you ever been there? Secondly, it is self-effort: I'll come up with it, and I'll do it in my strength and bless God, I'll do it. Have you ever heard that? Thirdly, it is self-glory: since I came up with it and since I'm doing it in my strength, I'll take every bit of the glory for it. That's where lots and lots of people find themselves. What's our service like right now? Are we putting Him on display? Or are we putting ourselves on display?

Verses 6-7 just ought to light your fire. Verse 6 says,

"Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs."

You know, I get this picture of the seraphim flying around there. They are hiding themselves with two wings. One of them hears something. "Oh, did I hear what I think I heard. Was that proud Isaiah? Did he admit something? Is he repenting? Praise God. Let's get to the altar quickly. We've got to tell him something." Hey, folks, the down side is the good side, because there is a flip side to that. The mercy of God is waiting on you if you will go on and get honest with Him.

He runs to the altar. The altar in the Old Testament is the cross in the New Testament. The price has already been paid. God has already expected that out of him. He knew he would fail. He has already taken care of it. The seraphim runs and grabs a token from the altar, a coal, and he flies quickly to Isaiah and touches him at the place of his sin, right on his lips.

Oh, folks, can't you see that is the way in which God wants to free us of old self. As quickly as you are willing to die to that old pride in your life, God is that quick to forgive. Isn't that precious? That's what He told us in Chapter 1 of Ephesians. He said He lavishes us with forgiveness. Do you know what that means? It means you can't sin that God doesn't abound with grace and mercy to forgive you. He is ready to forgive you. "Oh, I have been carrying this around for a long time. You mean I can actually be honest with people

like this?" Sure you can. If you can't be honest in here, where can you be honest? Just go on and deal with that rotten, critical, judgmental, divisive pride. God said, as quick as you do, you are cleansed by the blood of Jesus. We have it available at any time. Now, he is finally ready to be used. When he saw the pride in his life, look at what he does. Verse 7 reads,

"And he touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.'"

If we knew how quick we could be released from it, many, many more people would be running to the cross daily. The power of the cross is there again, that crucified life, when I am willing to go on and admit that, God is quick to forgive.

Verse 8 says,

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?'"

Wait a minute! I thought he had already gone. I thought he was a prophet. Now, he is ready to be a vessel, and he said,

"Here am I. Send me!"

Do you know what God was about to tell him? "Isaiah, I want you to go and preach a message that nobody will ever listen to." "How long, O Lord? How long?" "Until the end." Tradition says he was sawn in two and martyred for his faith. He couldn't have handled that before because he was too proud. He couldn't handle going out to where nobody would ever hear him again. You see, we are not ready to be sent until we are cleansed of the pride that is in our life.

What's in your life?

What's your service like?

Are you displaying Christ or are you displaying yourself?

Moses displayed himself. He didn't display God. That's why he didn't get to go into Canaan. That's exactly what God said. "You did not represent me." In other words, "You painted the picture that I am a tyrant ready to beat my people. Oh, no, Moses, you displayed yourself. You didn't display me."

"Isaiah, you are displaying yourself. You are not displaying Me."

Who are you displaying?