

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

John 13:34-35 (ESV)

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

“What Does God Want Me to Do as a Christian?”

Introduction: What a fun weekend we have had! I’m really glad to have been here with you! We spent some time in the great outdoors of northern Minnesota! Ate some awesome food! And spent time growing together in God’s Word!

You are a loved and forgiven child of God

During the study that Katie lead on Christian Identity, we learned that our identity is this: You are a loved and forgiven child of God!

It’s true you and I know that we have sinned and there will always be sins that trip us up and entangle us. But that sin does not define you. You confess those sins to God, who forgives you and enables you to fight against temptation for another day! No, **sin** does not define you, **God** does. And His definition of you is that you are His beloved and forgiven child. You are baptized into Christ!

What’s more, God gives you different gifts and abilities that He wants you to put to use in the callings in life He has given you; in your family, community, place of work, school, and church.

Despite the fact that we live in a fallen world, God will restore all things through the victory of Christ.

Next, in the study that Tori led, we examined one of the most difficult and complicated questions ever to be asked: “Why Do Bad Things Happen?” During that session we were confronted by the hard and very real facts that evil exists in this fallen world. Because of Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden, things are not the way they are supposed to be. There is death and decay in the world. We all sin. And sin has consequences. Sin is either a direct or indirect reason for why bad things happen in this world and in our lives. But God who is all-loving **and** all-powerful has defeated sin, death, and the devil. He did it through His Son’s victory at the cross and empty tomb.

Yes it is definitely heartbreaking when bad things happen, there's no getting around that. But as Christians we know the beginning of the story of **why** evil exists. Better yet, we know the **end** of the story: Eternal life with God in heaven is waiting for us because of Christ; because we are saved by grace through faith in Him alone. We know that bad things will continue to happen in this world, but we do not lose hope and we do not give up because some day it will all be behind us.

And that leads us into the topic of this time together in God's Word that we have right now: "What Does God Want Me to Do As a Christian?"

We are redeemed and free to love God and others.

Picture it like this: Say you just had the most amazing dinner in your life. Every bite was incredible, the service was perfect, and the ambiance was just right. Even better, the dinner was free! Somebody else paid the bill and will pay the bill for everyone else too. What do you do?

Or picture it like this: You've read the best book ever. It literally has changed your life. You'll never look at the world the same again. And this book is all over the place, you have plenty of copies. What do you do?

Those two situations are amazing but they don't come close to the unfathomable grace God gives to each of us. So what do you do... now that you are saved by grace through faith in Christ? Well, just like you would want others to know about the extremely delicious, free meal and about the life-changing book of which there are so many copies, so too you and I are led to share the best news in the whole world- God's love for everyone in Jesus Christ!

The truth is you and I **have** received the most incredible gift ever! We fully deserved to die and suffer an eternity of punishment. Instead, God Himself died in our place and rose again, conquering the sin and death that had threatened to claim you and me. He loves you dearly and has claimed you as His precious child. Now, you will live forever in the most beautiful place imaginable. Better yet, He loves and has died for everyone. So what do you do?

You share that love of God in words and actions! Because "we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Eph. 2:10). And what do those good works look like?

After Jesus rose from the dead, but before He ascended into heaven, He gave instructions to His followers: Go, baptize, and teach. I am sending you. (See Matt. 28:19-20) As forgiven children of God, it is our joy to obey the Lord. We share His good news by telling others what He has done. This is one of the ways we show love to others in the way that God has shown His love to us. We

heard about that in our short reading from John's Gospel: "love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). Other ways we can show our love is by doing kind things and building others up with our words.

Really, the greatest command is to love (see 1 Cor. 13:13). In fact in Matthew 22: 37-39, Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments by telling us to love God and love one another.

God equips us to serve our neighbors and tell others about Jesus. We live out our faith in the place God puts us in our vocations.

And remember, we can only talk about loving our neighbor because we are redeemed and have the Holy Spirit living in us. In God's eyes, we are already forgiven and holy. There is nothing we can do, aside from unbelief, to take away God's love or forgiveness. Free in that grace we go out to others and love them by witness and service.

It may be strange, but the Law is summed up in one word: **love**. I say that it's strange because love is also the heart of the **Gospel**, because God first loved us.

Filled with grace, it is our joy to live our lives in love. We love God. We love our neighbor. We don't do it because we have to: we do it because we get to. The Holy Spirit enables us to live according to God's will wherever we are. And that's what God wants us to do as Christians: Love Him and love others through words and action. Amen!