

Give God All The Glory

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 October 2026

Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0:00] Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 through 10 is our sermon passage. I'd like to read in context a bit first. So let's read beginning at verse 4. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 4.

! This is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, sufficient word for you and me, his people. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Here are three verses for today. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

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

[1:20] The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

Let's pray. O God, we ask that you will magnify the glorious gospel of salvation of sinners like us in your beloved son, Jesus Christ.

We praise you for your Holy Spirit who carried along the apostles, the prophets, Lord, who through their pen, we have the very word of God himself breathed out by your Holy Spirit.

We praise you, Lord, for how your Holy Spirit has preserved your word and how we are the ones you purchased. And so we have the right to receive your word in our own language and your providence and your right time.

You provided a copy of the English Bible in what's now our heart language, that we can know you and truly grab hold of the one true God through your word. We praise you for how your Holy Spirit continues to sharpen us by your word.

[2:47] We pray that the Holy Spirit will do now, Lord, through the preaching of your word, what you love to do most, which is bring glory to your beloved son, Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ, that the glory of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will be set on display.

So, Lord, I ask by your power, by your help, by the spirit that you will do that, Lord, that you will magnify your own glory to your beloved people today, your beloved congregation here.

We ask this for Christ's sake. Amen. Well, if you looked out the windows as you were driving into church today, which I hope at least all of the drivers did, you will have noticed hundreds of colorful trees.

Aren't they so beautiful this time of year? And if you're up on a hill, it almost looks like we live in a forest and our little roads wind through these. Now, trees have been the subject of pondering for me this week.

Trees are a form of vegetable life. Trees are created by God. Trees are sustained by God. Think about the cycles that God has given us.

[4:07] At least in this part of the world, we get to see all four seasons. Trees are recreated, so to speak, every single spring. We get to watch this on their branches.

They're renewed each summer. They're adorned in full color every fall. And then we get to watch them almost die every winter in order to watch the whole beautiful cycle happen again and again. Why did God do that? God is most wise. He's given us this wonderful gift all around us. And you probably enjoy the same, you know, when you get a chance.

And sometimes for us, it's in the dark. But when it's still in daylight, we love to just go for a little walk around our neighborhood, our home. My wife and I, Andrea and I, we will look at those trees.

And as we walk really close to them, really close to the branches and leaves, sometimes they'll hit me on the hat. Never once has a tree asked that we give it glory.

[5:08] Never once has a tree boasted of its own beauty. To boast means to highlight something about yourself so that you get glory from other people.

It's to brag about something, to use some older English words, which are good for us, to expand our vocabulary. Webster's Dictionary of 1828 says, To boast is to vaunt oneself, to make an ostentatious display, or to exalt oneself.

And these beautiful red maple trees, adorned in these bright colors this time of year, has never once looked down at itself and boasted of its color.

Brothers and sisters, Christians, in the same way God did not recreate us, his people, his church, with the ability to boast.

He eliminates that from being a possibility for us. In the same way, Christ does adorn us, his church, like he adorns these trees. And why does he do this?

[6:15] It's for the same reason that he adorns the trees. It's as a gift of his grace for us to enjoy God. And so give him all the glory.

The title of today's sermon is just that. It's an exhortation for me, for my heart, for you. Give God all the glory. Give God all the glory.

And here's four reasons walking through our passage for today. Number one, give God all the glory for your salvation. Number one, give God all the glory for your salvation.

Look at verse eight. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Church, be reminded by these words, you have been saved.

salvation. It could be translated, you have been rescued, made whole, preserved. And how?

[7:21] By grace, by the grace of God. God's grace is his favor. It's his goodwill, his loving kindness. And God has done this.

God has saved you through faith, through conviction, through belief, through trust. We're told this is the gift of God.

This is God's precious present to you and me. It's him offering something freely to us. This is the bounty of God.

It's our salvation. And it's emphasized, this is of God, not of yourselves. Our confession of faith gives us clear summary of the teaching of scripture.

Our best works cannot merit pardon or eternal life. There is an infinite distance that separates us from God. We cannot benefit God by our works or pay the debt of our sin.

[8:22] Even at our best, we are unprofitable servants doing only our duty. God is the one who gives us good works. Good works proceed or they flow from the Holy Spirit.

Yet because we are the ones who perform these good works, even when we do something good, it is defiled by our own weakness and imperfection. So our good works cannot endure God's strict judgment.

Our salvation is a gift of God's grace. Now, there's been a lot of dispute about what is it that is a gift, the gift of God.

Some have emphasized it's the grace of God. That's the gift. Others have said, no, even the faith itself is a gift. And in studying this, I can give you probably a longer answer than you want to hear later.

When it says this or that is not of yourself, it, when it says it is a gift of God. In the Greek, this refers not to one of the terms only.

[9:31] It doesn't single out either one of the preceding nouns. It refers to the entire clause as a whole, the complete reality of being saved by grace through faith.

This entire gift package originates outside of any human effort. Now, how do we, how do we be cautious on how about, on how we talk about this?

Well, he says very quickly next, that there's to be no room for boasting on any aspect of our salvation. That serves as a control for interpreting this wonderful truth.

In verse eight, boasting another, another word for it is sometimes translated as glory. So that no man may glory in himself or steal God of glory that God deserves.

If faith were of man, it would be for the glory or for the boasting of that man. If saving faith were generated by any works, a sinner could do.

[10:31] Let's say a sinner could crawl up on their knees, a hundred floors in order to receive this gift of faith. Or let's say a sinner could, could fast, you know, multiple meals in a row to receive the gift of faith.

Then that person would have grounds for boasting, which this passage says is impossible. God will only save in a way that no one can boast. Now I'd like for you to turn forward just a page or two to Ephesians chapter six, verse 23.

Sinclair Ferguson helped to point this out and we're following our own steps of interpretation. We've looked at this immediate passage with its close context. No, no room for boasting, but let's try to still answer that question.

Is faith a gift from God? And look at chapter six, verse 23. Paul prays that the church may experience more love and faith from God.

Do you see how faith is also from God? And that's why he prays to God that he would give that to the church. So we can answer in confidence from all of scripture.

[11:36] Yes. Faith too is a gift from God. No, not even faith. We can say is of ourselves. Faith also is something the Lord is pleased with.

He's to effectuate in his people. Faith too is not of works, lest anyone should glory or pride in themselves. Our confession says this type of saving faith.

It is the work of Christ's spirit in the hearts of the elect. Now listen carefully, because I believe this will encourage you as it did me. Saving faith varies in degree.

Saving faith. That's truly saving. It can be weak or strong, yet it remains fundamentally distinct from the common grace of false believers.

People who for a time act like they're saved and think they're saved. No true saving faith. It may be attacked and it may be weakened, but true saving faith ultimately does gain the victory.

[12:45] Faith is a gift from God because God loves his people. The image we have of God's people and God doing all the work to save them, including that seed of faith growing in his true people.

It's the image of a vineyard. In the Old Testament, the people of God are described as just that, the vineyard of the Lord. And the false kings and rulers are compared to being irresponsible stewards of what belongs to God all along.

And so when Jesus comes and he says, not only am I the caretaker, no, I am the vine. I am one with my people. I am the true vine. The only vine that can bear fruit.

Grapes that are not sour. The only one whose good works are pleasing and sweet and lovely to God the Father. And Jesus gives to his people, those he purchased with his blood.

That imagery of these grapes now being made into a wine that's poured out like blood. And Jesus says, my people are engrafted into me, the true vine.

[14:00] Ephesians 5, 25 through 27 makes this gospel truth so clear. Christ loved the church and gave himself for her that he might sanctify her and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.

that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle. Why? Because he washed her himself or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

This is our great God, our Savior. We give God all the glory for our salvation from start to finish. All the glory evermore to him.

Here's the second reason to give God all the glory. Give God all the glory for your assurance. Give God all the glory for your assurance.

Let me separate these two. Remember, you can have a true saving faith, but it can be very weak. Now, you can be saved and not have assurance of salvation, but it's a true saving faith.

[15:11] If you do enjoy, or at some point, you will enjoy an assurance of salvation. Give God all the glory for that as well. Don't let your own works or attributing that assurance to anything in you either.

Let me go back to the same phrase from verse eight. You have been saved. Give God all the glory for that assurance that in Christ, you have been saved.

The verb here is in the perfect tense. It highlights a complete action in the past that produces abiding continuous results in the present. So believers were saved at a definite point in time by God's grace.

And now, even today, as you sit here, maybe questioning your salvation. If you have a true saving faith in Christ, God's grace currently abides in you in a permanent, secure way so that your assurance of salvation in Christ should not be shaken.

It should help settle your soul even more in Christ. Every Christian will wonder this from time to time. Have I been saved?

[16:22] Am I a true believer? And this is because there is a spiritual war over our souls. Galatians 5:17 says, the flesh lusts against the spirit, but if you're united to Christ, the spirit, the spirit fights against the flesh.

And these are contrary one to another so that you do not do the things that you wish. So how can you know when you're wrestling that way, flesh against spirit, to discern if you have true saving faith?

Our confession of faith summarizes what the Bible teaches this way. Saving faith matures in many, but not all, to the point that they attain full assurance through Christ, who is both founder and perfecter of our faith.

See, Christ even is perfecting our faith, and he's the founder of our faith. It's a gift of God through him. Saving faith is ordinarily produced by the ministry of the word, read, preached, prayed, the word received, visualized publicly in baptisms, and strengthened regularly by the Lord's supper. So as a Christian battling the spirit against the flesh, trusting the Lord to continue washing you as his bride by his word, we place ourselves under his word.

[17:54] Romans 8, 5 says, for those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. See, if we're spending all of our days, we're not gathering with God's people.

We're not putting ourselves in the ministry of the word. We're sowing to the flesh. We're feeding our mind with everything else that's less. But those who live according to the spirit are sowing the things of the spirit into our mind and our heart.

And by this faith, Christians believe to be true everything revealed in God's word, recognizing it as the authority of God himself.

So if you have a true saving faith in Christ, when you're hearing his word ministered, growing, when you're talking with your family, when you're studying it for yourself, when you're encouraging one another in the word of God, he helps us to receive his truth and rest in it instead of fighting his word and returning to disobedience.

Galatians 6, 8 encourages the same thing. He who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption. But he who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life.

[19:11] Our confession says again, saving faith makes you love God's word. The Holy Spirit makes you see the Bible as the place in which the glory of God is revealed, where the excellence of Christ and the power of the spirit are brought up in your mind and worked into your soul, teaching you to trust God through his word.

Thus enabled, Christians entrust their souls to the truth of God's word. They come to more and more obey the commands, tremble at the threatenings and embrace the promises.

But those are not the basis of our assurance. The confession says, yet faith's principle acts focus directly on Christ.

See, the basis of our assurance is this, accepting Christ's promises to you, receiving Christ's grace again and again and again, resting upon him alone.

This is the basis of assurance. Rest upon Jesus to be declared righteous in God, to be sanctified in Christ, to have eternal life through his covenant of grace.

[20:28] This is the basis of our assurance. It's trust in Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said it as clearly as anyone could. We read this passage a moment ago, John 15, 16, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

In a sense, this passage and all of John 15 is simply opening up that glorious promise. Jesus chose you. He grafted you into him and in him you will bear fruit that lasts.

Any fruit that we try to produce on our own does not last. First, a dead branch has to be cut and the tree trunk itself has to be cut and the smaller branch has to be put into it and bound there.

And then it'll enjoy the life. It'll be grafted in. Only when God engrafs you to Christ is your spirit enlivened, regenerated.

Only then could a dead branch like you or me who's a hellbound sinner deserving to be put in that pile that will dry up and be set ablaze.

[21:46] Only in Christ can we enjoy life and know this true salvation. And so therefore our security and our assurance are only in the fact of being engrafted into Christ, nothing else.

What if my faith is too weak? What if I never have tasted this type of assurance? What if I still fear those fires of hell?

Well, if the Holy Spirit is ministering and stirring, he will cause you to run to Christ. He will make you hate your own will and take your refuge in Christ alone.

Now, there are others here who have a very sensitive conscience, maybe. And so some questions that can be helpful are these, and they're very simple. Do you love Jesus Christ?

If you say yes to this question, that is not of yourself. you naturally would hate Jesus Christ. Here's another question. Do you want God to be glorified by what you do, by all of your life?

[22:56] Then this is not of yourself. You naturally would want glory for yourself, not for God. A trembling hand can still receive a precious gift.

if your faith is weak and trembling, your salvation by grace through faith in Christ is a gift of God.

Even trembling, you weak hand, receive this promise and hold on to Christ.

Jesus Christ will gain the victory. He who gave you life in Christ will keep you in Christ, and he will grow you in Christ.

He promises to do this. And since we cannot boast on any one of those steps, we are free to praise our great God all the more and praise him for our assurance, especially.

Rest assured in these gospel promises. Let them wash over you one more time, and I pray that the Spirit will work assurance into you even as you hear these verses. Colossians 1.22 In the body of his flesh through death, Jesus Christ received sinners in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in his sight.

[24:17] Galatians 3.27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. What God sees when he looks at you is the Christ that you have put on.

Isaiah 61.10 God says, I will greatly, I'm sorry, I will clothe you. And then we say back to him, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

We rejoice in the Lord. He has done this. God is the one who alone deserves all the glory even when you can rest in this assurance of salvation.

All the glory evermore to him. Here's the third reason. Give glory to God alone for his ongoing work in your life.

[25:23] Give glory to God alone for his ongoing work in your life. Verse 9 goes on to say, work three times. Look at that in verse 9.

He says, you are saved not of works, not of actions, deeds, or labors that are your own, lest anyone should boast. Now, verse 10, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Well, the first clause here, he clarifies what it's not saying. It's a negative protection. it excludes even a single instance of human self-glory before the God who saves sinners.

God designed all of our salvation to shut down any legalistic or self-righteous boasting. In Ephesus, they, in Asia, remember, Asia Minor, and that deep-rooted honor-shame culture, people standing, and you can only imagine within the culture of the church.

It was all based on honor and shame. If you live in Ephesus, you're trying to point out to people, either through blatant boasting or subtle hints why you are better for reasons that bring glory to you.

[26:45] And Paul strips away any type of social rank within the church. There's no room for human pride because the church is before the face of God. God. No believer can claim superior merit compared to another believer.

No believer deserves a higher standing before God in the local church. We are not saved of our own works. He says, any presumption that a work is possible to save ourselves could not even be called good.

Notice how in verse 9 he says, you're not saved of works. He doesn't say, you're not saved of good works. We can't even call those types of works that would attempt that good. He does say, you are saved for good works.

That word good is upright, beneficial, pleasant, or pleasing works to God. Our confession is helpful on this doctrine because we look out in the world and we see people who don't know the Lord, who want their own glory, doing a lot of good.

The confession clarifies, works done by unregenerate men may be commanded by God and useful, yet they do not come from a heart purified by faith, nor are they done rightly for God's glory.

[28:08] Therefore, they are sinful. They cannot please God and cannot qualify anyone for grace. Yet neglecting those works that are pleasing to God is even more sinful and displeasing to God.

You see, the situation we're in is that we owe God good works, but even our best works fall short of the glory he requires. So God must be the one to give a new heart, to bring that sinner into union with Jesus Christ and pump divine life through his Holy Spirit into the life of that person who was once dead in trespasses and sins.

in verse 10, he takes that same concept of work and he says, we are his workmanship. We are God's workmanship, church.

We are God's design, God's product, God's creation in Christ Jesus. Created in Christ Jesus, he says, we are formed in Christ Jesus, shaped in Christ Jesus, fashioned in Christ Jesus for good works.

Good works are only those commanded in God's holy word. Works invented by human zeal or good intentions are not truly good. See, God alone gets to define what is good in his eyes.

[29:33] Now, when what God has commanded, when it's done in obedience to God's commands by the power of Christ for the glory of God, it is truly a good work. And it is truly then evidence that the life of Christ is working and flowing through a Christian.

So good works are not the root of your salvation, but they are the consequent fruit of union to Christ. That word workmanship was fascinating.

The Greek word is worth saying out loud. It's *poiema*, and it's from the word from which we get in English, the word poem. And so it refers to an artisan's crafted work.

It could refer to a pot, you know, a lump of clay that you work it into an object, you know, like a vessel. And so you could picture even an artistic creation.

You picture going to a gallery in Ephesus, this cultural hub of that part of the world. And in the gallery are only the finest pieces that are put on display, and you can walk through and see each one and appreciate the workmanship that's on display here.

[30:49] But behind every one of those artifacts that made it to the gallery is a dirty, dusty workshop with other shards of clay on the ground and, you know, the lumps sitting here and there and all the tools, and it's messy.

I love Sinclair Ferguson's imagery. He says, the church on earth is the workshop of God. It's messy. It's not the final product.

We are Christ's workmanship. And soon, for some of us, very soon, even sooner than we know, we will get to be in the gallery of God in heaven.

See the church glorified. See the glory of God as an artisan fashioning and adorning and beautifying his church. We are his workmanship.

In that same imagery, think of a lump of clay. Believers cannot fashion themselves. They are God's handcrafted masterpiece.

[31:53] We are recreated from spiritual deadness like mud into new life, made useful in the hands of the potter. Believers are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, so that to mix metaphors here now, our lives will be these vessels of holiness.

The outcome of those vessels in the hands of God is eternal life. Not because they're useful in carrying what he designed them to carry, but because they are his and they're used by his hands. In Christ, God creates life in us. New life in Christ is a gift of God. You and I were once dead branches.

Can you imagine walking by, there's going to be bonfires and things like that, and there's a pile of dead branches. Can you imagine one of them looking to the other and trying to brag, you know, seeing, seeing, we're in this pile over here, you see that beautiful tree, one day I'm going to be in that tree, you just watch, I got big dreams, you know, it's just never going to happen.

And though it's happened, the church is adorned, we were dead, now we're alive in Christ. We have no room for boasting. Yeah, think of, think of one beautiful maple leaf.

[33:19] That leaf depends on so many other aspects of God's divine kindness and providence to even exist. That leaf would never have taken that shape, it would never have actually had life and stopped being brown or little.

If it weren't for all these other factors, you know, it needs the water, the rain, it needs the branch, the trunk, the roots, the nutrients, the soil. I mean, so we are a leaf. We are a leaf. We have nothing of our own. It's all of God. The triune God, he is the roots of the tree of the church. We're united to him organically through Christ, so to speak.

And from this God of love, for the glory of his grace, our Lord Jesus Christ was born. He grew up. He succeeded and he thrives as our savior.

The scripture uses this imagery throughout. We can say Jesus Christ is the mighty trunk of the church. He is the strong armor, the Lord, raised up from the stump of Jesse.

[34 : 23] We are the branches grafted in to him by God's grace, making us part of true spiritual Israel. God is the gardener overseeing it all.

And it's his Holy Spirit that keeps the life flow continuously in us who belong to him and Jesus. We are created in Christ Jesus for his glory.

Second, I'm sorry, Titus 2, 14 reminds us that Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people zealous for good works.

A zeal that comes from union to Christ, from his spiritual life flowing in his people. Dear brothers and sisters, be encouraged. Your good works, we can't make a big long list of them, it's the fruit of the spirit, it's the ten commandments, and the positive keeping by the power of Christ.

Your love, your patience, your ongoing repentance, your humility, glory. These are merely like a beautiful leaf or display, a flower of all the work that God has already done, and it's all for his glory.

[35 : 39] They are produced by God, for God, and for our good. Give God all the glory for this ongoing work in your life.

All the glory evermore to him. The fourth and final reason for today is this. Give God all the glory for the good works you walk in.

Give God all the glory for those good works you walk in. Notice how he says at the end of verse 10, these good works God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So as you walk in these good works that God has prepared, give him all the glory for that walk.

Prepared beforehand. God has prepared these works for us to walk in beforehand.

He's made them ready in advance. It's a prearranged sovereign ordination for his people. It will happen. Before a believer was ever recreated in Christ, God had already constructed the path of righteous living for each one he saved to walk.

[36 : 57] To walk around, it represents not just going from one place to the other. It's really a figure of speech for a person's whole lifestyle, conduct, and daily walk.

The Ephesians believers, they had formally walked according to the course of this world.

Remember that in verse 2? But now they are called to step into the pre-marked footprints of Jesus Christ, who went before his people, and he says, follow me.

We follow Christ, trusting that every step we take is in the direction that Christ himself has led us.

We follow our good shepherd's voice. Believers and their good works, our confession says, they are accepted by God through Christ.

Though works remain imperfect and weak, God views them in his son, accepting and rewarding what is sincere. Through good works, believers express gratitude, strength and assurance, edify brothers, adorn the gospel, silence objectors, and glorify God.

This ability comes entirely from the spirit of Christ, requiring his ongoing influence to will and to do. Yet believers must not grow negligent they must be diligent to stir up the grace, the reliance, the dependence on Christ within them.

[38 : 26] So, brothers and sisters, we actually walk with Christ. We actually follow him. But the relationship between us walking and our union to Christ, it's not like two equal parties collaborating on this together.

We are cooperative, but what we do is secondary, and it's completely dependent on what God has already done, and what God continues to do.

And he presses this home, he reminds them of how impossible it would be to walk with God without the spirit enabling every step. He had told them, you once walked according to the pattern of the world as sons of disobedience, but now in Jesus Christ, you walk according to the kingdom of heaven as sons of God, sons of obedience to your loving father.

You once conducted yourself in the same way as all this fallen world in darkness, you're drifting along as to hell, but now you're united to Christ, you no longer conduct yourselves that way, that sin no longer reigns over you, you're not a slave to disobedience, you are now a slave to Christ, a joyful slave, a willing slave, and Christ in you now makes you begin to conduct yourself in the way of the values of heaven.

You once thought like the world, but now you think more and more like Christ who lives in you. So these good works in the church, the bride of Christ, they are God's gracious way of beautifying us for him.

[40:02] And that's really the Holy Spirit's job in this age, in this life that we have. The Holy Spirit was sent by God the Father to take the precious bride of Christ and prepare us for the Son.

Sanctification is that. It's the Holy Spirit adorning, beautifying the bride for the groom. When the Holy Spirit is sanctifying and encouraging you and making us not never perfectly, but more and more beautiful in the eyes of Christ, it's evidence that you belong to him already.

It's by his new creation power in the midst of all the death all around us in this fallen age. And all of this is a gift of God lest anyone should boast.

So as you see yourself for one another, and as we encourage one another to walk according to this great calling that we have, be reminded that it's by the power of the Spirit, not as something to be leveraged against assurance, but it's an encouragement that if you see the grace of God changing your desires, giving you more love for God, more love for others, this is God's work in you.

Give God all the glory for the good works you walk in, all the glory evermore to him. One last comment. Some of us in talking with you and hearing your stories, I know this, you've told me, some of us have been trained to give God all the glory in your justification, but to then go and secure your final salvation by your own works.

[41:48] Even if it wasn't stated that plainly, that was the subtle emphasis for many of us. And this will always be the tendency of our flesh. In the time of belonging to this church, I've received that actually as a criticism of my ministry of God's word.

I was told that this church needs to tell people what to do more. Not just pull them to Christ, but make them do more works.

In God's providence, the same week I received that criticism, which didn't hurt my feelings. It honestly made me think maybe they're right. I need to reflect on this. Well, in God's providence, I got this amazing quote from a fellow pastor who shares our confession of faith in a different state. And I'm not talking about any situation. He just sent me an encouraging quote. It's by a man named William Bridge in the earlier part of the 17th century. A confessional congregationalist like us. Listen carefully. He wrote this. See how the gospel conduces to our holiness. Strengthen faith and we strengthen all of it.

[43:03] faith and all graces are weakened. But if you strengthen faith, you strengthen all your holiness and all your graces.

The way to strengthen a bow or a branch of a tree, the branch of a tree, is not to carry dung up to the tree, into the branches, but to lay the dung as fertilizer to the root of the tree.

strengthen the root and you strengthen all the branches. Faith is the root grace. Now the knowledge and the thorough digesting of this truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is our great high priest.

In this point of satisfaction, it does wonderfully strengthen our faith. And therefore all the other graces are strengthened as well. Let me run that by you one more time.

If you take manure, say you're a farmer and you've got an orchard, a peach orchard, it's going to want to make you not buy peaches. And that farmer takes the manure from the pigs, that he or his neighbor grows these pigs, and they have all this manure, kids.

[44:17] You know what that is? Poop. And they take that and they're going to climb into the branches and smear it on the leaves and the fruit in order to make them full and juicy. It's not going to produce what you want.

He says take that same manure and put it at the roots of the tree. That soil is going to take the nutrients out of the manure. The roots are going to suck what it needs for life and carry it all the way up into the branches.

And then the fruit will come and it'll be beautiful. You see what this passage teaches us for our life as a church? If we go around trying to impose works, expectations on one another, it's like smearing manure on peaches.

Instead, what we do is we focus on the root, which is Jesus Christ, our mediator, our great high priest. And we, like our confession said, we don't grow negligent.

We stir up this glorious truth right here, the faith in the roots of the church of our lives. Keep emphasizing Christ and faith and all those other graces.

[45 : 23] God will produce. He's the one who does that work. Isn't that comforting? This is helpful to me in my marriage, my parenting, my role as an elder.

Remember what Jesus said in John 3, 19, he who has the bride is the bride groom. Christ has it. He has his church. Revelation 19, 8, we have this promise.

This is the gallery that's yet to come very soon. To her, to the church, the bride was granted for free, a free gift of God, to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Church, you are God's handiwork. You are his new creation. He renews you and makes the fruit of his spirit begin, at least begin to blossom, in your life like a spring bud, and your supply of spiritual life in Christ will never run dry because you are engrafted into Christ himself, who was raised up from the eternal love of the triune God himself.

He adorns you with beauty and color. Why does he do all of this in your life and in mine? It's not for your boasting, not for your glory, any more than his handiwork is for the glory of the trees themselves.

[46 : 48] When Jesus Christ, the king, walks through New Jerusalem, his church, which he describes like a forest, like a garden, he does not praise the leaves, but he praises the vine dresser who planted him, the tree, and who does all the tending of all the branches.

It's for the glory of God. He lavishes the riches of his grace because of his kindness to you and me in Christ. He does this for his glory as our creator, sustainer, recreator, renewer, and adorer to the praises of his glory, to keep his everlasting covenant with his son who has already clothed us and is adorning us more and more for the praise of his Holy Spirit who takes the son's love for God and grows it in God's people, who takes the son's love for others and grows it in the church, and for the glory of the son, Jesus Christ who will receive us in glory very soon when our lives come to an end or when he returns.

Revelation 19 7 encourages us, let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory for the marriage supper of the lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready.

In Song of Solomon, chapter 4, verse 7, we get an idea of the words of Christ to his church, his bride. He will look at us and say, you are all fair, my love, there is no spot in you.

In Isaiah 62, 5, we're told that as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over the church.

[48 : 37] With every breath, as we sang last week, because of his spirit in us, I long to follow Jesus now, for he has said that he will bring me home, and day by day I know he will renew me until I stand with joy before the throne.

To this I hold, even with a weak trembling hand. My hope is only Jesus, all the glory ever more to him. When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

Give him all the glory, all the glory ever more to him. Let's pray. Oh Lord, we praise you. You're our gracious redeemer, our loving savior.

Thank you for your promises. You have adorned your church for your glory already with clothing us in Christ's righteousness and you are doing this more and more by working out Christ who dwells in us into every aspect of our life, Lord.

We do pray, Father, that we will trust you more today, more this hour, and that you who began a good work, you who are the founder of our faith, will continue to show yourself true to your promises as the perfecter of our faith.

[50 : 02] We ask for your own sake. Amen.