

***Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024***  
***ROOTED AND ESTABLISHED***

*Prayer*

Lord, help us to understand that of ALL our salvation, from beginning to end, is your work and that we contribute nothing save for our sins to the process.

Amen

*Paul's Prayer*

The past couple of weeks the sermons have focused on making sure that you know that you're a member of the family of God – in theological terms, that you have been Justified and are in a right relationship with your creator. In today's Epistle reading, we see Paul's prayer on behalf of the believers in Ephesus, and in one way answers the question: "OK, so what's next?" Theologians use the word Sanctification to describe the growth in our relationship to God once we've recognized, in time and space, that we belong to Him.

*NOT of Ourselves*

Not unlike how we want desperately to think that we've contributed something to our Justification, we also want to believe that we assist God in our Sanctification. We want to take the credit when our new spiritual nature wins a couple of battles with our old sin nature and we

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sin a little less, give up a bad habit, attend church more, or even read the bible one in a while. To even claim that credit is itself sinful – because the focus is on us and not on God. Only the Holy Spirit within us that can produce any change of attitude or behavior that our Holy God would consider good.

*Context*

If we take a moment and look at some of the earlier parts of the letter, we find Ephesians 2:8-10. You often hear only verses 8 and 9 cited to support the truth of *Sola Fide*, by faith alone, as follows:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Verse 10 follows and completes the thought:

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

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Immediately before today's reading, Paul writes of how God's plan to redeem the world includes not only the Jews but the Gentiles as well.

*Faith*

Paul must not have had a good rhetoric teacher, as verses 14 – 19 are one long run-on sentence; as you may have guessed from the title, I'd like us to focus our thoughts primarily on that section noted as verse 17:

*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*

How do we get faith? Paul taught the church at Rome thus (Rom 10:17):

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

And you're hear that word of Christ **here and now** – the remembrance of the words spoken at your Baptism, the word of Absolution of the forgiveness of your sins spoken by the Pastor, the Old Testament and Epistle read by Elder, the reading of the Gospel, the preaching of this sermon, and the visible words of the body and blood of Christ, in, with,

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and under form of bread and wine. We call what we're doing Divine Service, because God is providing his free gift of grace to us. We need His service, He doesn't need our worship.

*Rooted and Grounded*

The next phase - being rooted and grounded in love - brings to mind trees, bushes, and crops. Throughout the scriptures, we see the use of plants as an analogy between God and those whom he has called.

In the first Psalm, we read (Ps 1:1-3):

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*He is like a **tree planted by streams of water** that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

And in the John's Gospel, the connectedness between Christ and his followers is reinforced (John 15:5-6):

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*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*

There are lots more, but I want to focus on the relationship between the plants (you and I) and farmer or vinedresser (Christ Jesus).

I know that some of you have been farmers and I know that at least a couple of you garden, as evidenced by the roses around the church. You don't have to answer out loud, but think about this – what do the plants contribute to their growth and the flowers or foods they produce?

The answer is, **nothing** – they just do what they were designed by God to do – they behave according to their nature.

On the other hand, what does the farmer do?

Everything!

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**He provides water:** As recorded by John, Jesus promised (John 7:37-38):

*On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

**He provides food:** Again, in John's Gospel, Jesus declares (John 6:48-51):

*I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. **I am the living bread that came down from heaven.** If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

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**He fertilizes us:** in the manner of the vinedresser in His parable as recorded by Luke (Luke 13:6-8):

*And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.*

**He prunes us:** John records the words of Christ (John 15:1-2):

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

And the results of all of God's work on us? Ephesians 2:10 says it all:

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

And just like our worship, God doesn't need these good works and neither do we, but our neighbor does.

The exhortations contained in the Bible to pray, witness, fellowship with other believers, or read; mark; learn; and inward digest scripture are God's promised to us in order to sustain and strengthen His relationship with us, NOT a new law that you MUST obey, once you recognized that God has indeed called you to be one of his children.

And if you ever hear a preacher, including me, **TELL** you that you **MUST** do something because you're a member of God's family, remember that's as silly as the gardener talking to the rosebushes outside and commanding them to bloom or the farmer ordering the apple tree to produce good fruit. It's a waste of breath, for these things happened as a natural result of what they are. We too, product good works only



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because of the new nature within us and they are as inseparable from each other heat is from fire.

May the Holy Spirit continue to work through you to produce the good works that God has prepared for you to do and may you not be anxious about them, since He holds you in the palm of His hand.

AMEN