

## Fixing What Can't Be Fixed

### Ephesians 2:4-10 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

"What can I do?" That's the thought bubble I have whenever a problem comes before me. Someone says I need to get from point A to point B. My mind says, "Well, let's look at Google Maps. Let's see the quickest route. Can I show you the way? Is this something I can offer to do? Maybe I'm even planning on going that direction. Is there another solution to get you there such as public transportation?" Someone says that they don't know how they are going to pay their bills. My mind says, "Well, how much are we talking? Is this something that I can help with? Is this something bigger that I would need to bring to a bigger group of people? Have they checked out the local aid? How about the federal aid? How is your budget? Have you ever done a Financial Peace University, a Dave Ramsey course? Is there anything you can postpone or do without for a little bit to make it through?" Someone says that they don't know how they are going to move all their stuff. My mind immediately goes to, "Well, I can pick stuff up and put it on a truck and unload it. I know some people that I can ask to help with that. I know a few people with some trucks." I can fix this.

Then come the harder ones. The perfectionist who is in tears because they feel as if everything that they have done is a failure and that they are a nuisance, a burden, on all those around them. Doesn't matter how many times I say that they are not a failure, the feeling doesn't leave. To the person who is grieving, I can tell them that God is always with them, that God has conquered death for them, that one day God himself will wipe every tear from their eyes, but the grief does not instantly stop at these words and promises and great truths. For the person sharing with me the anxiety that they have, I can explain up and down how this is needless, irrational worrying, that God is in control, but that doesn't make the anxiety stop. I can't fix these things. That's when I feel powerless. That's when I feel useless and frustrated. This person needs help. I want to help, but I can't fix them with the tools in my kit. Then what good am I if I can't fix things?

The Mr. Fix-It attitude applies to spiritual matters as well. I look at my relationship with God and I examine what needs to be fixed and how I can do it. There's a particular sin in my life that I seem especially prone to. Well, then I gotta fix it. I just have to avoid those times when I'm tempted. I have to have a stronger will, and then I'll overcome it. I can change my life. I can make it better. I can be more God-pleasing. I can make my relationship right with God. I can fix this.

But can I? I can say all the right things. I can put all the right plans in place. But then I fail. I let that temptation in. I thought I was better than that, but I'm not. That sin wrecks my relationship with God. I'm broken. Can I fix this? I think I can, but the truth is that I cannot. I cannot because as Paul says at one time "we were dead in transgressions." (verse 5) Dead. What can a dead person do? That's right: absolutely nothing. We are powerless to do anything to fix our relationship with God. We can't even lift a finger to help. The Mr. Fix-It side of me does not want to hear this. I can fix so many other things, but I can't fix this. Then what good am I?

The list of things I can't fix just mounts from here. I can't fix your perfectionist attitude. I can't fix your anxiety. I can't fix your grief or depression. I can't fix your marriage. I can't stop bad things from happening to you. I can't fix your relationship with God. I can't even fix myself. But I put it all on me. Has my Mr. Fix-It personality started to turn me into my own personal Jesus, that I fix things, I fix people, I am their Savior, that this is how I find value in my life? Am I and my Mr. Fix-It personality my idol, my false god?

I need to stop looking at me to fix everything and instead look to God. I may not be able to fix so many things in this life, but God fixes what no one else can fix. I mean, we saw this all throughout Jesus' ministry. There was a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. She had spent all her money on doctors and remedies, but nothing worked. No one could fix it, until Jesus. She only touched Jesus' clothes and Jesus instantly healed her. There was a man born blind. No one could fix it. In fact, people blamed him and/or his parents for sinning so grievously against God as if that is what caused his blindness. Then Jesus came along. He spit on the ground, made some mud, put it on the man's eyes, sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam, and the man could see for the first time in his life. He was fixed. In the Old Testament times while the Israelites were wandering and complaining against God before reaching the Promised Land, people started dying from venomous snake bites. God fixed this problem of death by instructing Moses to fix a bronze snake up on a pole so that when anyone who was bitten looked at it, they would be healed. God fixes what we can't fix.

God also fixes the most important thing that none of us could fix: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” (John 3:14-15) By lifting up Jesus on the cross, God fixes the problem of eternal death, of an eternal sentence in hell, a sentence we deserve when we make ourselves into our own personal saviors thinking that we can fix anyone and everything, including ourselves and our relationship with God. God calls out that idol in our lives. He shows us that we can’t fix ourselves and our relationship with him so that we instead look to him and what he fixes. As Paul put it, God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.” (verse 5) God fixed us. We were completely powerless to fix our spiritually dead state, but not God. He made us alive. He saved us. He fixed us!

But why would God do this? It’s not because we pleaded our case. It’s not because we were so pitiful that it moved his heart. It’s not some “with great power comes great responsibility” that God has to fix us because he is able to. Listen to the piling up of terms of why God fixed us: “Because of his great love for us,” “God...is rich in mercy,” (verse 4) “In order that...he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (verse 7) “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (verses 8-9) God fixing us is his gift to us. He gave it to us because he loved us with a great love. He gave it to us because he has a wealth of mercy, this deep, unending pool of mercy, mercy which treats us not as we deserve or ought to be treated. This is grace. God’s grace, his undeserved love freely given to us, is what caused him to fix us, to make us alive, to save us, to fix the problem of death by giving us eternal life and closing the possibility of being condemned to hell as we tried to fix ourselves.

When you step back and see all his great free love that God has loved us with, that fixed us, now my Mr. Fix-It stands down and stands aside. It’s not about me fixing others and their problems. It’s not about me being other people’s saviors or even my own savior. It’s about God fixing us, fixing what we cannot fix. He took us from spiritual death and made us alive. He rescued us from condemnation and made us alive for eternal life with him.

God can and does fix what we can’t fix. He is that powerful, and he is that unbelievably loving. So, if your perfectionist attitude persists, if your grief lingers and hangs on, if the anxiety never fully go away, if struggles still come at a frantic pace, then I let go of the idea of me being the one to fix it, of being my own savior or being someone else’s savior or looking to other people to fix me. I admit my powerlessness. Instead, I give it to God. God, you fix what needs fixing. You help me get through my struggles. Since you have fixed the problem of my spiritual death and have already made me alive, since you have already saved me, then you’ll take care of the rest, even if I don’t understand why you allow these things in my life. Since you have fixed me out of your grace, I know that you love me too much to cause me to needlessly suffer. So, God, I trust you to fix what else in my life needs fixing that I can’t fix.

I can’t fix everything, but that doesn’t mean God has left you and me here without purpose. We may not be able to fix the world’s problems, our local problems, or even the problems in our own lives, but Paul reminds us: “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (verse 10) We have a God-given purpose, and that may certainly include fixing things.

These good works that God prepared in advance for us to do may not be fixing the world, but rather simple works like changing diapers, reading stories to our children, coloring with them, picking the kids up from school, doing our homework, getting to work on time, putting in your time and attention in school or at work, being nice to the check-out person at the grocery store who has obviously had a hard day, picking up and throwing away trash as you see it, sending a hand-written card or text to someone to let them know that you are thinking about them. These good works prepared in advance for us to do are things like greeting people at church who you don’t know and talking with the people you do know. These works are bringing goodies for potlucks or for treats after service. They are picking up things that you see need tidied around here, holding doors open for people, spending the time to listen to someone without trying to fix their problems. Of course, the greatest work that God has prepared in advance for us to do is to tell others how he fixes what we can’t fix, how he made us alive when we were spiritually dead, how he saved us out of his great love for us, a great love that he has for them as well.

God fixes what we can’t fix. His great grace fixed us. Now, let’s go and do those good works he has prepared in advance for us to do. Amen.