

God's Work in Us and Through Us

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[0 : 0 0] God's at work. Whether you are a child of His or not, He's working. If you haven't trusted Christ as your Savior, He's calling you to come to Him. And if you are already a child of God, He's working in you, and He is working through you. For we are His workmanship. Let's take a look.

We are in the book of Ephesians, chapter number 2, and this morning we're going to be in verse number 10. The first thing that we're going to look at is in that first phrase of verse 10.

The second thing in the second phrase. Verse number 10 reads, For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto, or the purpose, for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. The Greek word translated workmanship is not a word that most people would expect right here. That word that the Apostle Paul used is the Greek word *poiema*, and that might sound familiar. It's the word from which we get our English word poem.

So think about this with me. God says, you are His poem. What is a poem? A poem well written is a piece of art, is a creation, something that was created out of the creative mind.

It means that which is made, and that which is manufactured, or a manufactured product. So the word Paul used is, we were literally made, we were manufactured when we trusted Christ as our Savior, and we became a work of art. We became something that God Himself created. In other words, our conversion is not the end. Our salvation is not the end-all be-all. And there are so many who look at salvation as, oh, I've arrived, I've trusted Christ as my Savior, now I'm no longer going to hell, and so I can just coast, and I can enjoy life. Well, it's just like birth.

[2 : 3 5] Not that babies think, but not necessarily the way we understand it. But who would say, well, okay, I'm born, that's it. Yeah, I'm going to die like this. Seven years later, I'll be, you know, eight pounds, six ounces, can't speak, need to have someone to change my diapers. No, what's wrong with that picture? We're supposed to grow. We're supposed to mature. And as we age, we learn new things, and we're able to do new things, and we become someone that is productive, and we will make a difference in this world. And that is the same in our Christian life.

Our conversion, our salvation is not the end. It's simply the beginning, and we begin to grow from there. 2 Corinthians 5, 17, we're part of God's new creation, and God continues to work in us, and he continues to make us into who he wants us to be. His purpose is to make us more like his son, Jesus Christ. Romans chapter 8 and verse 29 tells us that in order to accomplish it, God goes to work in us the moment that we trust Christ as our Savior. So the first area where we see God work is in us. God wants to work in us. If we will but allow him, God wants to begin something in you. He wants to take that new creation, and he wants to build upon it. It's the foundation, and upon the foundation we begin to build a superstructure, and that's what God is doing with us. Our salvation is the foundation. That's where we start. That's where we begin, and God begins to build from there. But how does God do that? How does he build within us? Philippians 2, 13, through his Holy Spirit, the Bible says, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. That's how God works in us. It's however he wants to. So whatever he wants to do that is right for us in order to help us to be who he wants us to be. Christ's finished work on the cross accomplished our redemption. But he arose from the dead, and he returned to heaven.

And there he carries on his unfinished work of perfecting his church, perfecting his body. Salvation, the work on the cross, atonement was finished. But Jesus isn't finished with working on us through his Holy Spirit, through his word, through prayer we're going to see in a moment.

God is continuing to work. He's equipping us for our walk here on this earth. He is helping us to become who he wants us to be. And to do this, he uses three special tools. The first tool is his word, 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 13. Second, in Ephesians 2, Ephesians 3, prayer. And then thirdly, again, rather an unusual tool that God uses. He uses suffering. We see that in 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 11 through verse 14. And as we read God's word and understand it, we meditate on it. We think on it. And we feed on it. And God's word begins to go to work in our life to cleanse us and to nourish us. As we pray, God's Holy Spirit releases his power within us. And as we suffer, the Holy Spirit ministers to us. The Holy Spirit comes and applies that healing balm that only he can.

And it's within that time of suffering and within that time of ministering to us that our relationship grows closer and grows deeper with our Heavenly Father. And suffering drives us back to the word and back to prayer. So it's a cycle. We suffer. We're driven back to God and his word. We're driven to God and his word. And we pray. And God allows us to go through more suffering in order to strengthen us and to deepen that relationship, which drives us back to his word repeated over and over again.

[7 : 15] The thing is, too many Christians think that conversion is the only important experience and that nothing else matters quite so much in our life. But this is wrong. And we can use the resurrection of Lazarus as an example. Do you remember the account of Lazarus where he had been placed in the tomb? He had the grave clothes on him. He had been dead for a period of time.

His family says, well, Lord, it's too late because he's been dead for this period of time. And by now he stinks. And so it's kind of pointless trying to raise him from the dead or to go into the tomb and say hello. It's just too late. And after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, what did he say?

Loose him and let him go. In other words, this man's alive. Get him out of the grave clothes. He's alive and he's no longer in the graveyard.

I've taken him out of the graveyard. And so let him go and let him live his life. So Paul has this concept in mind in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 22 through 24.

When he writes, he says that you put off the former conversation or behavior, the old man, which is corrupt, and that you put on the new man, that new nature that you and I have, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

[8 : 57] Colossians chapter 3 has the same message that the apostle Paul had earlier says, since you then be risen with Christ, he says, seek those things which are above.

So once we trust Christ as our Savior, our brand new life begins. But it's at that point in time that we begin looking after or our attention is turned toward the things of God and toward the things of heaven. And the same resurrection that the same resurrection power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is at work in you and me.

It's working day in and day out. That saved the same resurrection power that saved us and took us out of that great graveyard of sin is the power that helps us to live our daily life that honors and pleases him. And at the great expense of Christ himself, or God himself, God worked for us on the cross.

And today on the basis of the price that Jesus paid at Calvary, he's working in us to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ.

He's working in us to make us like him. God can't work in us until he's worked for us. He did that on the cross of Calvary.

[10 : 23] And after we've trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior, God begins to work in us. And he can't work through us until he begins that work in us.

This is why it's important for us to spend time in God's Word. This is why it's important for us to pray and yield to the Holy Spirit's power in our lives as we grow in our Christian life and during times of suffering.

Because it's through the Word, through prayer, and through suffering that God works in us. Now there are so many Bible examples of God using that process.

I think of Moses. And do you remember the life of Moses? God spent 40 years working on Moses.

Working in Moses. Before God could work through him, God had to work in him. You remember at the beginning of his ministry, he was pretty impetuous.

[11 : 26] Even killed an Egyptian because he got angry. And he was short-tempered. And so he had to flee out into the wilderness.

And hardly a successful start to a ministry. And so for 40 years, God is at work in Moses. Working in him.

Growing him. Showing him that he's there for him. That he's in control. He humbled him as a shepherd in the desert. Moses experienced God's work in his life.

A working. That prepared him for the following 40 years. Where God would use him to deliver his people. And be able to lead them. Hopefully, ultimately to the promised land.

But we know that that didn't happen. His people, the next generation, ended up going into the promised land. So God, for 40 years, humbled him. Worked in him as a shepherd.

[12 : 27] Preparing him for the next 40 years. Where God would be able to use him for 40 more years of magnificent service. There are other examples. Do you remember Joseph? Joseph, as a young man, had a dream.

That everyone else would be bowing down to him. But it took him quite some time. It took 13 years before God would place him on the throne. Second in command to Pharaoh.

And he was then able to help the rest of the world. And also save his family. Family through which the Lord Jesus Christ ultimately would be born.

We see David. David was anointed as king as a youth. But what did David have to do? God had to work in David as an exile for all of those years before he was able to be crowned as king.

Even the apostle Paul. What happened to Paul after he trusted Christ? He spent three years in the desert in Arabia. Undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ teaching him about who he was. And so it took a period of time for God to work in Paul before God could work through Paul.

[13 : 40] No doubt experiencing God's deeper work preparing him for his future. So God has to work in us before God can work through us.

So are we letting him work in us today? Or are we doing our own thing? That leads us to the fourth work which we've been looking at the previous three weeks.

And so we'll look next at the next work that Paul talks about. And that is that God wants to work through us. He's working in us so that he can ultimately work through us.

Let's look back at Ephesians 2.10. For we are his creation. We're his handiwork. We're his workmanship. But what do we see next?

We are created in Christ Jesus unto or for the purpose of what? Good works. He wants to work through us so that what we do as a follower of him shows the rest of the world how awesome God is.

[14 : 47] Not that our good works are anything really. We're going to talk about that in a moment. But our good works, they're only good works because God works them through us.

We are created in Christ Jesus unto or for good works. We're not saved by good works, but we're saved unto good works.

We're saved for that purpose. The famous theologian John Calvin wrote this. He said, it is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.

We see that born out in James chapter 2. What does James say? If you've got faith, it's going to be proven by your what? By your works. He said, because if you show me someone that doesn't do the works of the Spirit, I'm going to show you someone that doesn't have faith, or at least not saving faith.

Paul focused on faith because his audience were so keyed up on works. Got to do this to be right with God.

[15 : 58] Paul says, no, you don't have to do anything to be right with God. It's by faith alone. James dealing with a totally different audience. And he was dealing with an audience that says, all you got to do is have faith.

And I don't have to do anything. James saying, no, you got faith. It follows that you will prove, show that you are a part of God's family by living like you're a part of God's family.

So James says, you've got to prove your faith by your works, or your faith will be proven by your works. We're not saved by faith plus good works, but by a faith that works.

We're not saved by faith plus works, but we're saved by a faith that is powerful and that will prove itself by the outworking of good works.

And the basic scripture, as we said, is James chapter number two. And the Bible speaks of all kinds of different works, many, many different kinds of works.

[17 : 05] There are the works of the law, which the Bible says can't save. There are the works of the flesh. They're listed in Galatians chapter five, verses 19 through 21. Paul spoke of the works of darkness.

Romans chapter 13 and Ephesians five. Hebrews six one talks about dead works. Or works that lead to death.

Since the wages of sin is death. Romans six 23. Then we also have the works of righteousness. Titus three five refers to the works that we do after or religious works.

Rather Isaiah. Now think about this. Isaiah declared that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in his sight.

Isaiah 64 six. So think about this with me, if you will. If our righteousnesses. Now say that fast three times. If our righteousnesses are filthy.

[18 : 12] What must our sin look like? If righteousness is filthy. If the best thing that we can do. The best thing that we can do in our life.

On our own is filthy. Imagine what sin. Must look like to God. So the works. The apostle Paul talks about here.

Created. In Christ Jesus. For good works. Or unto good works. Have two special characteristics. The first characteristic. That we see.

Is that they are good works. That they are. Good works. In contrast to the works of. Darkness. And wicked works.

So if we contrast. Chapter two verse ten. We are created. In Christ Jesus. For good works. And Ephesians chapter two verse two.

[19 : 06] Where it says. In which you once walked according to the prince of the power of the air. Who now works. In the sons or the children of disobedience. We see chapter two verse ten.

Talking about created. For good works. Because before we trusted Christ as our savior. It was Satan. Who worked in us.

The evil works of darkness. So those are contrasted. After we trust Christ. We're able to do. Good works that honor.

And please. Our heavenly father. The believer has gone working in us. Now our works are not good. Because we do them. Our works are good. Because God can do them.

Or God does them. Through us. Because we have that new nature from God. The Holy Spirit. Works. In us. And through us. To produce. These good works.

[20 : 04] Now it's too bad that so many Christians minimize. The place. Of good works. In our life. We put so much attention on.

It's just by faith. All we've got to do is trust Christ. And we tend to coast along. In our Christian life. And we look at others. Who are changing the world.

They're doing things. That are amazing. And accomplishing so many things. For human justice. Or other things. That they're doing.

And we say. Oh well you know. That's great. That's all for them. But what are. What are we doing? Do you realize that. The things that we do. That are good works. Shows the rest of the world.

How awesome. And how great. God is. We don't do it. To show off. We do it. Because it shows. Excuse me. How good. God is.

[20 : 57] Matthew 5. 16. Let your light. So shine before men. That they may see. Your what? Good works. Let our light shine. Before the world. That they might see.

Good works. And ultimately. Says they will glorify God. Which is in heaven. So we don't. Do good works. To glorify ourselves. We don't do good works.

Just because. Maybe we're following. A party line. We don't do good works. Because of any other reason. Other than. We want to honor. And glorify God. We want to exalt him. And say.

Look at how good. God is. 2nd Corinthians 9. 8 says. We should abound. To every good work. We should be doing things. That are good. And just. And right.

And serving. Others. Around us. And Colossians 1.10. We're supposed to be fruitful. In every. Good work. Do you see a pattern. In scripture.

[21 : 54] We're to be doing what. Good works. So. We should be busy. After we trust Christ. As our savior. Salvation is not the end. It's just.

The beginning. And so. He wants us. He wants to work. He works in us. So that. He can work. Through. Us. Our result. Or one result.

Of a knowledge of the Bible. Is that the believer. According to 2nd Timothy 3.17. Is thoroughly equipped. For every. Good work.

There's that. There's that. That phrase again. That. Or that. That word. In. In the original language. As believers. Titus 2.14. We should be zealous for.

Good works. And you thought good works. Didn't show up in the Bible. Very much. It's on. And on. And on. Our works are actually. Spiritual sacrifices.

[22 : 50] That we offer to God. Hebrews 13. Says. You know. You think. Well. We don't do sacrifices anymore. Well. Yes. We do. Because. Remember. Remember. What does Romans chapter 12.

Verse 1 and 2 say. That we're to offer ourselves. Our bodies as what? A living. Sacrifice. And then. That's right. And when we.

Serve him. And when we do. Good works. It. Glorifies him. And we're offering. Those good works. Literally.

As sacrifices to God. And saying. God. You provided this. And I'm simply giving it. Back. To you. Our good works. Are evidence. That we've been born again.

Matthew 7. 21. Not everyone. Said. Said. To me. Lord. Lord. That saith to me. Lord. Lord. Shall enter. Into the kingdom of heaven. Not everybody. That does good works.

[23 : 47] Will be in heaven. Think about that. Not everybody. That says. Oh. I'm a Christian. I'm a Baptist. I'm a Methodist. I'm a whatever. It doesn't matter.

What matters is. Have you trusted Christ. As your Savior. Are you trusting. In the finished work. Of Jesus Christ. On the cross of Calvary. To be the.

The full and complete. Atonement. For your sin. Where you. We are regenerated. And we're given. A brand new life. In Christ. He says. Not everyone. That says to me.

Lord. Lord. Shall enter. Into the kingdom of heaven. But he says. But he. That doeth. The will. Of my father. Which is in heaven. And so we need to be doing God's will. To show.

That we've trusted. Or that we are a part. Of the family of God. Our all. Our good works. Are also. A testimony. To those who don't know Christ. As our Savior. First Peter. Chapter 2.

[24 : 41] Verse 12. And what do they do? Our good works. That are done. Through the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Literally. Win us. The right.

To be heard. If you're talking to someone. Who doesn't know Jesus. And. You come across. As holier than thou. Or you come across. As judgmental.

Or you come across. In any way. Such as that. People will probably. Shut you down. And say. What right. Do you have. To talk to me.

What. Who are you. But if we. Empowered. By God's Holy Spirit. Allow him. To work. Through us. And allow.

Our good works. To be a positive testimony. To those who don't know Christ. As their Savior. It can pave the way. For them to listen to us. When we share.

[25 : 38] The glorious gospel. With them. One pastor told. About. Christian lady. Years ago. Who often visited. A retirement home.

And. One day. As she was going through. And she was talking. To the residents. It was. Lunchtime. And. She comes to this.

Older man. Who was sitting by himself. And. He was staring. At his dinner tray. And. Very softly. She.

She. She. Speaks to him. And she says. Is. Something wrong. And he says. Is there something wrong. And he replied. In a very. Very. Heavy. Accent.

He said. Yes. Something is. Very wrong. I am a Jew. And I cannot eat. This food. And she said. Well. What would you like.

[26 : 33] To have. He said. Well. I would like. A bowl of soup. And so. What she did. Was. She went home. And she. She prepared. A bowl of soup.

In a. In a fashion. In a way. That he would be able. To eat. She brought it back. To the retirement home. She checked with. With the. With the staff. And asked if it would be okay.

And she went. And she brought him. The soup. And in. Succeeding weeks. She did that. Over and over again. She would. Prepare. A bowl of soup. Or she would prepare. Something that.

That he could eat. She would bring it. To the retirement home. And she would. Serve him. Eventually. She led him. To faith in Christ. It was.

Those good works. That she did. That paved the way. For this elderly gentleman. To have his heart. Softened. And his mind.

[27 : 28] To be open. To the gospel. And to see. That Jesus Christ. Is. The Messiah. And he was. And he is his Messiah. And so.

It was her good works. That paved the way. For him. To do that. So. It is. Good works. That God. Hath prepared. Beforehand. That we should.

Walk. In. Them. The only other time. This word's used. In the New Testament. Is Romans. Chapter 9. Verse 23. The Bible says. We are. Vessels.

Of mercy. God. Works. In us. As his. Vessel. So that. He is. Going to be. Working. Through us. That he has. Prepared.

Verse 10 says. So we're his workmanship. We are. Created. For good works. And God. Prepared.

[28 : 23] Beforehand. That we should. Do those good works. So that word. Prepared. As we said. Occurs only one. One other time. In. Romans. 9. 23. That we are.

Vessels. Of mercy. Mercy. Which he had. Afore. Prepared. Unto glory. So God. Prepared. Us. To do. Good works. Under the power.

Of his. Holy. Spirit. The believer. The person. The child of God. Walks. In good works. Because God. Has prepared. Beforehand. That we should. Walk.

In. Those. Good. Works. Paul says. We need to be. Getting. Getting. Busy. The will of God. Comes.

From. The heart of God. Now. Are we wearing. The grave. As we close. The question is. Are we wearing. The grave clothes. Or. The grace clothes.

[29 : 18] Are we still. In that great. Graveyard. A spiritual death. Or have we trusted Christ. As our savior. And we're. We have new life. And. We're born again.

Unto. Good. Works. Are we enjoying. Our liberty. In Christ. Are we still. Bound by the habits. Of the old life. As a Christian.

As a follower. Of Christ. We've been raised. From the dead. We've been seated. On the throne. With Christ. We need to practice. Our position.

In. Christ. He's worked. For us. He is working. In us. Because. He wants to work. Through us. That he might give us.

An exciting. Creative. Life. To the glory of God. Let's pray. Father. This morning. As we. Come to the close. Of this. Message.

[30 : 14] In verse number 10. We ask that you. Would help us. To understand. And realize. The place. That good works. Have. In our life. Where. You use your word. You use prayer. You use our suffering. To draw us closer. To you. And to prepare us. To do the good works. That you have. Prepared beforehand. For us to be doing. Help our lives. To show. To the rest of the world. That we belong to you. That you are a good God. And that you love us. And that you made a way possible. For us to be made right with you. Through Jesus Christ. Lord. Lord. We thank you. And we praise you for this. For we pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.