

I Am God's Masterpiece!

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship ("work of art", "masterpiece"), created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Background:

- 1) All people are God's physical children. We are all created by Him and in His image (Genesis 1:26-27).
- 2) Only some people are God's spiritual children. We become God's spiritual child by responding in faith to the gift of salvation that God offers via Jesus' payment on the cross (Ephesians 2:1-9; John 1:12-13).
- 3) When we are saved we become new creations (2 Cor 5:17), and are God's workmanship, His "work of art" and "masterpiece". We are created to do good works which God has planned for us (Ephesians 2:10).

Masterpieces:

What are the characteristics of a masterpiece?

- a) Low value or high value?
- b) Created carelessly or carefully?
- c) Custom made or mass produced?

GOOD WORKS – "LOVE IN ACTION"

I John 3:17-18

"I know this now. Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing and they give their lives to little or nothing. One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it. And then it is gone. But to sacrifice what you are and live without belief, that's more terrible than dying". Joan of Arc

WHAT

What are good works?

Good works represent "love in action" (I John 3:17-18)

“Christianity is not just about helping you become a better person; Christ came into your life so you could help make the world a better place” (from “The Externally Focused Church” by Rusaw and Swanson)

- 1) There are two categories of good works:
 - a) General works - we are all intended to do (e.g. love our neighbors)
 - b) Specialized works – specific works that only we can and should do, based on our specific SHAPE and opportunities He gives us.

- 2) General Good Works – some examples:
 - a) Love God and Love People (Mat 22:34-40)
 - b) Make disciples of Jesus (Mat 28:18-20)
 - c) Be witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8)
 - d) Glorify God in all that we do (I Cor 10:31)
 - e) Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances (I Thes 5:16-18)
 - f) Let the word of God dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16)
 - g) Meet needs of others (Titus 3:14), including feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, giving drink to the thirsty (Mt 25:31-46; Jam 2:15-16). Meet the needs of the saints and practice hospitality (Rom 12:13).
 - h) Visiting orphans and widows (Jam 1:27).
 - i) Giving cheerfully (II Cor 9:7-8).
 - j) Many others

- 3) Specialized works – potential good works unique to us based on our personal SHAPE:
Spiritual Gifts
Heart
Abilities
Personality
Experiences

- 4) Charles Spurgeon’ groupings of good works:
 - a) Works of obedience – obeying the teachings of scripture
 - b) Works of love – love for God and love for people
 - c) Works of faith – relying upon God and His promises
 - d) Acts of common life – whatever you do (work, traveling, on a sick bed, etc.) do it all for the glory of God (I Cor 10:31)

5) Here are some biblical examples of people who did good works:

- Good Samaritan - made an effort to help someone who was in need (Luke 10:25-37).
- The woman who poured perfume on Jesus (Mt 26:6-13).
- Tabitha (also known as Dorcas) (Acts 9:36).
- Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2).
- Epaphras (Col 4:12)

WHY

Sincere Good Works - (Matthew 6:1-18)

Doing the right things for the wrong reasons (e.g. to gain the honor and recognition of others) undermines the purity of our good works. Jesus encourages us to let our good deeds be seen so that onlookers will glorify God (chapter 5), not that they will be impressed by us (chapter 6).

[Concept of the “Audience of One” (Col 3:17, 23-24). Jesus should be the audience that motivates us and that we play to. We should do everything as if we were doing it for Him and for His glory].

Jesus desires for His followers to do sincere (properly motivated) good works. Sincere good works draw us closer to God, strengthens His Kingdom, benefit others and benefit ourselves. Three specific works are highlighted in this section:

1) Giving (verses 1-4)

Giving should be motivated by our desire to help people, not bring honor to us. God will reward us for properly motivated giving.

2) Prayer (verses 5-15)

Prayer should be sincere from the heart, not techniques or formulas to try and manipulate God. The Lord’s Prayer models a balance including worship, focus on God’s kingdom, character development and meeting of needs.

3) Fasting (verses 16-18)

Fasting helps us focus on God and attract His attention. It humbles and softens us, and helps us better concentrate and increase our sensitivity to working of the Spirit.

Why should we NOT do good works (i.e. what are some wrong motivations)?

- To earn our salvation. We are saved by FAITH (Eph 2:8-9).
- To keep our salvation. We are justified by FAITH (Rom 3:28,5:1; Gal 2:16, 3:24).
- To bring glory to ourselves (Phil 2:3-4; I Cor 10:24; Mat 6:1-18).

What are some proper motivations to do good works?

- 1) God created us to do good works; true faith should result in good works (Eph 2:10; James 2:14-26)
- 2) We are commanded to:
 - * Bear fruit in every good work (Col 1:10)
 - * Be zealous for good works (Titus 2:14)
 - * Be careful to engage in good deeds (Titus 3:8)
 - * Be DOERS of the Word, not just HEARERS (James 2)
 - * Be ready for every good deed (Titus 3:1)
 - * Meet pressing needs (Titus 3:14)
- 3) We are to love God and our neighbors as ourselves (Mt 22:34-40). A practical way to demonstrate our love is through good works (I John 3:18). Good works benefit others (Mat 5:16-18).
- 4) Good works pave the way for the good news (Acts 9:32-35; Luke 5:17-26).

“In serving others, salvation is our ultimate motive but not our ulterior motive”.

- 5) Good works bring glory to GOD (Mt 5:16; I Pet 2:12; I Cor 10:31). We should do our good works in the name of Jesus (Col 3:17).
- 6) When we help the poor and needy, we are helping Jesus; or help or lack of help for the poor and needy is a test of our relationship with Jesus (Mat 25:31-46; Jer 22:15-16; James 1:27).
- 7) To earn favor with civil authorities so that we can live in peace and share the gospel openly (Rom 13:3; I Tim 2:1-4).
- 8) We are God's fellow workers (I Cor 3:9). God is our example by the great works that He does (Rev 15:3). Jesus was a great example to us (Acts 10:38).
- 9) We are called to external good works, not internal piety (i.e. external focus, not internal focus) (Is 58:1-12).

10) We "reap what we sow" (I Cor 3:8; II Cor 9:6; Prov 12:14).

11) We will be judged for our deeds (Rev 20:12-13; 2 Cor 5:10).

12) Our good works help the church body function well (I Cor 12:12-27)

WHO

Who should do good works?

- All believers (Eph 2:10; Titus 3:8)
- Women (I Tim 2:10)
- Widows (I Tim 5:10)
- Rich (I Tim 2:21, 6:18)
- Young (Titus 2:7)

Who should be on the receiving end of good works?

- All people, especially believers (Gal 6:9-10).
- Poor and needy (Mat 25:31-46)
- Our local community/city (Jer 29:4-7; I Tim 2:1-6).

HOW

We need to do Good Works AND verbally share the Good News (Acts 10:36-38; Rom 10:8-17; I Pet 3:13-16).

What resources are available to us to help us practice good works?

- 1) Jesus strengthens us to do good works (II Thes 2:17).
- 2) The Holy Spirit can give us great power (Acts 1:8).
- 3) God's Word equips us for good works (II Tim 3:17).
- 4) We should stimulate each other to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24).
- 5) Equippers (e.g. Preachers, Teachers) (Eph 4:11-13)

Mother Teresa "We can do no great things, only small things with great love".