

Created with a Purpose **Ephesians 2:8-10**

30 some years ago I met a Christian man with a very unique sense of humor, who by the way was a member of the local Gideon's camp. One day he pointed his accusatory finger at me and said, "...you Pastors have it quite easy because you get paid to be good." Then he said, "Us average lay people, well, we have to be good for nothing!" That was funny!

What's not so funny is the fact that there are some people who are literally good for nothing. They don't know how to give a word of encouragement; they just criticize and tear others down. They never see the good God is doing, they just complain about the negative. And when it comes to doing Kingdom work, they are so busy building their own temporary kingdom that they contribute little or nothing to God's eternal kingdom. Realistically, that probably could be said about all of us at one time or another. Listen: If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then you are not good for nothing; instead you are good for something. Verse 10 says, "We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

You see, God didn't save us just so we could be with Jesus someday in heaven. (although that is one of the great benefits of faith in Jesus Christ!) Nor did He place you on this planet so you could occupy space and use up resources. Nor did He save you so you could watch TV or play video games all day and live a life of comfort. No sir, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ God saved you and placed you here on planet Earth so that He could do something good in you, for you, with you and through you! He saved you to be good for something.

Like Esther, the peasant girl who God sent to the palace to become the queen of Persia. Why? So that God could use her to save His chosen people from being massacred. Like Joseph who was unjustly sold into slavery by his brothers, and who ended up in Egypt. Why? So that God could use him to save His people Israel from starvation. And like the little boy who God placed in a huge crowd one day with his 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. Why? So that the Lord Jesus could miraculously feed over 5000 people.

So God created you and saved you and placed you in a special realm, a certain sphere of influence, for a divine purpose. What is that purpose? To do something good. To advance the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), to bring glory to the glorious name of Jesus (I Corinthians 10:31), to honor Him in the way you live your life (I Corinthians 6:19-20), and to benefit others who are in your realm (I Corinthians 12:7). This is your divine purpose. But, what is your realm? What is your sphere of influence? It is your

family; it is your place of employment; it is your school; it is your neighborhood; it is your church; it is your circle of friends; it is those who are under your authority.

He saved you so that you can be a Kingdom person in a world that is saturated in and dominated by sin. But now brothers and sisters you have a choice to make. You can manage your world, you can rule your realm, you can live out your life in one of two ways: God's way or your way. You see, God never forces us to do it His way. We get to choose that. Yes, you can manage your part of the world your way; but if you do you are on your own. God cannot and will not bless you if you do. And what you will experience is chaos, pain, sin, dysfunction and death. But if you manage your realm, your domain God's way, then He promises to cover you, protect you, provide for you, guide you, and bless you & those in your sphere of influence.

Don't get me wrong: I am not saying that if you live God's way, that you will never experience trials, pain, or sickness. Not at all!! Jesus said in John 16:33 *"In this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* There will be problems, pain, even chaos. But the chaos in the world should not set the agenda in your world nor determine how you live your life or manage your realm.

So you see, God has a "good work" for you to do. He has something good for you to do. But take a look at verse 10 again. Notice the words "which God prepared in advance for us to do." The Psalmist in Psalm 139:16 says it this way, *"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."* You see God has a plan; a divine design for you; a Master blueprint. I don't know about you, but I don't want to get to the end of my life and find out I did not finish the good work that God ordained me to do. Jesus accomplished the divine purpose for His life on Earth. He said, *"I have finished the work which You have given me to do."* (John 17:4) Paul the Apostle finished the good work the Father ordained him to do. He said in 2 Timothy 4:7 *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith..."* And by God's grace so can you and I! How can you and I fulfill God's Purpose for our life? How can I live my life as a Kingdom person in a world that is saturated with sin? How can I finish the "good work" that God has saved me to do? I must follow God's recipe. I must make the right choices!

I Must Choose to Believe I am Who God Says I am. Ephesians 2:1-10

If you are going to become a kingdom person and fulfill your divine purpose, then you must know who you are. You must see who God says you are. In Ephesians 2 Paul rehearses for the ancient believers in Ephesus and for every believer here who we are in Christ.

- V. 5: Once we were dead in our sins. But now because of God's great love and mercy we have been made spiritually alive and given a brand new life in Christ.
- V. 2 & 6: Once we were dominated by sin and enslaved to the ruler of the kingdom of darkness; but now by God's grace we have become a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and in fact are spiritually seated with Christ in the Heavenly Realms.
- V. 3 & 7: Once we were headed for the wrath of God; but now because Christ took that wrath in our place, we are immersed in and destined for the incomparable and eternal riches of God's kindness and grace.

If you are in Christ this morning, then this is who you are! And notice v. 8: this is all a gift from God. It is not something we earned, not something we worked for. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This is where kingdom living begins. You and I must start here. We must get verses 8-9 right first. I must know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I have been born again. That God has made me alive in Christ and given me a new life; He has made me a citizen of His eternal Kingdom; that he has set me free from wrath and poured out His grace and kindness upon me through Christ. It would be good to rehearse this everyday! (Romans 12:2 calls that renewing your mind).

But there is more: I want us to focus on verse 10.

- *“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

Paul says “We are God's workmanship.” The word “workmanship” in the Greek means “a work of art, or a Masterpiece.” It can also mean “a poem.” What is God saying? He is saying that now that you are in Christ He sees you as His Masterpiece. When He looks at you He no longer sees your messed up life; instead He sees that you are a work of art. If you have been born again by the Spirit of God He no longer sees the ugliness of your old sinful life; instead He sees you as poetry in motion. You're His Masterpiece.

Example: Dr. Tony Evans in his book “Kingdom Man” talks about a junkyard specialist named Billy Taylor. Billy goes to junkyards and finds junk that is worthless in everybody else's eyes. Billy looks at junk and he sees a treasure! He takes things that are discarded and worthless and makes them into a treasure; something beautiful—then he sells them for upwards of \$5000!!

Like Billy Taylor, God is a junkyard specialist. He takes an ugly, worthless, helpless, hopeless, and lifeless soul and He recreates it. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ then He has saved you, justified you, redeemed you, set you free, and He makes you into a

work of art, a Masterpiece. What for? To do something good; to advance God's kingdom; to live your life for His honor and glory; and to benefit others for the sake of God's kingdom right here where God has placed you. But the only way you can accomplish these good works that God has planned for you is to know and believe who you are in Christ.

I Must Choose to Submit Myself to the Lordship and Leadership of Christ.

The second key to accomplishing the "Good Work" that God has prepared in advance for us to do is found in Romans 12:1. He says, "*I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship...then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

The apostle Peter declares the same truth in I Peter 3:15. He said, "*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord...*" You see, there is a huge difference between knowing Jesus as Savior, and knowing Him as your Lord. Many Christians have placed their trust in Jesus as their Savior; but have not gotten around to making Him their Lord! The word "Lord" in this verse is the Greek word "kurios" which when translated means Master, Owner, Boss, or King. Many Christians are still sitting in the driver's seat of their lives. They are still sitting on the throne of their lives, still calling the shots and making their own plans and leaning on their own understanding. And they wonder why their lives, families, relationships are all messed up or why God is not using them to do something good. It might be because we have refused to surrender every area of our lives to the lordship and leadership of Jesus.

Example: One reason you and I need to intentionally and daily set apart Christ as Lord, Master, & King in our hearts is because we are not as smart as we think. Our wisdom is at best limited; at worst it is flawed by sin. We can be tricked by the great Deceiver, the world or even our own flesh. But the Lord knows everything. Not only that but He sees everything—every future detail. Obviously we can't see the future. We don't even know what the next moment holds for us. But the LORD does. He sees it all. He sees the end from the beginning. God sees your life as someone would see a parade from the top of the Empire State building. Normally, when we attend a parade we can only see what is directly in front of us. But if we could take the elevator to the top of the Empire State building we could see the entire parade all at the same time. The beginning to the end and everything in between. That's how God sees your life. He sees every detail, every moment of your life as if it were happening right now. Not only that, He holds the perfect blueprint for your life in his hands! His thoughts are higher than yours. His plans

are better than yours. His ways are superior to yours. And He knows what is best for you. You can trust Him with your life.

Listen: if you want to advance the Kingdom of God and live your life in a way that brings glory and honor to Christ and benefits others—if you want to accomplish the “Good Work” God has planned for you to do, then you must deliberately and daily set apart Christ as Lord; you must get out of the driver’s seat of your life, hand Him the keys and submit yourself to His leadership and lordship. The first question a Kingdom person should ask every morning is not “What do I want to do today?” Rather it is, “Lord, what do you want me to do today?” It’s not “Where do I want to go today?” Rather it is “Lord, where do you want me to go today? Lord, who do you want me to spend time with today? Lord, what school do you want me to attend this year? Lord, how do you want to use me today?” Thirdly...

I Must Choose to Become A Life Long Student of God’s Word.

The 3rd key to becoming a Kingdom person and accomplishing the “Good Work” that God has prepared for us to do is found in Paul’s second letter to Timothy—2 Timothy 3:16-17.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Listen: Too often we treat God’s Word like it is a band aid. When we get wounded or banged up because of a difficult trial or a catastrophe, then we run to the Bible and try to find something that will stop the bleeding. That’s not what the Word is talking about here. Having a copy of God’s word available when we have an emergency is not good enough. If we are going to be equipped to do every “good work” that God has planned for us we must become a student of God’s Word. Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 *“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of God.”*

If you don’t know the Word of God then you will never be able to advance the Kingdom of God in your realm, because you will not know what that looks like. If you are not serious about becoming a lifelong student of God’s word then you will never be able to do the “good work” that God has planned for you to do—because you will not know what it is or how to do it.

Example: Several years ago I was talking to a friend who had just bought a brand new Ford Focus. He said, "I had the car for 3 months before I finally figured out how to turn the radio on and change the channel." I asked him how he figured it out. He said, "I had to dig into the glove compartment and read the Owner's Manual." Then he added, "It is amazing what I learned about all the bells and whistles this car has by just reading that book. Did you know my car can tell me when I don't have enough air in my tires and how many miles I have left in the gas tank?"

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you are a work of art; a Masterpiece! God has recreated you in Christ Jesus to do "good works" that He already planned for you to do even before you were born. But in order for you to utilize all the bells and whistles that God has given you as a New Creation in Christ Jesus, you must get into the Owner's Manual! In order for you to know what this new life should look like you must become a Student of God's Word. In order for you and me to accomplish the "good work" He has planned for us to do, then we must devote ourselves to the Reading, Studying, and Obeying of His Divinely inspired word. It is the only Owner's Manual that we have been given!

There are 3 other keys to fulfilling the "good works" God has planned for us to do. Here they are along with the Scripture that support these keys.

I Must Choose to Get Connected to a Great Team. Hebrews 10:24-25

"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Christ's 2nd Coming)." In order for you to fulfill God's purpose for your life, you will need to be a part of a great team. You may be a great running back. But you need someone to hand you the ball. And you need someone to block for you; or you will never score a touchdown. It is the same in the Christian life. In order to fulfill the good work God has planned for you, you will need some great teammates. You can't do it on your own. None of us can. We need each other. We need encouragement, fellowship, accountability, friendship, and we need others to speak into our lives; and we need to do the same for others. You need to get connected to your teammates right here at East Lincoln. You can't hang out on the fringes, you need to jump in with both feet.

I Must Choose to Keep on Practicing Repentance in My Life. 2 Timothy 2:19-21

"Everyone who confesses the name of the LORD must turn away from wickedness...if a person cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work." Here is something you

need to know about God. God cannot hang out with dirty vessels; nor can He use a dirty vessel. So if you plan on accomplishing the Good Work God has for you to do, then you must continue to cultivate an attitude of repentance in your daily walk. In other words, we must constantly confess our sin and forsake our sin and put it to death. “Let us lay aside every weight and sin that so easily besets us...” Hebrews 12:1

I Must Choose to Stay Connected to The Power Source. John 14:12-13

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.”

What an incredible promise! God wants to do great things in you and through you. Jesus wants us to carry on the same Kind of Kingdom work that He did while here on this planet—even greater things! But there is a condition. We must stay connected to the Divine Power Source. We must stay plugged into Him; and we do that through prayer. We must daily, moment by moment recognize our total dependence on Him and His power; constantly crying out to Him to do in us and for us and through us what He wants to do.

Conclusion: So if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, God has saved you and is making you into a Masterpiece. He has placed you right here on this planet. He has given you a realm, a sphere of influence; and He wants to do something good in you, for you, with you and through you. He has a divine design—a blueprint for you to follow so that you can accomplish all this good work that He has planned for you to do. The question is will you accomplish it? Will you finish the good work? You can, if you will follow His plan. You can if you will choose to...(review 6 choices).

I know that there is probably someone here who is thinking, “But Pastor Randy, you don’t know the mess I have made with my life.” You might be thinking, “I was born again years ago, but I have made too many bad choices. I have failed God so many times that He couldn’t possibly use me for His glory.” Well, God wants me to tell you that that is a lie! The Master can take any Mess and Make a Miracle!

Example: Many years ago I owned an old 1967 Ford Galaxy 500. The engine ran great but the body was a mess. The front quarter panel was crinkled because of an accident; there was rust all over the bottom half of the body; and the finish was faded ugly. My plan was to just drive it until it fell apart. But then I met a Master Auto Body man. He was an expert at what he did. He looked at my car and said, “Do you want me to fix that smashed up quarter panel?”

I said, "Not really, the car has way too much rust on it to even bother."

He said, "I can fix that too."

I said, "Naw, it's not really worth it because the paint is so ugly."

He said, "I can fix that too."

So I let the Master take my car to his shop. Several days later he drove it to my front door. I didn't even recognize it. The smashed up quarter panel was gone. All the rust was gone. The ugly paint job was gone and in its place was a bright and shiny paint job. It looked like a brand new car! The Master Auto body man had transformed a mess into a miracle.

So brothers and sisters in Christ, if you think God can't use you because you made a mess of your life, or you failed him too many times, or you've got too many spiritual blemishes to be of any use to the Master. Think again. Let the Master take your messed up life and fix it. Let Him fix your dents, let Him get rid of the rust and let Him fine tune your heart so that He can do all the good works that He has already said you were going to do. Set apart Christ as Lord in your heart so that He can do something good in you and for you and with you and through you. Just come to the Master and He will make you into a Miracle.