

Works Prepared Beforehand 07-18-21

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Years ago I was privy to two conversations that were both on the same subject. Both times the conversation began with a question by a mother of young children who felt guilty about fulfilling other works as a Christian. The mother struggled to balance her children with works such as visiting others, hospitality, etc.. Titus 2 suggests that it is the work of older women to teach younger women on these matters, and so in both cases the appeal was mad. One older woman answered “just do it”, while the other spoke of the importance of the works that they are immediately accountable for. Who was the wise woman?

Paul speaks in Ephesians of the great mystery of being in Christ. Chapter 1 addresses the plan of God through Christ. Chapter speaks to the work of Christ on the cross. Chapter three discusses the revelation of these things through the understandable Word of God and the manifestation of God’s eternal purpose, the church. In the midst of this Paul states in Ephesians 2:10 that our purpose as Christians is to accomplish works that God has prepared for us, works that are called “good works”.

What are the works of being a Christian? Works could be defined as anything that we “do”, any action of any type. “Good Works” are those actions that God commands of us. This is important, as many people defined “good work” as anything they see as good. Yet Jesus states that many on the day of judgment would be refused entry into heaven because they worked their own works, not the works of God (Matthew 7:

21-23). It is important that we understand that the works of being a Christian are prepared even before we were changed. This is the theme of Ephesians 4-6; the works of being a Christian.

The first things Paul addresses is the work of membership in the local church (Ephesians 4:11-16, 5:11-20). Paul seeks to apply to us a family mindset (2:20), telling us to pursue a close relationship with other believers. We know that the moment we are saved we are added to the church. That church membership is a vital part of our faith.

Next Paul speaks about the importance of being pure and sanctified before God. Paul focuses on the matter of keeping ourselves without sin (Ephesians 4:17-32, 5:1-10). We are told that we should be “imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ...”. That is the expectation of God, that we should work out our salvation by modeling our lives after Christ.

In chapter 5-6 Paul then speaks of three sets of relationships that are important works of our faith. First is the marriage relationship in Ephesians 5:22-33. There we see that husbands are to be the head of the marriage and the home. This means that they are responsible for the family. They are accountable for those in their oversight. Wives, by submission, are to enable this responsibility. They are meant to reinforce this structure.

Paul then speaks of the relationship of parents and children in Ephesians 6:1-4. He speaks of parents and the work of focusing themselves on raising saints. He also reminds children, both young and old, to manifest honor and respect to their parents. This is the work of God.

Finally, Paul speaks to servants and masters (for us, employees and employers) who are working as though unto the Lord in Ephesians 6:5-9. This work was seen in those who work for another by a devotion to duty that reflects the grace of God, and that those who are in the position of oversight in a work environment are overseeing as stewards and mindful of their obligation.

It is interesting to note that within these roles arise other works. For example, within our church works there are other opportunities to serve, such as deacon, teacher, elder, song leader, etc.. In the home a parent might take on the role of coach or teacher. In the work environment a worker might become a supervisor or administrator. But here is also a danger. Sometimes we lose perspective by these secondary works to our primary works. Sometimes a preacher forgets to be a husband, or a coach forgets to be a worshipper. Other times we feel guilty because our primary works might prevent a secondary pursuit. But we need to understand that it is the primary works that must take precedence.

Let us return to the scenario we began with; the mother of small children feels guilty for not doing more to serve God as perhaps she sees other doing. But the right answer is this: focus on the work that is in front of you. It is a good work, a work of God to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That important work, created beforehand, must take precedence to those secondary opportunities. There is no reason to feel guilt, since there will be opportunity later to do these other works. But being a mom or dad, being a member of the local church, working to be like Christ, working in our job, or working to be the right husband or wife are works that God holds us most accountable for, and we need to be fulfilling those works before we move on to more sophisticated works authorized by God.