

“Work on Me, Jesus!” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

TEXT (VERSES 8-10)

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

COMMENTARY

Verses 8-9. In these verses, Paul sums up the Gospel message. Grace is a gift of God. It does not come to us through any merit of our own. The human response to God's grace is faith. Paul goes on to state that the grace that we have received is “not by works, so that no one can boast.” This is true because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Because salvation does not come from human effort, it cannot lead to spiritual pride.

Verse 10. Finally, in verse 10, Paul sums up his entire Epistle of Ephesians. First, “we are God's workmanship” (*poiēma*). In other words, we are his new creation or his “masterpiece” (see discussion below). Secondly, we are “created in Christ to do good works.” Therefore, although our human works were not enough to save us, good works are nevertheless important. Here, Paul agrees with the central message of James 1:22 and 2:14-26. We are not saved by good deeds, but once we are saved, we must follow a course of holy and righteous activity and bear good fruit.

GOD'S MASTERPIECE – A LONGER REFLECTION

Paul writes concerning the people of God: “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, NKJV). Verse 10 basically sums up the message of the Book of Ephesians by informing us of who we are in Christ and what God expects of us as Christians. First, we are God's workmanship. The Greek word translated “workmanship” also carries the idea of a “masterpiece.” We are God's masterpiece or work of art.

Because we are God's masterpiece, we are very special to him. It does not matter whether we are rich or poor, black or white, male or female, educated or uneducated. We are all very special to God. There may be some of you reading these notes who do not feel very special to God. Maybe you have been struggling with some sort of nasty habit or perhaps you are unhappy with your physical appearance or it could be that you regret your socio-economic level. You may even wrestle with low self-esteem.

There are countless ways in which the enemy wars against our minds. He does not want the people of God to realize their full potential. He does not want you to discover that you are special to God. He does not want you to have the power, or the assurance, or the resources, or the self-esteem, or the confidence to become whatever God created you to be. But the Devil is a liar! Dear Reader, you must come to the realization that as Ephesians 1:6 declares, you are accepted in the Beloved. Therefore, your self-worth is based on who you are in Christ rather than any other consideration. If you are struggling with self-esteem issues on today, then keep telling yourself that you are God's masterpiece until the truth of that declaration takes root in your heart.

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So, we are God’s workmanship. Secondly, we are “created in Christ to do good works.” Although we are not saved by human effort, good works are nevertheless important. Good works are the actions that we do out of our love for Jesus Christ. We can do “good things” without loving Christ, but “good works” come from hearts that are in relationship with Christ. When we do good works, we become the agents through whom God expresses His divine will in the earth. When we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, rescue the oppressed or free the captives, we are doing things of which God approves.

Finally, the good works that we do are those “which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Here, Paul wants to remind us that we have no reason to boast about the good works that we do, because the good works that we now do were made possible by God Himself. God works through Christ to empower us for his service. God is the source of our strength. He is the source of our life. God is the source of all the good that we do. Without the Lord, we can do nothing. Without him we would fail. Without Christ, our lives would be drifting, like a ship without a sail. Help us, O Lord, to do those works which God prepared in advance for me to do!