

-we are what he has made us ... for good works ... to be our way of life
Ephesians 2:10

Greetings to each of you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you were asked to describe with one word, the Christian life, which one would you choose? Many might pick the word, *faith*, because believing in Jesus is the foundation of Christianity. But did you know that the believer's life should also be characterized by, *good works*? While we are not saved by anything good we have done, genuine salvation always results in a changed life, complete with new thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours. Every Christian should be a living, walking example of good deeds.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he commended them for their *work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thess. 1:3). Everything we do should be motivated by faith, hope and love which are rooted in our relationship with Christ.

Now the question is, what qualifies as good work in a Christian life? The Scriptures are filled with good examples: caring for others, meeting needs, giving our time and treasure, and engaging in activities such as worship, prayer, and Bible reading. These are activities that should characterize us as God's children and Christ's representatives in the world.

As we consider this topic of good works, we must remember four important truths. Otherwise we may assume that we are the ones who define what is good, what needs to be done and how it should be accomplished.

First, God determines what He wants each of us to do. (Ephesians 2:10), *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.* Because we belong to Christ who purchased us with His blood, He has full authority over our life. There are specific tasks we are appointed to accomplish as we walk according to His will. If we think believing in Christ means attending church on Sunday but living as we please all week long, we are wasting our life. Christians are the people through whom the Holy Spirit is carrying out the work of Christ on earth. He redeemed us from sin and purified us for Himself so we can be people zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:14).

Second, God equips us for whatever He calls us to do. *He is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us* ((Eph. 3:20). In every opportunity God gives us and in every act of service He calls us to perform, He has already provided whatever we need to accomplish the task before us.

Consider the many resources God uses to empower us for good works. His indwelling Spirit gives us direction and strength to obey, as well as spiritual gifts that enable us to serve Him. He uses the Scripture *to teach, reprove, correct, and train us in righteousness* so we will be adequately equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And He uses our sisters and brothers in Christ to motivate us toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24). Even our wealth becomes a tool in his hands when we use it as He desires us, *to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share* (1 Tim. 6:18).

Third, our good works are to glorify God, and not ourselves. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called His followers, *the light of the world* and said they were to *let their light shine so others would see their good works and glorify the Father*. (Matt. 5:14-16). Then in the next chapter He warned them: *Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them* (6:1).

The difference is motivation. Although we should never seek or expect approval and praise from others for what we do, our life should stand out and be characterized by good deeds in the midst of a dark, self-centered world. If commendations come our way, we need to remember that apart from Christ alone, we are nothing. Then we can simply pass the praise on to Him in a silent prayer of recognition and gratitude.

Fourth, God will one day judge our good works. What we do in this life will have a tremendous impact on our eternity. As believers, we will be called before the judgment seat of Christ to account for our deeds (2 Cor. 5:10). Some of our works will be worthless and burned up like an old newspaper in the judgment. But we will be rewarded for the good works done in obedience to God, according to His power, and for His glory (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Although we do not know exactly what these rewards will be, one thing is certain. They will signify a life of good deeds that glorified and pleased God. Nothing could be more valuable than receiving praise from the Saviour. Let each of us spend our life living for Him.

Prayerfully Yours, Jan

PS. When it come to good works, remember these are not just religious activities. Christ takes into account whatever we do that flows from obedience to Him – at home, work, school, church, and beyond. We must resist the temptation to compare our works with the achievements of others. We are responsible only for the tasks God has prepared specifically for us.