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GOOD WORKS? - Part 1

Are we saved by our good works? No, of course not. Again and again you have heard preachers quote Ephesians 2:8 - *It is by grace you have been saved, through **faith**,the gift of God, and **not by works**, so that no one can boast.* The New Testament tells us over and over that we receive salvation as a gift by believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins.

Hopefully, your preachers went on to read the next verse, Verse 9: *For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

We are not saved by our good works, but we are saved in order to do good works - those actions we do in love and obedience to God, our new Master. The Bible makes it clear that if a person is not doing actions in love and obedience to God then he is not saved! (Read the little book of 1 John.) Nowhere in the Bible is the ridiculous idea expressed that someone can be "saved" and continue to live just as he did before, yet there are many "Christians" in our nation who are living exactly like their pagan neighbors, and they are just waiting for the rapture escalator to whisk them into heaven.

- The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) concludes with these words from Jesus: *Everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man...whose house fell when the storm came.* And what kinds of things did Jesus say in that famous sermon? "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; Blessed are the pure in heart; Don't "murder" people with your anger and your evil words; Don't lust after a woman; Bless others, don't curse them; Don't hate your enemies like the pagans do, love and bless them; Give to the needy; Pray and fast and give secretly to your Father in Heaven; Etc."

Maybe I'm so dense that I can't comprehend the meaning of Jesus' words, but it appears to me that Jesus intended for us to actually do the things He taught us to do.

- At the end of Jesus' life on earth, the resurrected Christ gave to His believers what is called "The Great Commission." (Matt. 28:18-20) He said to His disciples (and there is no distinction in the New Testament between a "believer" and a "disciple"): *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.....**teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.* Again, it seems clear that Jesus actually expected, in fact He commanded, that His disciples obey His teachings. We need to remember that this is the One who laid down His life for us on the cross. These are not the commands of an evil despot, but of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us.
- The teachings in James spell it out clearly: **Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. Don't merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Faith without deeds is dead.** What kinds of actions does James tell us that God commands us to do? "Guard your tongue. Look after widows and orphans. Be respectful to the poor and help them if they are hungry. Humble yourself before God. Don't slander or judge others. Be generous with your money. Be merciful and prayerful."

Great days, does God really expect us to do these things?

- 2 Tim. 3:16 - *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***
- In the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, God reveals that Christ has prepared certain people to be leaders in His church: *It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, **to prepare God's people for works of service....***

I could continue through all 27 books in the New Testament, but I think I have made the point. Over and above the clear instructions set forth above, what is it exactly that God expects us to do as Christians? Does He expect us to attend church all the time and live moral lives? The Pharisees did those things, at least on the surface, but they were enemies of God.

First, God wants us to fall in love with Him, because He has fallen in love with each of us with an absolutely crazy kind of love! Every time I have been tempted to give up on myself as a loser when it comes to living the Christian life, God has surprised me, shocked me, overwhelmed me, with His kindness, gentleness, and encouragement. *It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance.*

Second, God wants us to grow in maturity as Christians through the normal disciplines: We are transformed by renewing our minds through reading, meditating, and obeying the teaching of the Bible. (Ro. 12:1-2) Prayer, fellowship, and works of service are essential if we have determined to be disciples, doers, and not just hearers of God's Word.

Third, God wants us to grow in maturity to the point that we can "hear" Him so that He can personally direct our lives. He will gradually make clear to us the unique and individual work He has planned and prepared for us from the beginning of time.

GOOD WORKS: Part 2 - GOD'S PARTICULAR CALL ON EACH LIFE

God has created you and me with specific talents, abilities, and interests in order to fit us into His body, the church, as it serves the world. What might that look like for you? Since it will be a specific call for you, I can't say, but it might be one of the multiple "ministries" listed in the New Testament: Romans 12: **Serving, teaching, encouraging, giving generously, leading, showing mercy.**

I Cor. 12: **Ministries of prophecy, wisdom, healing, miracles, administration, helping those in need, and others.**

Ephesians 4: **Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher.**

There are others "jobs" in the church that are not specifically listed: For instance, those called to a special ministry of **prayer and intercession**, and those called to **the music ministry.**

During the past few years, a number of talented men and women in our local church have used their skill and work to create a vegetable garden on the south end of our church property, and we have been able to give away many tons of food to the needy in our community. Others have worked many hours each week preparing backpacks of food for needy kids in the public schools. Others have adopted orphans from other nations, or have become foster parents in our community. (What an incredible ministry! And thank you, Lord, for not calling me to do that.) That is a ministry of "helping" or of "mercy" or of "giving," but it is not possible to label all the "ministries" that God calls people to do. Others have been called as missionaries to other lands, including Muslim nations. Note: "Missionaries" are not only those who preach but those who teach the poor how to start small businesses, or how to use modern farming methods to increase their yields, etc. .

I want to make it clear that our service, our "ministry," is to be used to bless "the world," and not just people in the fellowship. If God has called you to be a doctor, an attorney, a teacher, a businessman, a veterinarian, a mechanic, a professional soldier, or a politician, your service to Christ will certainly include your arena of work.

It might be helpful if I described God's call on my life: When I was 30 years old I had an office job in Dallas with the Texas & Pacific Railroad. My "spiritual life" looked pretty much like the scenes of the New Jersey beach following Hurricane Sandy. By the grace of God, I received Christ as my Savior. God started a big clean up job. He brought in bulldozers, wrecking balls, dynamite, and jackhammers. At least that is the way it seemed to me. I started teaching a Sunday School class. I started wanting to be a pastor and began promoting the idea to my long-suffering wife, Doris. The idea scared her to death. I finally talked her into it, and I started attending a Methodist seminary at age 35. I graduated from seminary at age 38 and we moved to Colorado to take over a church. We had four kids, aged 4 to 14.

STOP! Consider what we have named "**The call of God.**"

Did God "call" me to be a pastor? I believe so. I didn't have any kind of supernatural manifestations - dreams, visions, angelic visits, words spoken from heaven, telegrams or letters signed "God." I had a strong desire to preach and be a pastor. I loved that kind of work. Also, I hated my job with the railroad. (I may as well be honest here and confess that my motives were mixed.) I prayed a lot. I talked with my pastor and other mature Christians. But I can't prove to anyone that God called me. It was a step of faith. Faith always involves risk. I could have been misled. But I continue to believe that God led me to that step.

Time passed and I became a Methodist minister. I backslid into my old sinful ways. God had mercy on me. He rescued me again.....through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and through a "deliverance." Demons were cast out of me. These two experiences changed my world view big time. Boy, did they ever! Then God gave me a dream (I won't go into detail) through which He called me into the ministry of inner healing and deliverance. God immediately confirmed this call by having several people whom I did not know speak prophetic words from Him to me. Then He started bringing people to me that were in desperate need of ministry.

Note: A dream, vision, or prophecy is not necessarily a call from God. It must be tested. Example: A farmer left his farm and became a preacher. His friends visited his church and observed that he was the worst preacher they had ever heard. He was so boring that everybody was going to sleep and snoring. They confronted him after the service: "Zeke, why in the world did you become a minister?" He said, "As I was riding on my tractor, I saw a sign in the sky, big letters that said, 'P.C.,' and I figured God was telling me to Preach Christ." One of his friends said, "Zeke, I think God was telling you to Plant Corn."

NOTE! This was the second "call" from God on my life. The first call was to be a pastor. The second call was to a specific ministry to the bruised and broken; to those in bondage to lies, self-hatred, and addictions; to those who are captives of the devil.

GOOD WORKS: Part 3 - AFTER WE RECEIVE A CALL FROM GOD, WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES FOR SERVICE IN THAT AREA

This is obvious but needs to be set forth. After we receive a call from God, it is imperative that we diligently prepare ourselves for service in that specific area.

When I felt called to be a pastor, I didn't jump right into some church as the pastor. I started studying, evangelizing, visiting the sick, and doing many other things to prepare myself. Then I attended a seminary for three years, and actually that was only the beginning of the training that I needed to be a minister. This is the same process that everyone goes through in preparing for their particular career/service/ministry in the world. A doctor or nurse has an interest in the healing profession, but he must spend years studying, training, and interning. The same preparation applies to a school teacher, carpenter, or leadership in various arenas.

When I received the second call from God to the inner healing ministry, I immediately started trying to learn how to do it. I prayed, studied the Bible in this area, started attending seminars and classes. I think I attended 8 or 10 seminars led by John Wimber, John and Paula Sandford, and others, as well as numerous classes taught by pastors and teachers. I started accumulating many CD's on this subject and at one time had over 200 of John Wimber's teaching tapes. I started reading and studying books about inner healing and deliverance. For many years I have read about a book a week (included in my reading were books by Louis Lamour and John Grisham, but they probably don't count). And I constantly ministered to people in churches (and prisons) here and in Mexico and a few other countries and learned by experience what works for me.

Am I saying that I have figured out the "right way" to do this ministry? No, not at all. The reality is that there are many different perspectives and methods used in this area of ministry, some of which don't seem to be in agreement, and yet they seem to work. How can that be? Because it is not the method, it is God who sets the prisoners free, just as it was not really Moses but God who led the Hebrews out of bondage to the Promised Land. God has chosen to use His fumbling and bumbling children as key parts of His great work of ministering to broken and devastated people.

The point I am making is:

- God gifts us with His salvation through Christ because He loves us.
- After we have received Christ as Savior, we are commanded to "Do good works." This is not optional. When we

become believers/disciples we have signed up as soldiers in the army of God and He is our General.

- A part of "working out our salvation," (as God tells us to do in Philippians 2:12-13) is to listen to God for the particular call or ministry for which He has prepared us. That call may be preaching, prophesying, praying for the sick, building houses for the poor, policeman, county commissioner, adopting a child, planting corn, or whatever God in His infinite imagination has in mind for us.
- And whatever God has called you and me to do, we must prepare ourselves with single-mindedness. I've known people who believed that God had called them to have an important ministry in preaching, teaching, counseling, etc, etc, and they sat around month after month, year after year, waiting for it to fall on them out of the sky. God is not going to entrust a great responsibility to some lazy hound dog!

"CONTAGIOUS GODLINESS"

Contagious Godliness, Experiencing Personal Transformation - is the name of a book just published by Paul and Gretel Haglin, my dear friends who live near St. Louis, Missouri. They have been co-workers with John and Paula Sandford and have been greatly used to minister inner transformation in many nations over the past 40 years, and it is my hope that you will order and be blessed by their book. The introduction, written by Paul, starts as follows:

"I was frantically giving CPR to our eleven year old son, Christopher, while Gretel and our other three kids prayed and waited desperately for the ambulance to traverse through the torrential downpour and flooded streams to our farm tucked deep in a remote area of the countryside. Chris had died in his sleep early in the morning just before we woke for a weekend of fun at our recently purchased weekend retreat.

I cried out to a God I only had heard about all my life but didn't yet know, 'Please take years off my life and give them to this precious son of ours!' To my complete astonishment, a strong and strangely comforting voice spoke into my ears and deep into my spirit, 'Don't ask Me to do that, Paul. I have plans for your life!' At precisely the same time, God spoke words of eternal comfort into Gretel's ears, 'Be at peace, Gretel. There is a Heaven and Chris is here with Me. You will see him again someday.'

We were lifelong nominal Episcopalians, untrained in the Scriptures and things of the Holy Spirit, but in that moment, we were ignited with fire and zeal to get to know this God who audibly spoke words of comfort and peace straight into the depths of our trauma and fear. It was not long before He drew us into the Kingdom of God and gloriously baptized us with His Holy Spirit. We started having prayer and worship meetings in our home every Monday night and were on our way to radically being transformed. Revival is not a strong enough word to describe the intensity of the spiritual pressure cooker we experienced as He made Himself known to us through signs and wonders in the form of healing, prophetic teaching, and assisting others with personal transformation."

Just a couple of quotes from the first chapter, which is as far as I have got at this point, on the subject of Beguilement:" (Eve was "beguiled" in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3, when the serpent lured her into disobeying God. The word "beguiled" is used in the KJV and NKJV; the word "deceived" is used in most other translations.)

"Blowing up an offense in your imagination until it completely fills your vision is beguilement. One day as I was teaching a group how to handle offenses and hurts, I saw myself in a vision bravely enduring a huge two-edged sword run through my chest, right up to the hilt. *Oh, the pain! Oh, the agony!* But I stood firm as a mighty man of faith and power, courageously grasping the hilt of that broad sword with both hands and, with a mighty heave, withdrew it triumphantly from my flesh--pop!--out came a teeny tiny pinprick-sized blade. That was the reality of my wound in God's eyes. You see, the offense against me had turned into a 'poor-me' spirit and become full-blown martyrdom! Actually it was false-martyrdom. Let me tell you about false-martyrdom: it's far less martyr, and much more dumb. God's wonderful sense of humor broke that beguiling off of me and set me free!"

And from the same chapter: *"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.* (Proverbs 4:23 NKJV) What is in your heart will flow out of you, and what you are coats your every word and either edifies or pollutes your listeners accordingly. If you preach sexual purity while you are in sexual immorality, the people who listen will receive sexual defilement instead of cleansing. We have experience with several churches where that was the case, and we had to help minister to the defilement that was spread. If you had only read the words of the sermons, you would have found no fault in them. But the spirit of the man who delivered those words had coated them with his unclean spirit and defiled the whole congregation.

If you urge giving while you have greed in your heart, the people will fall into the error of 'giving to get,' or trying to bribe God, and they will become covetous. We ministered to a young man who was a street evangelist with an enormous anointing. I was ministering to him in order to get him free of his problems because his dad was not a very good dad. He

turned to me one day and said, 'Paul, you must keep your spirit and your heart clean because you reach so deeply down inside of people. If you are not clean you will defile them,' I knew that was from God because this young man didn't know anything about inner healing.

If you proclaim love for the Body of Christ and at the same time have animosity and hatred in your heart for those that disagree with you and have done you wrong, the people will become religious, strident, divisive, and sectarian. If you teach holiness while you are practicing sin, the people will become pharisaical hypocrites. If you talk about anything with pride in your heart, the people will become prideful.

You see, Beloved, the condition of your spirit is more important than the words you speak, even if you are not a teacher. You don't have to be in the pulpit. If you are at enmity with anyone, you will spread enmity. If you are driven to be performance motivated, you will minister the hell of perfectionism. The same is true with frustration, impatience, and unforgiveness.

The Scripture says you will reap what you sow; unfortunately, so will others reap as they feed upon the spirit that is carrying your words. So, Beloved, keep your heart diligently. If you are called of God to minister deep down inside of other people all the more you must keep your heart diligently so that what you are ministering is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

I genuinely encourage you to order this book right away, before you forget. It would be a wonderful Christmas present for dear ones. The book costs \$16.95, shipping and handling is \$7.00 for first book, plus \$5.00 for each additional book. Check or money order payable to:

**Resurrection Christian Ministries,
300 Eagles Nest Farm Road,
Hawk Point, Missouri 63349.**

For credit card, PayPal or eBook orders go to: www.ContagiousGodliness.com

MINISTRY

Just concluded an 8-week seminar in our church titled "Pathway to Freedom." It was well attended, and it concluded with personal ministry sessions to about 40 of the people who attended. The personal ministry was led by ten teams of people who were trained by June Fellhauer and her daughter Jolene Hanson. Marvelous break-throughs and healings! It is thrilling that many people in our fellowship have gone through these seminars, and even more thrilling that many people are being led to this ministry of inner healing. (It is the "call" on their lives.) PTL!

God Bless,

Glenn

WEBSITE: glennbrownministries.com

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions,
you may send them to:

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