

Sermon Series: Hands & Feet-Advancing the Kingdom Here and Now
Sermon Title: His Masterpiece
By: Neil Silverberg

Sermon Text: Ephesians 2:10

Introduction

Years ago, I was having a time of ministry in France with Phil and Jenny Adams in Paris. On a day off they took me to the *Louvre*, the world's most famous art museum. I had no real interest in art when I went but I was totally blown away by what I saw. We moved from gallery to gallery standing before the world's greatest masterpieces (The Mona Lisa was there). As I stood before each incredible work, my first question was not "What is this?" but rather "*Who painted this?*" There's a reason for that. Each of these incredible works was a reflection of the person who created it. It reflected his or her '*glory*'.

When we stand before something beautiful and incredible, we instinctively want to know all about the one who created it. Incidentally, that is exactly Paul's argument in Romans 1 for how creation reflects God's character and nature. That's what Paul is saying in this text in Eph. 2:10 as well. This statement follows an incredible litany of statements about what God has done in creating the Church. The chapter started with three verses that described the problem (it's bad, very bad news). In fact, it is so bad three words best describe it based on these verses in Eph. 2: man outside of Christ is *helpless, hopeless, and worthless*.

Helpless in that there is nothing we could do to change ourselves; *hopeless* because we are totally helpless and therefore without hope, *worthless*, not that humanity has no worth but that in our natural state we are under God's wrath. One thing is clear: *if this situation was ever to change, God Himself would have to act*. That's exactly what Paul begins to describe in vs. 4—"But God". He uses resurrection and creation language: God raised us up who were dead and gave us new life when he joined us to Christ. This was entirely his doing (Eph 2:8-9) and He did it for one reason: "*So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus*" (Eph. 2:7, NLT).

Paul says these incredible words: "We are God's *masterpieces*" (Eph. 2:10, NLT). We were created in Christ Jesus to "show off" who God is. How do we do this? According to Paul, by doing those *works* we were created in Christ to do from eternity past. What is clear from vs. 8 is that we are not saved *by* good works but we definitely are saved *for* good works. Paul infers three things about these works: we were *destined* for these things, we are *anointed* to do them, and they *magnify* the Father.

Three Aspects of our works (destined, anointed, magnified)

Destined: (Eph. 2:10)

"*Good works*" are those specific tasks (works) that God has uniquely called and equipped you to do (God wired you before eternity to act, think, and function the way you do). Good works are not works you decide you should do or that others tell you, you should do but works *God has given you to do*. This raises the question, "*How do I know what I am given to do?*" There are two simple things that help us to know what God has given us to do from eternity past: First and foremost, "*You enjoy doing the things God has given you to do*" ('My meat is to do the will of him who sent me').

It's amazing to discover how God wired you (Why my brother as a young boy was taking apart everything in the house while I was writing books. It is no coincidence that he ended up owning a construction company and I became a teacher and author). This is the opposite of what I was taught as a new believer. When I was a new believer, I was taught you'll always know what the will of God is—it's what you *hate* to do. An example familiar to many believers is the picture of Missionaries in Africa displayed before a congregation with the implication, we all should go whether or not it is in our heart to do so.

Another reason is the fact that there are ***certain people God has called you to reach***. Right now there are people in your immediate sphere whom God is calling you to pray for and seek to reach. In John 4, we see a clear example in the life of Jesus. '*He had to go through Samaria*' (not true of most Jews). He felt compelled and pressed to meet a woman there. Whom is God compelling you to reach (neighbor, friend, relative, business associate?).

Anointed (Acts 10:38)

Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to do certain works the Father had given him. This anointing compelled him to "do good" and meet practical needs but was mainly centered in relieving human suffering caused by sin and sickness and Satan (healing all who were oppressed). First thing He was anointed to do was *preach the Gospel* (Isa 61).

This is a description of Gospel ministry. *Anointing in our lives equips us to do works initiated by the Father* (can't do everything!) What are you called to do? *The anointing in Acts 10 led Peter to go outside his own circle to reach others*. Peter wasn't prepared to hear the Spirit tell him to go to the Gentiles (neither was David Wilkerson many years ago).

Magnified (Matt. 5:16)

When people are doing those works they were preordained to do in the power of the Holy Spirit it brings glory to God. I want people to look at me and immediately know how good God is. There's no *one* way that that is done. Some people glorify God in their healing while others glorify God in their sickness. Some people glorify God by escaping death while others glorify God in their death. Your good works are "good" inasmuch as they reveal the character of the Father. We should want our lives to reflect God in every way. Does what you do and the way you live reflect on who God is or tell people how great you are?

That doesn't mean we have to immediately tell everyone who praises us, "*It's not me; it's the Lord!*" But it starts by each one of us knowing within ourselves that any goodness that proceeds from us is from God. "*Let your light so shine so that they may see your good works.*" That statement implies that our light shines as we engage in those deeds of righteousness that demonstrate the love of Christ. Sometimes we get to serve others selflessly and God is glorified. For example, *after 9/11, a group of Christians from somewhere down south volunteered to come to NY and clean apartments*. They walked around New York wearing their protective suits. People asked them what they were doing and they told them.

Thousands of New Yorkers were blown away. A year later that same group came to plant a church in Manhattan. They set up a booth and were handing out invites and people were suspicious and stayed away. The moral of the story is not that we shouldn't plant churches but to ask the question "why" are we doing what we do. Sometimes we're trying to get a notch in our belt or sometimes we are trying to get people to join our church

John 6:28: "*This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.*"

Jesus isn't saying you don't have to do anything but believe. Rather, he is saying *faith in Jesus is the basis for our works*. Our good works are simply works of grace that are anointed, enabled, empowered by our faith. In Hebrews 11, we have a list of men and women who did incredible things by their faith in Christ.

There is a great difference between works of law (works you perform to merit favor with God) and those works which are the result of a deep and abiding faith in the Gospel. These works are the result of our relationship with Christ not the cause of it. Paul calls it "faith working through love". So how does this affect evangelism? It affects evangelism in every way! We aren't sharing the Gospel because it is our duty but because our faith has actually produced in us a divine love for people. Because we deeply love others, we want them to know the truth. We love them therefore as a result of our confidence in the Gospel.

#####

The questions below are for House Group Discussions.

1. What does the word 'workmanship' mean in Ephesians 2:10?
2. How did Neil compare this to fine works of art?
3. What are the three words Neil said describe our condition in Ephesians 2:1-3?
4. What does it mean that we are not saved *by* good works but we are saved *for* good works?
5. What does Paul mean that God has prepared our works beforehand?
6. How do you know if you are doing the things God has ordained you to do?
7. Why is the anointing of the Spirit so important in carrying out those things God has called us to do?
8. How do our works bring glory to God?