

# Created for Good Works

Ephesians 2:10

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## **Introduction:**

Today we are only going to look at one verse—Ephesians 2:10.

- But first, I want to take a moment to remind you once again where we have been in this series...

In Ephesians 1, Paul told us about the way the Lord pours out His riches on all His elect.

- He goes on and on listing off all the things that God has done for us in Jesus Christ.
  - He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him,
    - that we should be made His sons,
    - that we should be redeemed by the blood of Christ,
    - that we should share an inheritance with Christ (actually live in heaven with Christ in God's house forever),
    - that we should be sealed with God's Spirit as a pledge of all this now...
- And then, after describing all that God has for His elect,
  - Paul began to tell them how he prays for them—
    - praying that they will be able to know what riches they have been given!
    - praying that God will open their eyes to see how they have been lavished with the most marvellous blessings!

And then in chapter 2,

- we saw that Paul goes on to magnify God's grace to us even more...
  - He magnifies it by showing us what kind of people we were when we first received the grace of God!
  - We were a people dead in trespasses and sins!
    - We were as dead as dead can be—cut off from God...
      - given over to walk according to the the world, to Satan, to our own flesh...
      - given over to live in complete alienation from our God.
        - We were under His wrath and curse as those who by nature are offensive and loathsome in His sight!
  - Such are those whom He has chosen to come and live in communion with Him in heaven forever and ever—in the rich love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

- Such were all of you until He, by His powerful grace, made you alive in Jesus Christ!
- What riches for wretches!
- And last week we saw how the apostle, knowing what we are like, reminds us that even though we have been radically changed—raised from spiritual death...
  - we yet have no grounds for boasting in ourselves!
  - It was not our own work, but God’s that wrought the change in us!
    - The apostle knows how prone we are to pride—
      - he himself struggled with it—
        - so he drives home the fact that salvation is by grace through faith, and that not ourselves—it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
        - He repeats it in five or six ways to make sure we are left with nothing to boast in.
  - He tells us in verse 7 that God has done all this for His own glory.
    - He does not save us so we can boast about ourselves...
      - but rather to show of the riches of His grace upon us!
      - When we boast, we act in a way that is contrary to God’s purpose.

And today we come to verse 10...

- And here Paul is really continuing with the same thought...
  - You can see that verse 10 and starts with the same word as verse 8—
    - The word “for.”
      - v. 8: **for** by grace you have been saved...
      - v. 10: **for** we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them...
- Just as the glory all goes to God for making us alive when we were dead in our sins...
  - so all the glory goes to God for the new lives that we now live as God’s people—
    - lives filled with good works that God brings us into!
  - Even this is His work!
    - All the good works that you ever do you do because of His work in you.
    - Paul once said that he laboured “more abundantly” than all the other apostles—and he did...

- but then added,
  - “Nevertheless, not I, but the grace of God in me!”
  - He knew that the source of all his good works was the Lord.

This morning I want to look at three things about good works...

- First, that God created you, if you are in fact a believer, to do good works...
- Second, what these good works are... what is their nature...
- And third, that God has already prepared good works just for you that you might walk in them—He has a future line up of good works for you.

Okay, then, first of all...

## **I. Christian, understand that God created you to do good works.**

A. This God’s very purpose for **every** believer.

1. Good works are not just an add-on to salvation.

a. They are the very object of it...

- Our text says that you were “created in Jesus Christ for good works.”
- Before, you were dead in trespasses and sins,
  - but now, in Christ, being made alive...
    - you live unto God...
    - and those who live unto God do good works.

b. Salvation is a complete transformation of us that results in a whole new way of living—in a whole new walk of obedience to God.

- you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air...
- you simply did whatever seemed best to you—according to the desires of your flesh and mind...
  - but when you are saved, you walk with reference to God...
  - You delight in His law from within...
    - You want every fibre of your being to be filled with His word...
    - You want your life to be shaped by His word...
    - And that is what actually begins to happen...
      - You are no longer what you were.
      - You were dead, and now you are alive—and that life shows in good works.

2. There are many who are confused about the place of works in the believer's life.
  - a. There are some professing Christians today who want nothing to do with works.
    - 1) They take something like Paul's statement in verse 9—that our salvation is not of works...
      - and they completely misapply it.
      - They take it to mean that salvation has absolutely nothing to do with good works.
        - They claim that they believe in salvation by grace and that good works have nothing to do with salvation.
          - They say that works are good to do for sure, but they do not necessarily follow as a fruit of true conversion...
          - In other words, they suppose that a person can be saved and not do any good works at all.
    - 2) This is greatly mistaken.
      - Verse 10 says that we are created in Christ Jesus for good works...
        - It is the very purpose God has for us.
        - The whole point is that He gives us a life when we were dead...
          - And there is no such thing as a new life that is not lived!
          - When He saves us, He puts His Spirit in us and causes us to delight in His law so that we will do it... so that we walk a new walk and talk a new talk.
      - Jesus makes it clear that only those who deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Him will have life...
        - And the Apostle Paul, in Galatians, the very epistle in which he is blasting the notion that we are saved by our own works declares:
          - Gal 5:19-21: Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
            - To not inherit the kingdom of God means to be excluded from heaven!

- Paul is not saying that we are saved by our good works, but he is saying that we are not saved without them.
  - They are always the result of salvation.
  - Indeed, it is on the basis of works that those who are saved will be distinguished from those who are not on the Day of Judgment.
    - This is a constant theme of the scriptures and the clear teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25.
    - And John, in his first epistle, warns that unless we have such works, there is no reason to think we have been saved.

TRANS> Those who say that salvation has nothing to do with works are greatly mistaken.

b. But at the same time, there is this other error that we are saved by works...

- 1) Such persons actually believe that if they do enough good, God will accept them.
  - "I try to be good a person, I say my prayers, I don't do any harm to anyone..."
    - And they think by this that God will accept them.
- 2) This is about as far from the truth as you can be!
  - Such persons are so blind to their sin that they cannot see their need of Christ.
    - They are so blind to God's holiness that they actually think their lives are acceptable to Him without an atonement!
    - For them, Christ came to be an example and to lead us into better living...
      - but He did not come to bear the wrath of God due to us for our sins!
  - They are dreadfully deluded that they should even think they have measured up to what God requires!
    - Paul explains that he was like this before his conversion...
      - It was the majority view among the Jews in his day...
      - And sadly, I fear that it is the majority view among Christians today...
        - We need to pray that God's Spirit would invade their lives with God's law and show them their sins that they might be humbled and led to repentance.

- 3) You see that Ephesians 2:10 does not at all say that we are saved by doing good works...
- It says we are created in Christ **for** good works...
    - It is not our works that bring us life—that is what Paul has been hammering home...
    - It is not our works that bring us life, but it is Christ makes us alive...
      - and when we have been made alive, we do good works...
      - We are created in order that we might do good works.
        - Good works don't produce life, but life produces good works—indeed, life *is* good works.

B. As a Christian who has been made alive, you are God's workmanship!

- You are His creation out of sin...
1. Just think what this means: God's workmanship!
- a. The idea is that you are a piece of artwork—God's handiwork!
    - God wants to put you on display as His workmanship—as a trophy of His grace!
    - He wants to show the nations and the angels your beauty...
      - You are not a statue, but a living work of art that is displayed by the performance of good works.
  - b. Don't you see, in Christ, you are a vessel of honour...
    - God is shaping you—**you**, who were dead in sin—into something beautiful!
      - And that beautiful thing is one who is full of good works!
2. Look at Jesus!
- a. Jesus is the model of the perfect man!
    - The model of what we will look at when God is finished with us!
      - He is the man who went about doing good!
      - He is the man who pleased the Father and in whom the Father took delight!
      - He is the man who was filled with holiness and with such love for His brethren that He went to the cross for us...
        - and with such love for the Father that He went to the cross for Him!

- b. God is working in you to make you like Him!
  - You are members of His body, and His life is pulsing through you!
  - His life is producing good works in you!
  - You are being completely changed, and God is going to continue this work until you are just like Him...
    - just as full as love and obedience and holiness as He!

TRANS> No wonder He calls you a new creation!

- What a glorious change!
- What a piece of workmanship!

C. Isn't this a huge encouragement? Just to think that you are **God's** workmanship?

1. Brothers and sisters, the Lord delights in you—
  - a. He is making you into that which He absolutely delights in—a doer of good!
    - and already, He takes great pleasure in your good works.
  - b. The LORD tells you that He is going to reward you in heaven for your works...
    - Now I think we should look at this reward the way a godly child looks at his father's smile.
      - By telling us that He will reward, the Lord is expressing His approval!
      - Isn't that one of the main reasons that children love rewards?
    - It is an encouragement just to know that He approves...
      - He smiles when you simply give a cup of cold water!
      - He smiles when you sign praise to His name from the heart!
        - I know you are distracted and all that—but He still smiles at you as one who is pleased with the new life that is there...
        - As He shapes you—just as the master on the lathe turns the wood and delights in it as it begins to take shape—
          - It's not polished yet, it still has many rough places, but it is beginning to come to its shape.
  - c. Do you find this hard to believe? Do you find it hard to believe that He takes delight in you?
    - Then listen to these verses and believe...
      - Pr 11:20: Those who are of a perverse heart *are* an abomination to the LORD, But *the* blameless in their ways *are* His delight.

- Pr 15:8: The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.
- Isa 62:5: For as a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.
- Zep 3:17: The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."
- What a huge encouragement this is!
- God rejoicing in you who were once dead in trespasses and sins!

TRANS> What a huge encouragement...

- But need I add it...
2. This is no occasion for boasting in yourself...
    - a. Paul's very point is that **the LORD** has created you!
      - That you are **His** workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus for good works.
      - Why is it, then, that we boast about our works as if we had wrought them in ourselves?
    - b. It is the glory of God that is demonstrated in making you into something glorious who were one dead in trespasses and sins...
      - whether God's grace began to work in you when you were:
        - an idol worshipper...
        - a nice person of the world just living your life and minding your business who was dead to God...
        - a self-righteous member of the covenant...
        - a tiny babe in the womb whose very nature was contrary to God...
        - a person totally given over to every vice...
      - It is the grace of God that has transformed you through Jesus Christ if you have been transformed...
        - You are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works!

TRANS> But

## **II. What are these good works that the Lord created you to walk in?**

A. Good works are simply deeds that are in keeping with God's commandments...

1. At the most basic level, good works involve giving yourself in service to God and to your neighbour in the milieu—in everyday life.



- a. This is what God has always called us to do—
  - From the beginning, He told us to love God with all our heart and our neighbour and ourselves...
    - and now that Jesus has come, we know all the more what this is supposed to look like...
  - So not that commandment is refreshed and clarified by Jesus example and we are told to love as Jesus loved...
    - to have His mind...
    - to esteem our brothers and sisters as more important than ourselves...
    - to lay down our lives for them.
  
- b. Good works mean giving up self for the good of others.
  - 1) Husbands, it means taking your place as the head of the home.
    - It means taking time to lead your family in daily worship,
    - It means disciplining your children, not after your own pleasure, but in the discipline of the Lord.
    - It means seeing to it that they are given a godly education.
    - It means taking responsibility to see that your family worships in a place where God is honoured.
    - It means making time for your wife to talk to her and to be companion for her—even if you have to put aside your hobbies.
    - It means labouring hard to provide for your family.
    - It means bearing the blame for bad decisions your family makes rather than charging your wife.
    - It means putting off your irritability and imitating Christ in your home.
    - It means praying earnestly for them.
  
  - 2) Mothers, it means labouring until you are weary for your children and your husband, putting aside your pouting, your self pity, and your selfishness to serve.
    - It means giving yourself in prayer for them.
      - It means speaking with kindness and compassion...
      - It means correcting your children with patience and godliness—day after day.
  
  - 3) Children, it means loving your parents, submitting to them when they rebuke you or call you to do something you don't want to do without whining.

- It means doing the extra thing that you were not asked to do.
  - It means offering to wash the dishes when your brother was just called to do it and you see that he has just started to play with a new toy that he loves...
- 4) Students, it means loving your future family by diligently preparing yourself for your calling to serve others in the days to come.
- 5) For all of you...
- It means giving yourself in prayer for others, even when you don't get any recognition for it.
  - It means doing the work that nobody wants to do, even when it always seems to fall on you, and even when it is not appreciated and to do it without pride or self-pity.
  - It means bothering to speak a word for Jesus Christ, labouring in prayer and in word for those who do not know Him.
  - It means speaking a word of encouragement or a word of rebuke or a word of comfort to those in need.
  - It means weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice.
  - It means being like the widow I told you about before at Riverside ARP who does the ironing for all the mothers in the church every week instead sitting at home feeling sorry for herself or running around entertaining herself all day.
  - It means giving your enemy something to eat when he is hungry—
    - or helping the neighbour who always harasses you when that neighbour is sick or is stuck in the driveway with a flat tire!
  - It means being just in all your dealings—
    - doing your work heartily as unto the Lord,
    - paying your bills,
    - keeping your promises,
    - keeping confidences,
    - showing honour to whom honour is due.

TRANS> From all this, you see that good works are what you do every day in obedience to God's commands...

- Sometimes we think that good works have to be extraordinary works
  - Things like selling your estate to give to the poor or going off to be a missionary—

- Things like this certainly are included as good works, but you need to see good works as what you are now to walk in as a believer...
2. Let me show you a few other characteristics of good works...
- a. First, realise that good works are done in place of evil works
    - 1) I say this because there are those who look at good works as something a person can do on the side...
      - I am told that Al Capone, the famous gangster, was always at church.
      - But simply doing good works on the side is not what is in view here.
    - 2) Good works are something that we walk in **instead** of trespasses and sins... they are a replacement of evil...
      - As Paul will put it later on in Ephesians, we put off the old man and put on the new man...
        - In other words, you can't be a thief who continues to steal, but who does good works with his money—
          - true—the money may be used to feed the poor or to build a church for God's people...
            - but it is not a good work in God's eyes unless it replaces the evil work of stealing.
    - 3) Another way to say it is that good works must have universal repentance as their foundation...
      - They must be the fruits of one who has turned from all his sin to serve God through Jesus Christ...
        - If you are still not reconciled to God through the gospel, there is no such thing as good works for you!
        - Not in God's eyes! Not in truth!
      - How can a work be good before God if you are one who remains at enmity with God...
        - You have this huge problem of sin—that you are an enemy of God who needs to be reconciled...
          - and you don't consider it a problem!
            - It doesn't even seem to bother you!
          - You are like the man who beats his wife and then brings her flowers—without ever repenting of his abuse!
            - Or more appropriately, like the guy who robs you, rapes your wife, murders your children, burns down your house,

- and then expects you to be pleased with him because he comes over the next day to cut your grass for you!
  - But wait a minute...
    - That illustration has something missing!
      - I had better mention that the chap comes over and cuts your grass without repenting of what he did to your wife and your children and your house!
      - If he truly repents,
        - then the illustration can actually be used to show how great God's grace is...
        - If we have truly repented and turned to Christ,
          - He delights in us when we come to cut the grass despite of all we have done to Him!
      - The point is, that those who do not repent of their sin before God and suppose that He will accept their works are greatly mistaken...
        - For works to be good, they must grow out of true repentance.
          - They are not done on top of sin...
          - But they are done instead of sin.
- b. Secondly, realise that good works may be seen as well as unseen...
- 1) Sometimes when we think of good works for the glory God, we think they have to be seen by others in order that they may see them...
    - And it is true that Jesus commended works that are seen, and even said that they should be done to be seen!
      - Mt 5:16: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
      - You are supposed to be consciously seeking to adorn the grace of God by a fruitful life...
  - 2) But at the same time, there are also good works that are not seen... and ought not to be seen.
    - Jesus condemned the Pharisees for praying, fasting, and giving alms in a very public way...
      - doing it to be seen of men—to gain honour for themselves...

- He informs us that our Father who sees what we do in secret will reward us openly...
  - On the Day of Judgment, He will be glorified for all the things that were done for Him that nobody ever saw.
  - We don't have to broadcast things like this now.
- 3) The point is, do good works!
- both seen and unseen!
- c. Thirdly, realise that good works may be agreeable as well as disagreeable
- Here again, there is error on both sides...
- 1) Some think that a work cannot be a good work unless it is something very agreeable to us...
- Such persons would say that you are being hypocritical if you go to help someone when you would really rather be doing something else...
  - If you give a tithe when you find it difficult... whatever.
  - But a hypocrite is not someone who does things that are disagreeable.
    - A hypocrite is one who does things that are disagreeable and pretends like they are not...
    - He claims that he gets up early in the morning to have devotions every day because he is so eager to meet with God...
      - when in fact, it is the last thing he wants to do—and if any one checked—something he very seldom actually does.
  - Jesus was no hypocrite when He went to the cross even though it was, in one respect, the very last thing He wanted to do...
    - Did He not pray:
      - “Not my will—not what I want—but your will be done”?
      - It was not something He wanted to do...
    - Doing things you don't want to do in obedience to God or in love for your neighbour is not hypocrisy—
      - It is sacrifice...
      - It is an expression of love—that you are willing to do something disagreeable for their sake!
- 2) But some people so latch on to this truth—to the idea of sacrifice and of laying down one's life...

- that they suppose good works only include those things that are disagreeable to us.
- This is also wrong...
  - Often, service to God can be very pleasant.
    - What joy many fathers have gathering their children for worship...
    - What joy many find in giving to the needs of others...
      - often we start out with a spirit of sacrifice but then find great delight in our service.
- There are certain things that we ought to delight in—that there is something defective in the work if we don't delight in it...
  - like observing the Sabbath—
    - There is something wrong if you don't find it pleasant to spend time with the LORD.
    - But admittedly, there will times when you will have to drag yourself along in the duty.

TRANS> So you see what good works are—they are deeds done in obedience to God's commandments...

B. But now I want you to see furthermore that good works are good deeds done for God.

1. They are good works done in full communion with God.
  - a. They are more than mere deeds—they are deeds done as unto God, as delighting in God, as filled with His fullness.
    - 1) This is very important!
      - a) It is very easy to do our works with an eye to our neighbour alone...
        - This is what the Gentiles do—any unbeliever...
        - They take pleasure in their neighbour and they do good deeds for them—
          - but they do not live for God...
      - b) The difference in what really makes a work good is that it is done before God...
        - It is done by those who were dead to God, but have now been made alive to God.
          - They are living their lives before Him as their Creator, their Master, their Judge, and their Saviour

- instead of living as if there is no God.
- c) No matter what you do, even if you give your body to be burned or if you give everything you have to the poor,
- it can never be a good work if it is done by a person who ignores God.
    - a person who acts like the most important being in the universe in whom they live and move and have their being is not important!
    - If they ignore that all things are of Him and through Him and to Him...
      - and that everything they do is to be done to His glory.
- 2) And doing works for God should not be merely a mechanical thing either.
- a) By mechanical I mean that we do it in a perfunctory way—
- just going through the motions—
    - knowing that it is God's command—
    - but not really doing it in response to who He really is...
- b) Take the Sabbath...
- Any Pharisee can refrain from work and go to religious services...
  - But when he does so, God is miles and miles away as far as he is concerned.
  - Maybe not the god he has made up in his own head, but the true and living God...
    - He does not do His work unto God, but unto his religion and unto his peers and unto his own conscience.
    - There is no communion with the living God in the work.
- b. Works that are truly good are about our love for God...
- 1) They spring forth from the delight we have in Him, in His glory...
- They rise out of gratitude to Him for what He has done for us...
    - saving us when we were so loathsome in His sight...
    - actually coming and bearing our sins in Jesus Christ...
    - completely reversing our destiny from misery to happiness.
- 2) What can remain for us but to imitate Him when we see Him as He is?

- What else can we do but live to please Him when we see how kind He has been to us?
- What else can we do but live to be like Him when we see how beautiful His love is, and how He has made us His sons and calls us to be like Him?
- What else can we do but serve Him when we see how He has redeemed us
  - and how as redeemed, He now delights in our works, even though they are still full of much imperfection.

TRANS> Ah, but brothers and sisters,

- I know how you struggle...
  - We all struggle—we see how little we live before the glorious God who has been revealed to us in Christ...
  - We see how much of what we do is so far removed from Him...
    - But listen to me...

2. This is something we grow into

- a. It's not that you need to make a resolution that from this day forward you are going to live before God—you are going to consciously live your life for Him—
  - I mean, if you are a Christian, that is already your resolution... you made it when you were first converted...
  - And your life really did change... but you are not yet where you ought to be or where you want to be...
    - God is not nearly as major a factor in your living as He ought to be...
      - and all your teeth gritting resolution is not going to make all that much difference...
      - In a couple of days, you will be right back where you were.

TRANS> And that's why I say that this is something you have to grow into.

- b. You grow into it by growing in your grasp of what the Lord has done for you!
  - 1) What Paul has been talking about from the beginning of this letter...
    - You see the grace that has been poured out on you and your gratitude starts to grow and increase...
    - When it does, good works will follow... works that are truly good—works that are truly a response to God.



- 2) You need to behold the glory of God as He is revealed in Christ...
  - You need to look at the cross and see how great his love, how holy He is, how just, how wise, how gracious...
  - You need to gather with His people for worship and hear the gospel and marvel...
    - And as you do over the years your relationship grows and grows and you see more and more of His glory...
    - And you find that more and more you are living for Him.
  
- 3) It's not one of those things that you can flip and switch and all is changed.
  - We like things like that—we are used to things like that...
  - That is what happens at conversion...
    - Your whole direction is changed...
    - You get married, as were...
  - But then it is a matter of growth in the new relationship.
    - That takes time.
    - It takes living in communion with God and learning of Him.

TRANS> To put in the form of a verse,

- 2Co 3:18: But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
  - The more we see the glory of the Lord revealed in Christ, the more we are transformed to do good works.
- So you see then what the good works that God causes us to walk in are really like...
  - They are everyday things, but everyday things done for God out of gratitude and love for Him.
- And now as a final encouragement,
  - I want you to see that this verse teaches that:

### **III. God has already prepared good works for you to walk in—just for you!**

- Indeed, He prepares you to do the works and He prepares the works for you to do...
  - A. He has prepared you by giving His for you who then gives His Spirit to you.
    - The triune God is the one who both qualifies and enables you to do good works.
      1. First, He regenerates you—

- takes away the stony heart and gives you a heart that responds to Him...
    - a heart that repents and believes—
    - a heart that leaves all to follow Christ and that turns to obey all that He says.
2. Secondly, He justifies you...
- He reconciles you through the blood of Jesus, forgiving all your sins so that you are no longer God's enemies...
    - as we have seen, no one who has the huge problem of still being at war with God can do works that please God...
3. Thirdly, He sanctifies you
- He works in you in such a way that you do see His glory more and more and that you love Him and grow in your gratitude...
    - He causes you to grow in your understanding of His will and He gives you grace to obey more and more...
    - He even gives you grace to carry out specific works for Him!
4. Fourthly, on a very practical level, He imparts gifts to you...
- He gives you certain abilities that you can use to do good to others...
  - He gives you resources—like increased wealth that you can use in service to Him...
    - You are a steward who holds God's resources—if He gives you a lot, He entrusts you to care for the needs of those around you.
  - He gives you training and experience so that you are a blessing to others...
    - What an encouragement an older woman can be to a younger woman as it speaks about in Titus...
      - teaching her how to love her husband and how to love her children...
      - When they need to be fed and how to deal with their attitudes...

TRANS> Yes, God prepares you to good works...

B. But He also prepares specific good works for you to do...

1. In His providence, He puts things in your pathway...
- He brings you face to face with needs that you can meet, with ways that you can bless others...
  - He gives you a husband or a wife to love, He gives you children to care for and provide for, He gives you parents to serve...

- He puts needy people in your pathway to encourage, to comfort, to support, to provide for, to evangelise, to rebuke, to lead...
  - He provides you with a million good works to do and He smiles upon you when you do them!
2. That means that you should be thankful when opportunity comes...
- a. Jesus even says to rejoice when you are persecuted because your reward will be great in heaven if you honour God through persecution...
    - That means that you have God's approval!
    - You have Him smiling on you and delighting in you!
      - You are His workmanship, and He is showing you off when you are persecuted...
      - You glorify Him by your patience and by doing good to your enemies and by continuing to praise God no matter what they do to you.
  - b. The same is true with all trials...
    - Trials are not things that just happen...
      - They are sent to you by God so that you can do good works—so that God can show you off as His workmanship...
      - He can show what His grace has done in your life.
    - Think of Job...
      - The Lord showed Job off when Satan tried to get Job to curse God.
      - The LORD was putting Job on display as His workmanship – and Job was beautiful!
  - c. Knowing that God has prepared works for you to do also means that you ought not to pretend,
    - as it says in Deuteronomy,
      - that you did not see your neighbour's ox (or his pickup truck) in the ditch.
    - Don't be grieved that you happened to come by at the time of his distress...
      - It is your opportunity to do a good work.
        - It is an opportunity to show your love for your Saviour who has loved you and given Himself for you.
  - d. Oh brothers and sisters,
    - Let us start looking for such opportunities!

- Let us start looking for ways that we can love our neighbour for the LORD's sake.
- He will provide us with opportunities and He will delight in us when we walk in them...
  - He smiles upon and rewards us!

**Conclusion:**

What an encouragement this is!

- If you belong to Jesus, this is the life that God is growing you into!
  - Yes, yes, I know that you have a long way to go. Of course you do.
    - You don't find very many good works in your life.
- But don't you see, it is God who is at work in you!
  - He is making it happen!
  - He is already changed you a lot, and He is going to do a lot more.
    - Let's all remember that as we prepare to come to the Lord's Table.