



Mankato, Minnesota

Sunday Bible Class: "The Christian Calling"

Part I: The Christian Calling Defined

November 15, 2009

Session 8:

A Calling with Purpose—to Do "Good Works...Prepared (by God) Beforehand"

Ephesians 2:10 *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*

His workmanship...

The Greek word ποιημα (poi'ā-ma) means "what is made" or "creation." It is used only two times in the New Testament, here and in Romans 1:20, where it refers to the newly created world. This Greek word is the basis for our English word "poem," which refers also to the creative work of the individual poet.

◇ ...created in Christ Jesus!

Our physical bodies...

John 1:1-3 – *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

Ephesians 3:8-9 – *"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship^[a] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ."*

Colossians 1:15-18 – *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for*

Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Our spiritual lives...

Ephesians 4:20-24 – *"But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."*

Colossians 3:1-10 – *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."*

For good works...

Hebrews 11:16 – *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

Quotation from the Formula of Concord: "Faith must be the mother and source of works that are truly good and well pleasing to God, which God will reward in this world and in the world to come. This is why St. Paul calls them true fruit of faith, also fruit of the Spirit [Galatians 5:22-23]. For, as

Dr. Luther writes in the Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans:

Faith, however, is a divine work in us that changes us and makes us to be born anew of God. John 1 [:12-13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.

Faith is a living daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and all creatures. And this is the work that the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God, who has shown him this grace. Thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire." [LW 35:370-371]

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◇ ...which God prepared beforehand!

Romans 8:28-30 – *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."*

Psalms 139:16b-18 - *And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to*

me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand."

◆ ***...that we should walk in them!***

The Greek word περιπατέω (peripateo) is interesting. It means literally to "walk around." It is used in the New Testament almost 100 times. In the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life the word is used almost always to mean the simple act of walking. It is the word used for Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mark 14), and for Jesus enabling the lame to walk (cf. Matthew 11). In Paul's Epistles, however, is used almost always in the sense of how one lives or conducts himself. In this verse, consequently, Paul is describing the Christian's life as one of constant involvement in and focus upon the good works God has planned for us. Such a life will surely be blessed!

Psalm 37:3-4 – *"Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart."*

Romans 8:1 – *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

1 Corinthians 5:7 – *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."*

Galatians 5:16 – *"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."*

Ephesians 4:1; 5:2, 8, 15 – *"Walk worthy of the calling.... Walk in love.... Walk as children of light.... Walk circumspectly...."*

Colossians 1:9-12 – *"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."*

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