

October 10, 2021

Created to Do Good Works

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
Ephesians 2:8-10

"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, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."
Ephesians 4:11-13

One of the most memorable statements from any American President has to be John Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Those words sparked a period of volunteerism which we really have not seen since.

The troubled attitude that President Kennedy focused on in his speech is one that still permeates much of mankind's thinking. Far too often all of us look to what our organizations and institutions can do for us and seldom, if ever, consider what our responsibility might be to those same organizations and institutions.

This attitude is prevalent even in the church and all of us are probably guilty of focusing on what the church can do for us and not so much on what we might need to be doing for the church. We are far too prone, I think, to talk about the things the church does and should do from the standpoint of those who receive and not those who give; not those who participate.

This common attitude exists in direct conflict with the teachings of Scripture on the role believers should take within the body of Christ. In his letter to the church at Ephesus the Apostle Paul reminded the believers that although they were saved by grace through faith and not because of their works, they were none the less created through that salvation to do good works which *"...God prepared in advance for us to do."*

I cannot be saved by doing good works, but I was saved so I could do good works. In fact, I was individually and specifically designed by my God and Father to do certain things which he intentionally planned for me to do from the beginning.

Of course a major challenge for all of us is to understand just what our God and Father specifically designed us individually to do. If the church and its leadership has consistently failed in any single area, I believe it is in its efforts to *"...prepare God's people for works of service..."*

There are a number of reasons for this failure, but one of the most consistent, I think, is our effort in the church to tell people and to teach people what their works should be regardless of the God given design for them. A great example of this is found in the book of Acts and in the story of the relationship between Paul and John Mark.

At the beginning of their second missionary excursion Paul and Barnabas had a major falling out over the young John Mark. Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance to be a part of their evangelistic efforts after he deserted them and returned home during their first trip. Paul was absolutely opposed to the idea and the two friends parted company over the issue.

Have we ever asked ourselves why John Mark left the first time. Was it just possible that he felt compelled by the pressures of the church in Jerusalem to be something he was not

designed to be. Paul was designed to be an Apostle and evangelist. Planting churches was in his blood. John Mark was designed to be an author and historian. His gospel was the first penned and widely circulated among the early believers.

Everyone is not designed to be a Paul. Everyone is not designed to be a John Mark. But, everyone was individually and specifically designed to fulfill a purpose in the body of Christ; to perform preordained works of service. What are yours?

