

Good Works, Guidance and Spiritual Destiny

by John Edmiston

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As God's workmanship we are created both to be good and to do good. We are saved by faith through grace, for a good purpose. And not just for any old good purpose, but for certain good works that God has prepared beforehand for us to do:

Ephesians 2:8-10 MKJV *For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast. (10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Psalms 139:16 ASV *Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance; And in thy book they were all written, Even the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was none of them.*

God has created our days and He has also created the good works that we are supposed to fill our days with. He brings to us a discouraged person so that we can encourage them, or a penitent sinner so that we can lead them to Christ, or an eager bible student so that we can teach them or a sick person so that we can heal them or a small child so that we can love her or a youth so we can be a role model for him. Our day to day interactions at work, at home and in the ministry bring us hundreds of opportunities to glorify God.

Now, as I see it there are three main ways that God guides us into good works:

1. Through circumstances placed right in front of us by God which we in turn respond to out of our Christian character and conscience. For instance God sends us a hungry person so we just automatically feed them or a lonely person so we automatically befriend them. This is just so much a part of us that we hardly notice it:

Matthew 25:34-40 MKJV *Then the King shall say to those on His right hand, Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; (36) I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. (37) Then the righteous shall answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You? Or thirsty, and gave You drink? (38) When did we see You a stranger, and took You in? Or naked, and clothed You? (39) Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You? (40) And the King shall answer and*

say to them, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you have done it to Me.

This compassion flows from the normal agape love lifestyle of the Spirit-filled Christian:

1 John 3:16-20 ISV *This is how we have come to know love: Christ gave his life for us. We, too, ought to give our lives for our brothers. (17) Whoever has earthly possessions and notices a brother in need and yet withholds his compassion from him, how can the love of God remain in him? (18) Little children, we must stop loving in word and in tongue, but instead love in action and in truth. (19) And this is how we will know that we belong to the truth and how we will be able to establish our hearts in his presence. (20) If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.*

2. We also guided into good works as a result of our **calling in Christ**. These good works are performed in a deliberate and intentional fashion through the normal daily functioning of our special spiritual gift e.g. pastoring, evangelism or teaching:

2 Timothy 4:2-5 MKJV *preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. But you watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fully carry out your ministry.*

Timothy's ministry flowed not so much out of the reflex actions of conscience as from the struggle to fulfill his calling in Christ. Timothy was guided by his calling as to what to do each day. For instance Timothy was to do the work of an evangelist and preach the word 'in-season and out-of-season' without regard as to whether it seemed to be effective at the time.

3. Finally we receive guidance concerning good works as a result of **communication** from God. These are the initiatives of Heaven we have been speaking about. These are the times when the Holy Spirit takes charge so that we are in the right place at the right time, doing the right things, with the right people and getting the right results. This kind of guidance sometime takes us into new or difficult or unusual territory. A biblical example would be Jonah preaching to Nineveh or Ananias going to pray for Saul so that the church persecutor could see and be filled with the Holy Spirit. These were not immediately obvious things for either of them to do and so required special communication from God. God's special communication, the 'initiatives of heaven' , can also be used to properly direct how a ministry calling is to be carried out:

Acts 16:9-10 MKJV *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A certain man of Macedonia stood, begging him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us! (10) And after he saw the vision, we immediately tried to go into Macedonia, gathering that the Lord had called us in order to preach the gospel to them.*

All three of the above ways of being guided into doing good works are necessary. We are to be full of agape love and of good character and conscience, we are to work diligently at our calling as faithful stewards of the grace of God and we are to hear God's special communication directing us into specific good works.

If we fail to listen to God's guidance through these means, then we will fail to do the good works God has called us to and we will miss our spiritual destiny. If instead of agape love, we are full of selfishness - then we will not do many good works. If we are lazy in our ministry calling then we will miss great opportunities to glorify God. And if we are not listening to the initiatives of Heaven then we will miss the 'tactical' opportunities.

If one person fails to do the good works that they have been assigned to do, then in turn that can, and often does, affect others. Hudson Taylor told the story of how he had twenty struggling missions stations (I think they were on the China / Tibet border). When he went back to England he recruited twenty churches and prayer bands, one for each of the missions stations. There were breakthroughs in nineteen of the mission stations but one remained obstinately difficult and 'heartbreak territory' for those ministering there. He was greatly puzzled by this and on his next trip back to England he checked with the churches who had pledged to pray for the mission stations. Nineteen had prayed faithfully, but one had not done so, and that one was the one assigned to the station that saw no spiritual breakthrough. Many other stories can be told like this. When we are selfish, lazy or not listening for the Spirit's voice it can end up affecting large portions of the body of Christ.

You have a spiritual destiny. You have good works that God has foreordained that you should walk in, and your days were planned out even before you were born. Are you going to enter in to God's plan for your life? Or are you going to obstinately refuse it?

To enter into God's plan you must develop a good character that is full of agape love, and you must become faithful, courageous, diligent and strong in your God-given calling, and you must listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit directing you at the tactical level about what to say and what to do.

Ephesians 3:20-21 MKJV *Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (21) to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever. Amen.*

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