



Living as God's Workmanship

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM & PM Assemblies



Introduction:

We are God's workmanship. God is working on us. What great confidence we can have because we know that God is working on us. This year we have spent all kinds of time learning about God's workmanship. I want to be God's masterpiece, God's workmanship. And I am confident that God will complete His work. Therefore, I put my faith in His ability to complete His promise. Further, I want to live with you as God's workmanship. However, we need to recognize that being God's workmanship does not mean sitting on our backsides doing nothing as God pulls strings to push us along His path. Remember that **Philippians 2:12-13** says we are to work out our salvation. Paul explains that our work is valuable because God is working. Our work matters because God is working. But what should our work be? Now that we are confident God is working, what must we do to cooperate with the working of God? How do we live as God's workmanship? **I Peter 1:5-8** provides a great growth plan for us. If we follow this plan, Peter claims we will be guaranteed entrance into the eternal kingdom of God. Why? Because we worked so hard? No because God is working with us and makes our work worthwhile. But if we don't cooperate with Him, His work does us no good. Let's examine the life plan for living as God's workmanship.

Discussion:

- I. Strengthen your foundation: Faith.
 - A. We already have faith. It was part of what made us Christian to begin with (**Romans 10:9-10**).
 - B. **II Peter 1:8** says these qualities must be increasing. Thus, we may not say, "I have faith so I am saved." We must have a growing faith. This also applies to all the characteristics we will examine in this lesson.
 - C. **II Peter 1:10** says we must be diligent about these characteristics. The term translated "diligence" is elsewhere translated eager (**Ephesians 4:3**) and strive (**Hebrews 4:11**). We must exert will and action in these characteristics. Growth is not accidental. We must purpose and plan to grow.
 - D. **II Peter 1:10** says these attributes are practices, not just states of mind. We must not just have faith, we must practice faith. That is, we must do those things which increase faith (**Romans 10:17**) and those things which demonstrate faith (**Romans 1:5**). As **James 2:14-26** explains, a faith that is not demonstrated through submission is no faith at all. It is a dead faith. If we are living as God's workmanship, we must live in and by our faith (cf. **Galatians 2:20**).
- II. Build onto your foundation: Virtue.
 - A. Virtue is simply the idea of doing what is right because it is right, no matter the consequences. It is described by Paul in **Ephesians 4:17-32**, laying aside the old man and putting on the new man. Your path of virtue has already begun. In baptism, you built on to and made perfect your faith through accepting God's promise in baptism (**James 2:22-24; Colossians 2:12**). Now you must add to that virtue.
 - B. Remember God's word is the standard for what is right (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). If God's word does not authorize the work, that course of action is not virtuous, no matter what anyone else says or what you may think. No doubt, if what we are trying to do is prove how righteous we are so we can get into heaven, our righteousness will only look like filthy rags (**Isaiah 64:6**).
 - C. However, we do know that God saved us by grace through faith so that we could walk in His good works. Therefore, having been saved, we want to walk like a saved person, pursuing those good works. That is what virtue is all about. Walking in the good works God prepared for us
- III. Don't be destroyed: Knowledge.
 - A. Under the old covenant, God declared, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (**Hosea 4:6, ESV**). Jesus told the Sadducees, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures..." (**Matthew 22:29, ESV**). Jesus also said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (**John 8:32, ESV**).
 - B. We are seeing an upward cycle. Our faith comes by hearing (**Romans 10:17**). That is, we began with some knowledge, which led to faith. Our faith produced virtue. To know what was virtuous, we had to study our Bibles (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). This study increased our knowledge. This increased knowledge, produced greater faith, etc. Upward we go on the cycle.

- C. More than just reading the Bible, you must learn it. Hide it in your heart that you might not sin against God (**Psalm 119:11**). Additionally, more than knowing it, you must use it. Jesus' stands as a shining example of using knowledge in **Matthew 4:1-11**. Jesus responded to each temptation from His knowledge of the scripture, three times saying, "It is written."
- D. The reality is we don't have to know very much to enter Jesus Christ. But we must not believe that being satisfied with "entry knowledge" is living as God's workmanship. According to **John 17:17**, God sanctifies us by truth, which is His Word. Sanctification is the ongoing process of being set apart for God's holy use. As we learned earlier in the year, one of God's tools in working on us is His Word. But His Word can't work on us if we aren't opening it and learning it. If you want to live as God's workmanship, work on your knowledge.

IV. Standing on the feet God gave you: Self-control.

- A. **Romans 6:16** explains the problem we have had. Before entering Christ, we chose to sin. When we submitted to sin, we became slaves of sin. Sin took over. We didn't have self-control; we were under sin-control. **Romans 7:14-17** demonstrates this very struggle as Paul had it before entering Christ. So bad was his struggle he cries out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (ESV). But notice that he had an answer. The body that seemed to be under a law of sin and death, would be set free in Jesus Christ. Rather than being under sin's control, the Spirit would bring life to our mortal bodies (**Romans 8:11**). This paves the way for self-control.
- B. But do not misunderstand. Self-control is not achieved by relying on self. We tried that already. Where did it get us? As **Proverbs 14:12; 16:25** say the way that seems right to us will end in death. Self-control comes from relying on God. As **Proverbs 3:5** says we must not lean or rely on our own understanding but rather trust in the Lord. We recognize that **Galatians 5:22-23** presents self-control as a fruit of the Spirit. So we don't pursue self-control by just trying to white knuckle our own way through God's will. We pursue self-control by pursuing the Spirit's lead. As **Galatians 2:20** says, Christ lives in us when we live by faith. So we pursue self-control by pursuing faith in Jesus Christ and in His way.
- C. In **Psalm 141**, David was seeking self-control. Notice the two pronged approach. He didn't just say, "Hey God, look at me control myself." Rather, in **Psalm 141:3-4**, he prayed that God would act in his life setting a guard over his heart, directing his heart, and protecting him from relationships with wicked men. Then in **Psalm 141:5**, he asked for help in his self-control from other people. To pursue self-control, find righteous people who will strike you and smite you when you go astray. Find people who will provoke you to love and good deeds (cf. **Hebrews 11:24**).
- D. Always remember **I Corinthians 10:12**. If we are trusting in ourselves that we are standing, we will fall. Self-control then is not standing on our own two feet as I once thought. Rather, self-control is learning to stand on the feet God has given us.

V. Keep on keepin' on: Steadfastness.

- A. Steadfastness is determining to continue to serve God until the end (**James 5:7-8**). However, it is much more than serving God throughout the day to day humdrum activities. It means serving God even through hardship. It is endurance even in the face of the greatest suffering.
- B. Steadfastness means serving God even though we sacrifice some of the pleasures of this life (**Hebrews 11:24-26**). It means not being distracted by the things of the world (**Colossians 3:1-2**). It means facing hatred and persecution but continuing anyway without soft-peddling the gospel (**II Timothy 3:12**). To see an example of true perseverance read **Hebrews 11:35-38**.
- C. Remember that in Peter's first letter, he was encouraging the Christians to be steadfast even in the face of trials (**I Peter 1:6; 4:12-13**), reminding them of Christ's suffering followed by victory. In this letter, he is encouraging them to maintain steadfastness in the face of false teachers (**II Peter 2:1-3**). False teachers will be encouraging them to pursue sensuality. How easy it is to pursue that wide road rather than God's narrow road. But it ends in death. He also encourages them to be steadfast in the face of those who would try to convince them that God won't keep His promises (**II Peter 3:1-13**). But we can hang on to God's promise. We know that judgment is coming and God is providing the way of escape. If you would live as God's workmanship, be steadfast in the face of the hardships and trials that await you (**I Timothy 6:12**).

VI. Grow your relationship with God: Godliness

- A. You became a Christian because you feared God. You became a Christian because of your attitude towards who He is and what He does. Growing in godliness, means growing in that relationship.

- B. The term translated “godliness” (eusebeia) is a contraction of two terms, one meaning “good” (eu) and the other meaning “reverence” (sebomai). It is reverence for and piety towards God. However, as learned earlier, this, like faith, is not just an attitude. Godliness is to be our diligent practice. In fact, in **II Peter 3:11-12** we are asked since judgment is coming, what kind of lives should we lead in holiness and godliness?
- C. What would be the ultimate way of practicing piety towards God? Imitation! Paul commanded us to imitate Christ (**I Corinthians 11:1**). Peter said we are to be holy, because God is holy (**I Peter 1:16**).
- D. Living as God’s workmanship means living with reverence for God. That is, have a devotion and piety toward God that is demonstrated by living as God would. While I do not want to promote fads, the question that was so popular a few years ago, “What would Jesus do?” is a great guide for this aspect as long as we are basing our answer on what the Bible really says about Him.

VII. Grow your relationship with brethren: Brotherly affection

- A. When we enter a relationship with God, we are placed in a relationship with others (**I John 1:7**). Living as God’s workmanship means growing in your relationship with those others.
- B. The term translated “brotherly affection” (philadelphia) is also a contraction of two words. One meaning “friend” (philos), the other meaning “brother” (adelphos). Thus, we are to be friends with our brothers. As in our physical families, in Christ, we do not choose who our brothers are. But, in all relationships, we choose who our friends are. Peter says we must choose to be friends with our brethren (**Romans 12:10**).
- C. We typically make friends with those who have the same interests, same desires and same goals as we do. What greater similarity could we have than going to heaven and taking others with us?
- D. How do you treat a friend? With kindness and patience. You help them overcome their problems. You accept help from them with your problems. You work through relational difficulties. You speak well of them. You spend time with them. Look at all your brethren. How do you treat them? Be a friend to them. Our last lesson in this series talked about living with others like they are God’s workmanship. For more information here, go to our website to study that lesson.
- E. If you would live as God’s workmanship, you must be a friend to your brethren. By the way, notice this is not waiting around for your brethren to be friends with you. You be a friend.

VIII. Becoming Like God: Love.

- A. Now that you are a Christian, your outlook and action toward everyone changes. This love encompasses the previous two points (**Matthew 22:36-39; Luke 10:25-28**) and adds everybody else in your changing relationships. In fact, Jesus’ parable in **Luke 10:30-37** about the good Samaritan is an illustration of this love. The love was demonstrated between enemies: a Samaritan and a Jew.
- B. This love is an unconditional love. We are to love all no matter what they have done. They do not have to be pretty, rich, or even friendly. They just have to be there. God is our model for love (**Matthew 5:43-48**).
- C. This love is described in **I Corinthians 13:4-7**. An enlightening exercise is to take each of the attributes of love and see if you can honestly apply them to yourself. Instead of saying “Love is patient”, can you insert your name? “(Insert name) is patient.” Take the exercise a step further. Instead of thinking nebulously about your overall character. Ask yourself these questions about particular relationships. “(Insert name) is patient with (insert the name of someone with whom you have a relationship).”
- D. Think about it like this. God is working on us. That means more and more of Him is going to be in us the more He works on us. It is no accident that Peter ends this list with love. After all, God is love (**I John 4:8**). If we are growing as God’s workmanship, we will wind up here. We will also be love.

Conclusion:

Grow in these qualities, then “there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (**II Peter 1:11**, ESV). The goal of God’s work in our lives is to usher us into His presence for all eternity. He is making us into effective citizens in His kingdom. But if we won’t cooperate with His work, His work will be in vain (cf. **I Corinthians 15:10**). However, the great thing is, we know we can work on these things because God is working in us. Our work is effective because of God’s work (**Philippians 2:12-13**). Are you living as God’s workmanship?