

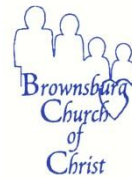
I Want to Be God's Workmanship

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



Introduction:

When Vince Lombardi was hired to coach the Green Bay Packers, the team had been a losing franchise. They hadn't had a winning season in 12 years. They had only won one game in the previous season. Morale was low. The future looked pitiful. In walked Vince Lombardi. The story goes that on the first practice, he gathered the team together, held up a football, and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football." Apparently, he started every season thereafter with a similar speech. One record of the speech goes something like this, "Gentlemen, this is a football. This season is going to be the start of something new. With every fiber of my being I am going to make you the best football team that I can make you. I will try and try again and if I don't succeed the first time, I will try again." Considering that the Packers went on to win 5 NFL championship titles and the first two Super Bowl championships in Lombardi's 9 years as coach, I'd say he did what he said he would. He was so successful the Super Bowl trophy was even named after him following his death. In fact, if what I really wanted was to be made into a football player, I think Lombardi would be at the top of the list of people I'd want working on me. I would work with him, listen to him, do what he said, surrender to his direction, practice when he said practice, practice what he said practice, practice with who he said to practice with, eat what he said to eat, sleep when he said sleep, avoid what he said to avoid, and, no doubt, I would become the best football player I could be (though probably not the best football player alive). Let's face it, if you want to be made into something great, having a great coach working on you is key. But what if what I want to be is holy? (cf. **1 Peter 1:16**). What if what I want to be is righteous? (cf. **Matthew 5:6**). What if what I want to be is like Jesus Christ? (cf. **Romans 8:29**). Who would I want working on me then? Vince Lombardi isn't going to get that done. Dr. Phil isn't going to accomplish that. Even Stephen Covey and John Maxwell aren't going to make this happen. Who do I want working on me? Obviously, God! That is exactly what **Ephesians 2:10** says about us as Christians. We are God's workmanship. He is working on us. We are devoting a great deal of our time in 2013 talking about what it means to be God's workmanship walking in good works. But as we start this focus this year, I just want us to see that we really do want God working on us. I'm not going to give you a whole bunch of direction in this lesson about what to do. I have only one goal. By the end of this lesson, I hope you are saying, I want God to work on me. I want to be God's workmanship.

Discussion:

I. God's workmanship

- A. The word translated "workmanship" in **Ephesians 2:10** is "poiema." It means "that which has been made." It refers to a created work. When a silversmith or goldsmith completes a ring or a pendant, it would be called his workmanship. When a woodcarver gets done with his carving, it is his workmanship. When a sculptor completes his sculpture, it is his workmanship. When a weaver finishes his tapestry, when a painter completes his painting, when an author ends his novel, these are their workmanship. The Greek word itself is the ancient root for our modern word "poem." Picture a master poet slaving over words and phrases, rhythm and meter, rhyme and wordplay. See him crossing out what doesn't work, replacing it with what does. He slaves over it until it is just right, saying exactly what he wants it to say. That is what God is doing with us. We are His workmanship.
- B. **Ephesians 2:10** goes on to say that we are God's workmanship "created" in Christ Jesus. This translates the word "ktisthentes." And while, no doubt, this word can refer to creating something out of nothing (**Colossians 1:16**), its primary meaning seems to be "to make habitable" and even refers to changing and transforming.¹ It can be a picture of taking chaos and producing order in it. Thus, in **Genesis 1:1**, when God brought the heavens and the earth into existence from nothing, that was creating. But when he took dust from the ground and formed it into man (**Genesis 2:7**), we can also call that creation. And when God planted a garden in Eden (**Genesis 2:8**) where man could live, we can also call that creation. When we talk about us being created in Christ Jesus as God's workmanship, the picture is taking the chaotic wasteland of our sinful heart and forming, molding, shaping it to be a habitable place for God to dwell. It's a picture of God bringing order to chaos. As in **Genesis 1:1-2**, what God first brought into existence was chaotic and through the week of creation He produced order, so He takes our chaos and creates habitable order.

¹ <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G2936&t=ESV>

II. God's masterpieces

- A. To me, just hearing that is a beautiful picture. I want that. I want to be God's workmanship. I want to be made into an orderly dwelling place for the Father, Son, and Spirit. I want the chaos that has been my heart, soul, and mind to be organized and ordered, created in Christ Jesus. But can God really do that? Let's consider some of God's masterpieces. After all, if you wanted to commission someone to paint a portrait for you, take some wedding pictures for you, do some printing work for you, you'd want to see the work they had done. Let's look at a handful of God's masterpieces.
- B. *Abraham*: According to **Joshua 24:2-3**, Abraham had been an idolater, serving other Gods when Jehovah called him. In **Genesis 12:10-20**, he struggled with his faith that God would actually take care of him. This was repeated in **Genesis 20**. In **Genesis 15**, Abraham struggled believing that he would have any offspring or that God would actually give him the land. In **Genesis 16**, he was so weak in his faith that he tried to help God along by taking a concubine who would have children. In **Genesis 17:15-17**, when told that God would produce a child from him and Sarah, he fell on his face and laughed. Let's face it. There seems to be some chaos in Abraham. And yet, look at where Abraham ended up. The child was born. And Abraham became a man who loved, believed, and served God so much that when God told him to sacrifice this only child through whom the promise could really come, Abraham did it (**Genesis 22:1-14**); or at least got right up to the point of it before God provided a better sacrifice. He became the father of God's Old Covenant nation, the father of the faithful (cf. **Galatians 3:29**). He is the example of salvation through faith in God (**Romans 4:1-3, 9-12**). God did that. God created Abraham. Abraham was God's workmanship. What a masterpiece!
- C. *Moses*: In **Exodus 2:1-10**, Moses seemed to have a blessed beginning. When infants were being slaughtered, he survived, and not only survived but thrived, being brought up in the house of Pharaoh. Surely this guy is going to be someone great. But then **Exodus 2:11-22** happened. Moses, thinking he was somehow special, was simply certain God would use him to deliver Israel (cf. **Acts 7:25**). He killed a man, was rejected by his own people, fled in fear from his adoptive grandfather, and became a shepherd, which was an anathema to his upbringing. Then when God called him in **Exodus 3-4**, he was an excuse-making coward. "I can't do it. Don't send me. Send someone else." This man who started out looking so great demonstrated that he was just a chaotic mess. His faith was pathetic. His submission was questionable. And yet, over the next several chapters of **Exodus**, Moses becomes the great man of God we normally think about. He led Israel out of Egypt. He led them through the wilderness. He even eventually led them to the borders of the Promised Land. I'm not saying there were never anymore hiccups. But he stood in the gap on Israel's behalf saving them from destruction. So connected was he to God that when Jesus went to the mount of transfiguration, Moses was one of the two men who met with Jesus (**Matthew 17:3**). God did that. God created Moses. Moses was God's workmanship. What a masterpiece!
- D. *Mary Magdalene*: According to **Luke 8:1-2**, Jesus was followed by a woman named "Mary, called Magdalene." We know very little about this woman, but what we do know is amazing. According to this passage, she had been inhabited by seven demons. Talk about chaos. What on earth can ever become of a person inhabited by demons? What evil must she have done in such a state? What evil had she done to end up there? And yet, when Jesus entered her life, she was created into something new. So much of a change did she experience that she was the first human being to see the resurrected Savior (**John 20:11-18**). She was the first witness of the resurrection. The first testimony given to the resurrection. The first evangelist if you will. In a sense, she was Jesus' apostle sent to the apostles. In a time when the testimony of women wouldn't even stand up in court, God used the testimony of a formerly demon-possessed woman first to proclaim His good news. God did that. God created Mary Magdalene. Mary was God's workmanship. What a masterpiece!
- E. *Peter*: Peter was an uneducated fisherman (**Acts 4:13; Matthew 4:18-19**). We know the story. He was impetuous and rash. He was fickle and changing. In **John 13:6-10**, in a matter of seconds, Peter went from declaring that Jesus would never wash his feet to demanding that Jesus wash his entire body, and was rebuked for both statements. At one point, Jesus likened Peter to Satan himself saying, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (**Matthew 16:23**, ESV), because he was denying that Jesus would suffer and die. This happened just verses after Peter made the good confession that Jesus is the Christ and Jesus said he was blessed of the Father for this. While he was ready to leap out and cut off the servant of the high priest's ear in defense of Jesus (**John 18:10-11**), it wasn't what Jesus wanted, and in just a few hours he was denying that he was even Jesus' disciple (**John 18:15-18, 25-27**). How on earth could Jesus pick this guy? And yet, in **Acts 2**, he stands up before all the Jews and declaring his discipleship; in **Acts 4** he defends his faith to the Jewish

council; in **Acts 5** he joyfully endures a beating for the Lord; in **Acts 10-11** he overturned his personal prejudices to follow the Lord's will and defends it against those even in the church who would stand against it. Certainly, he was a work in progress (as all of these folks have been), and he messed up sometimes (cf. **Galatians 2:11-14**). But he was a leader among the apostles, writing two books that are in our New Testament reminding all of us what it means to live as a Christian (**II Peter 1:12-15**). And as tradition and history reveal, he went on to die for his faith, bravely declaring his discipleship and accepting execution for it. God did that. God created Peter. Peter was God's workmanship. What a masterpiece!

- F. *Paul*: Could any survey such as this be complete without Saul the persecutor who became Paul the apostle? According to **I Timothy 1:13**, he had been a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent of God. According to **Acts 26:9-11**, he opposed the name of Jesus. He locked up saints, cast his vote in favor of their deaths, punished them in the synagogues, tried to force them to blaspheme, and chased them to foreign cities. In **Acts 7:58**, Paul watched over the coats of those who hurled stones at Stephen until he was broken, battered, crushed, and dead. How could this guy ever be anything good? And yet in **Acts 9**, he was converted to Christ. In **Acts 11**, he started working, preaching, and teaching in the church in Antioch. In **Acts 13**, he was called by the Spirit along with Barnabas to take the gospel to foreign cities. Rather than chasing disciples to foreign cities to turn them into sinners, he chased sinners to foreign cities to turn them into disciples. He wrote the largest number of books in our Bible and has come to us through history as one of the greatest of disciples. God did that. God created Paul. Paul was God's workmanship. What a masterpiece!

Conclusion:

God can do that for you. You can be another of His masterpieces. Don't you want that? I do.