



# God's Chisels

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



## Introduction:

Some of you may remember that when we got started in our look at being God's workmanship, that I introduced another sermon something like this:

"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. I 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."

But what exactly would that mean? Would that mean lounging around doing whatever I want while I claimed Lombardi was working on me? Of course not. That would mean Lombardi would pull out his bag of tools and start working on me. He would demand that I attend practices, do exercises, establish disciplines, get the proper rest, eat right, etc. When I listened to what he said and submitted to it, we'd say it was Lombardi turning me into a football player. This is important because too many have a completely wrong idea about God working on us. They think that means we just go about our business and wait on God to flip some switches on the inside to make us change. But that just isn't the case. There is a great video online put out by a group called "The Skit Guys" called "God's Chisel." I certainly don't agree with everything that group teaches, but I love that video. However, it leaves you at the end asking, "But how does God actually do the chiseling?" What tools does He use when working on us?

## Discussion:

### I. God uses His Word.

- A. Our entire look at being God's workmanship has been anchored in **Ephesians 2:8-10**. We are being created by God in Jesus Christ. We know that parallels the creating God did in the beginning. **Hebrews 11:3** explains that the universe was created by the Word of God. It is not shocking then to see that God's workmanship and creation of us also comes through His Word.
- B. According to **I Peter 1:23**, we were born again through the Word of God. That is, we were born again through obedience to His Word (cf. **Romans 6:17**). But that is not all. According to **I Thessalonians 2:13**, God's Word continues to work in those who believe. The point is that those who believe spend time in God's Word. They listen to it, read it, study it, surrender to it. Through that, it works in their lives.
- C. **II Timothy 3:16-17** says the Scriptures, or written Word of God, are profitable to us for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. The Word can equip us for every good work. The Word works on us and grows us as we surrender to it in faith. No wonder Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (**John 17:17**, ESV). The Word sanctifies us, makes us holy, sets us apart from the world, because the world won't surrender to the Word in faith.
- D. Finally, consider the armor of God, not just armor that is godly, but God's armor that He gives us in **Ephesians 6:13-17**. We all see that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. But notice the other aspects of God's armor. We can stand against the attacks of Satan when we have the belt of truth, and as we've already seen, truth comes from God's Word (**John 17:17**). We need the breastplate of righteousness, and training in that comes from God's Word (**II Timothy 3:16**). We need the readiness provided by the gospel of peace as shoes on our feet, and that gospel is the Word of God (**Colossians 1:5**). We need the shield of faith, and that comes from hearing the Word of God/Christ (**Romans 10:17**). Finally, we need the helmet of salvation, and we gain the wisdom that leads to salvation from God's Word (**II Timothy 3:14-15**).
- E. Letting God work on us doesn't mean sitting around doing whatever and just expecting Him to flip some switches. God chisels us with His Word. Will you let Him?

## II. God uses His people.

- A. **Ephesians 1:22-23** calls Christ's church His body. Implicitly, that means that the group of people who belong to the Lord are His hands and feet, His shoulders and back, His arms and legs. He is the head. He directs, guides, and leads. But we are what He uses to accomplish His work in the world. We are not surprised to find out that God uses His people then to work on each other in this creative process.
- B. In **Hebrews 10:24**, the Hebrew writer explains that we are supposed to stir one another up. Consider some of the terms used to translate this concept: provoke (KJV), spur on (NIV), stimulate (NASB). These are not generally considered positive words. We usually talk about provoking to anger and stirring up trouble. Spurring on is what we do with a lazy horse that won't get up and move. Stimulating is what we do when we jolt a muscle with a shot of electricity. Yet, this is what God's people do for each other. We push and prod. We stimulate and spur on. We stir up and provoke each other. We will not let each other be satisfied with spiritual mediocrity. By the way, notice in **Hebrews 10:25** that this is the reason we need to be at every assembly we possibly can be. In physics we learned that an object at rest will remain at rest until acted on by another force. The same can be said of people. Not to mention, in physics we learned that forces are working on objects in motion to slow them down and get them to stop. The same is true of Christians. Natural tendency is to slow down, stop, and stay at rest. We need the encouragement of our brethren. We need the poking, prodding, stirring up, and spurring on. This is even going to include discipline Jesus talked about in **Matthew 18:1-5**.
- C. In **Galatians 6:1-2**, Paul explains that we work on each other by restoring those caught in sin and bearing each other's burdens. This is an individual approach to God's working in us. This is more than "going to church." This is being involved in each other's lives, knowing each other, serving each other, helping each other. **James 5:14-16** provide a powerful picture of God working on us through His people. Sadly, all too often we treat our brethren like people we need to impress or compete with. We are afraid that they may find out we still have struggles. But this passage demonstrates we need to have a culture of vulnerability and safety. This begins with relying on our shepherds. That is why God has given them to us. When we are weak and sick, and I believe this refers to spiritual weakness, we need to turn to these men God has put in our lives to work in us and lead us, shepherding our souls, leading us in our relationship with God and victory over sin. But we also need to rely on each other, confessing our struggles with each other. We need to quit waiting until we have brought public "shame and reproach" on the congregation to share our struggles with other Christians. We need to confess to others when the sins are beating us, even if they are private. God has given us each other to work on each other. Rely on that.
- D. This all demonstrates two main points for us as members of the body of Christ and of this particular local body.
  - 1. First, we need to let others work on us. Don't isolate. Don't go off on your own. But more than that, when you relate to other Christians, don't let the relationship just be worldly talking about sports, the weather, politics, and the stock market. Find brethren that you will let provoke and stir you up.
  - 2. Second, be willing to work on others. Step up to the plate and ask your brothers and sisters how they are doing spiritually. If you see someone trapped in sin, help them, restore them. Encourage your brothers and sisters. Don't wait for the shepherds, deacons, or evangelists to do it. Get involved in the lives of your brethren. God is using you to work in their lives.

## III. God uses His providence.

- A. "Providence" is the foreseeing care and guardianship of God over His people. It is His general provision and provide-ence for those who are His. We often say, "God works in mysterious ways." That usually comes after we've been through some difficult circumstance that we eventually see worked out for our own good. God does indeed do that. He allows circumstances, natural consequences, even common suffering to help us grow and make us habitable for the living Spirit.
- B. There are positive and negative sides to this. On the positive side, when God allows us to enjoy the natural blessings that flow from surrendering in faith to Him, we are built up even more in our faith. Consider all those faithful people listed in **Hebrews 11**. I can't help but especially notice **Hebrews 11:23**. When Amram and Jochobed faithfully protected their son and were rewarded with the blessing of their son being saved and taken into Pharaoh's palace, do you think their faith and trust in God increased? When we surrender to God in faith, doing what He says, it works. As our faith is rewarded with those natural, providential consequences, it is built up, strengthened.
- C. On the other hand, there is a negative side. **James 1:2-4** explains that suffering happens in this life. This is not saying that God looked down at you and said, "I'm going to cause so-and-so to suffer." It is simply the

natural course of this life. Suffering happens. God doesn't allow us to suffer because He is mean, but because He is working on us in the suffering. Don't ask God to free you from suffering, but for steadfastness to endure the suffering and allow it to have its perfect work in your life, making you complete, perfect, and lacking nothing. As **I Peter 1:6-7** says, in life our faith gets tested. It's like gold being put in the crucible and subjected to heat. It melts us and pains us, but it allows the slag to come to the top so God can remove it from us. Of course, this demands something from us. Rather than allowing our sufferings to be an excuse to sin, we need to see them as a magnifying glass that shows where we still need God's work in us.

- D. Consider a specific example of this working. In **II Corinthians 12:7-10**. Satan gave Paul a thorn in the flesh. It was a natural part of living, even though Satan was directing it. But God also used it to work on Paul. God used this thorn to help Paul maintain humility so that he would not abandon God.
- E. Understand what this means. God is working on you all the time. Look at the discipline you are experiencing in everyday life and see where your faith needs to increase. Letting God work on you doesn't mean just floating along through life. It means facing life purposefully. It means accepting the disciplines of life and determining to use them as an impetus to grow in faith and in Christ.

#### Conclusion:

In an earlier lesson in this series, we claimed we wanted to be God's workmanship. But that doesn't mean just sitting around waiting on Him to flip some switches. If we were letting Vince Lombardi work on us to create us as football players, we would go to his practices, listen to his instruction, learn from his other creations, submit to His discipline. Why would this mean something different when we want to be God's workmanship? Let Him have His way with you. Let Him apply His chisels to your life. Immerse yourself in His Word. Surround yourself with His people. Purposefully experience His providence. Let Him chisel away at you until people no longer see you, but a reflection of Him.