



Working with God's Energy

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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Introduction:

Have you ever just sat back and been amazed at all Paul accomplished? Three missionary journeys, two imprisonments, 13 (possibly 14) books of the Bible, establishing and influencing numerous congregations, training multiple men to carry on the work, all the people and churches he claimed to pray constantly for. The list could go on. His work was tremendous. Surely, if anyone could boast about what he accomplished, Paul would be the guy. Yet, he says things like, "I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses..." (**II Corinthians 12:9**, ESV). He wouldn't boast in his work, but his weaknesses? Why? Perhaps **Romans 15:18** gives us a clue. Paul wouldn't talk about what he did, but only about what Jesus Christ did through him. Paul didn't see himself as accomplishing these great things. He saw it as God doing it. He was just the tool. Don't misunderstand, Paul knew he was working. But he also realized that what made the work effective was not him, but God. Thus, in **Colossians 1:29**, Paul said, "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" (ESV). In this verse, Paul demonstrates the two sides of what is going on in us as God's workmanship. We must toil and struggle, working for the Lord. But we only accomplish it by the energy and power that God powerfully works within us. As the old saying, sometimes attributed to Augustine, says, "Without me, God will not; without God, I cannot." But even more importantly, we can actually accomplish it by the energy and power that God powerfully works within me. We can modify the old saying, "With me, God will; with God, I can." If we are going to grow as God's workmanship in the good works that **Ephesians 2:10** talks about, we need to increase our faith in the energy and power of God. Consider for a few moments some aspects of Paul's statement in **Colossians 1:29** and what it means for our work.

Discussion:

I. God's work, power, and energy.

- A. Before we really consider what God's power and energy accomplish through our work, we need to be amazed at God's work, power, and energy in general. Sadly, having heard so much about God and His power, we can too easily become familiarized and unimpressed with God. Can we take a few minutes to simply sit in awe of God's power? For just a moment, think about the displays of God's power and work.
- B. The whole Bible begins with the words "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (**Genesis 1:1**, ESV). With His words He created light, He divided the expanse, He gathered the seas and oceans, He put the sun, moon, and stars in their places throughout the universe, He created and brought to life all vegetation, all fish, birds, creatures, and man. His power set in motion the life cycles that have continued to sustain us for millennia. He did this in the blink of an eye, a snap of the finger, by speaking it into existence.
- C. He flooded the earth for 40 days and nights, preserving Noah, his family, and the animal kingdom on a big boat made to his specification (**Genesis 6-8**). He destroyed the world and then repopulated it through Noah. For years, we've witnessed the devastations of tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes. We see the lightning, hear the thunder, see the destruction. It is hard to fathom that kind of power and yet God's is infinitely greater. He is the one who controls the storms (**Job 38:22-30**).
- D. Consider His work in Egypt when Israel was enslaved there (**Exodus 7-14**). He battled with the supposed gods of Egypt and left them all broken and shattered. He turned the waters of the Nile to blood; He sent the plague of frogs; He sent lice, flies, and destruction upon the cattle; He sent boils on the skin; He sent hail, locust, and darkness; He attacked the very throne of Pharaoh and destroyed the firstborn. In many of these plagues, He powerfully kept a distinction between the Egyptians and His covenant people, Israel. He parted the waters of the Red Sea, letting Israel walk through on dry land. Then He brought the water crashing down on Pharaoh's army. He gave Israel water to drink, manna from heaven, and preserved their clothes and shoes for the whole wilderness journey. Consider the praise the Israelites offered God in **Exodus 15**.
- E. Consider the victories He gave Israel. Joshua defeated Jericho by marching around for seven days and the walls came down (**Joshua 6**). He made the sun stand still over the battle with the five kings as Israel defeated them and then sent stones from heaven to crush them as they fled before Israel (**Joshua 10**). He gave victory over the Midianites to Gideon and 300 soldiers as they simply blew trumpets and smashed jars filled with torches (**Judges 7**). He defeated Goliath before the little shepherd boy David and handed the Philistines over to Israel (**I Samuel 17**). He defeated the Syrians before a besieged Samaria by sending

them the delusion of the sound of an oncoming army, sending them scurrying away in the middle of the night, leaving enough food to satisfy an entire starving city (**II Kings 7**). He sent an angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night when they were trying to besiege Jerusalem (**II Kings 19**).

- F. And can we forget the amazing work of the incarnation of Jesus Christ? God was so powerfully concerned about our salvation, setting us free from sin, and provoking us to good works that He sent Jesus into the world to die for our sins. But more than that, He raised Him up from the grave on the third day. He did all of this because He loves us and wants us to be workers in His kingdom, alive and reconciled (cf. **Romans 5:10**). If He did that, we can trust Him to exercise all of this power and energy on our behalf that we might be saved, reconciled, and overcome. Be in awe of this God and His attention to us for just a moment before we examine four powerful points we must learn from **Colossians 1:29**.

II. My good work is possible because God is working.

- A. Good work is impossible for those outside of Christ. Don't get me wrong. Obviously all people do things that we classify as good. But there are two principles we need to grasp.
- B. First, outside of Jesus Christ, our good deeds amount to nothing. As **Isaiah 64:6** explains, our righteousness and right actions are filthy rags. That is why Paul, bringing together several Old Testament passages, can say what he does in **Romans 3:10-18**.
- C. Second, for all of our white-knuckling attempts to produce good works, outside of Jesus Christ the law of sin and death prevails. We are enslaved to it. Paul expresses this in **Romans 7:13-24**. So enslaved and unable to continue in good works was Paul that He cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (**Romans 7:24**, ESV). The answer? God through Jesus Christ (**Romans 7:25**).
- D. **Ephesians 2:10** explains that we are created by God in Christ for good works. He is the one making it possible for you and me to walk in good works. Please, take courage. God is working. Therefore, He is making possible our good works.

III. My good work matters because God is working.

- A. In **Colossians 1:29**, Paul explained that he was struggling on behalf of the Colossians and all Christians. But why keep doing that? Why would anything Paul did even matter? Paul believed it mattered because God's energy and power were being brought to bear in Paul's working.
- B. Sadly, many Christians get turned off by discussion of the working of God. They think that talking about God working in us and through us will lead us to quit working. No doubt, some who do not appreciate the glory of God may take that approach. But that is not Paul's approach. In **Philippians 2:12-13**, Paul explains that we need to work, not because our work is so powerful, but because God is working. Do you ever get discouraged because your working doesn't seem to matter? You have invited a dozen people and not one of them has showed up. You have studied with a dozen people and not one of them has been baptized. You have tried to help brothers and sisters grow, but none of them respond. You have worked on a sin again and again and thought you were making headway, but then had another colossal fall. In these moments, we begin to think our work just doesn't matter. But it does. It does matter. Why? Because your working is so great? No. Because God is working. He is working in us, therefore what we do actually matters. If God weren't working, then what we do wouldn't matter at all just as the psalmist says in **Psalms 127:1-2**.
- C. Paul drives this home in **I Corinthians 15:58**: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (ESV). Hang on to that. You may not see it getting anywhere. You may not know how you can make a difference where you are. You may think you are not making a difference. But God is working, therefore your good work matters. Keep working.

IV. My good work is successful because God is working.

- A. Think for just a moment about the God and His working that we described earlier. Is there anything that can stop His working? This is the God who makes crooked and no one can straighten, He makes straight and no one can make crooked (**Ecclesiastes 7:13**). He can take a Moses who fled in fear at age 40 and make him the deliverer of Israel at age 80. He can take a little shepherd boy and make him the defeater of a giant. He can take a scared thresher of wheat, the least in his father's house in the weakest clan in Israel and make him a leader of men who defeats enemies. He can take an impulsive, petulant, fickle fisherman and turn him into steady and stalwart-as-a-rock fisher of men. He can take a persecutor and turn him into an apostle. God can do all of that. He can make your work successful. As **Ephesians 3:20-21** explains, He can do far more abundantly than all you ask or think by His power working in you.

- B. Consider **Isaiah 55:10-11**. God's Word does not return to Him void. When we are acting out of God's Word, our work will not return to Him void. Of course, we have to understand that we may not see it being successful because God's goal was not the same as ours. After all, who among the apostles thought God's Work was successful when Jesus was betrayed, on trial, crucified, or buried? Yet, in **Acts 4:27-28**, after God's full plan came to fruition, they were able to recognize that God's work in Jesus was absolutely successful.
 - C. Moses couldn't imagine succeeding in releasing Israel. But God made it successful. David stepped on the battlefield with Goliath, but not because he thought he would be successful, but because he was certain God would be. Abraham continued in God's plan, not because he was certain he was a virulent male who would have a host of children but because he had faith that God would work and bring about His plan.
 - D. You may not be able to imagine how you can be successful at good work. You may not believe you can even be successful at walking in good works period. Satan may be distracting you by all the mistakes you've made, even after becoming a Christian. But be aware, you will be successful if you are in Christ, because God is working. Perhaps you can't imagine how you can be successful at overcoming a particular sin, leading your family, teaching the lost, leading a congregation, or whatever else is on your plate. But in Jesus Christ, God is working. He will make your work successful. Toil and labor with the energy He provides. Don't grow weary in doing good; you will reap what you sow and you will be successful in Christ Jesus (**Galatians 6:9**).
- V. God is working; I need to get to good work and praise God for it.
- A. God is working. He has always been working. He will accomplish His purposes. His purpose is His glory, and He will make it happen. He will make it happen through His children. As **Romans 8:28-39** explains, we can rest in our faith in Him. We will conquer, overcome, and be victorious through Him.
 - B. But what does that mean for us? It means we need to get to work. Too often I spend my time paralyzed in fear thinking I can't do something for God. I multiply the excuses about why something will never work. And so I do nothing. Do you know what I've discovered? Doing nothing doesn't work. Who could imagine that a little shepherd boy setting foot on a battlefield would work? But God didn't deliver Israel from Goliath until David got on the battlefield. Who could have imagined that a failed leader who had fled for his life could deliver Israel from Egypt? But God didn't deliver Israel until Moses went to Pharaoh. If only God could accomplish these things, why would these men get to work? Because God works through us. So, we need to get to work. Keep on working, keeping your faith in God who is working.
 - C. And when you have a victory, give God the praise. Don't try to take the praise for yourself. You couldn't do it. It is God's energy, power, and work that granted the victory. Consider **Psalms 8:1-2**. David gives praise to God, recognizing that he is nothing more than a baby and an infant. Every victory he has had was because of God's strength and power. Again, notice Paul in **II Corinthians 12:9-10**. We are weak, but God is strong. When we accomplish something, it is because of His strength in us. And so, we don't talk about what we have done, but about what God has done through us (cf. **Romans 15:18**). A great example of this kind of praise is **I Chronicles 29:10-16** as David presented the people's offering to God, but rather than bragging on the people, He praised God for His abundant blessing that made the offering possible.

Conclusion:

Do you want to walk in good works? Then recognize you are walking by the energy and power which God supplies. Put your faith in His power, energy, and work. Keep working because you have faith that He is working. And keep praising Him when His work in you is successful. If you are standing outside of Christ because you just think you can't do it, please listen to this. You are right. You can't. But in Christ, God is working in you. Put your faith in His working, not your own. Quit letting your lack of faith in yourself keep you out of Christ. Put your faith in God, and let Him energize you in Jesus Christ to walk in His good works. Become His workmanship today. Don't put it off anymore.