

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 398

Series: Solution-Focused Faith

Topic: Faith For Kingdom Ministry

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2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 MKJV (11) Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of the calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, (12) that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:8 MKJV And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that in everything, always having all self-sufficiency, you may abound to every good work;

Hebrews 13:20-21 MKJV Now may the God of peace (who brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant) (21) make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 2:10 MKJV For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works. This is our purpose here on earth – we have a job to do. We are to have the divine nature of Christ expressing itself through us in deeds of kindness, faith and love.

We are to be like Jesus and Jesus did many good works (Acts 10:38). While salvation and being born-again is free (just like being born naturally is free) we are afterwards expected to grow up in Christ and do good works, which God has prepared beforehand for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Now doing good works is difficult for at least three reasons that I can think of:

1. Good works go against our sinful human nature and our natural self-interest and our covetousness and materialism. They also take up sacrificial amounts of time, money and effort.

2. Good works involve encountering the sick (if we are to heal them), the poor (if we are to help them and preach the gospel to them), the lost (if we are to win them for Christ), the dangerously evil (if we are to bring justice), the dead (if we are to raise them) and the demonic (if we are to deliver the afflicted). This is seldom pleasant.

3. Good works are opposed and resisted by the Devil and those in the world who see them as foolish, or who are threatened by them. We have to wrestle against principalities and powers that want to tear down what we build. (Ephesians 6:10)

Because the continued doing of good works is wearying, difficult, unpleasant and sacrificial and you can get misunderstood, slandered, persecuted and even killed, then you can ONLY do good works by having faith in Christ and by working in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Whether your good work is teaching fourteen year old girls in a Sunday School class or trying to win Muslims for Jesus in Asia's urban slums (I am not sure which is the tougher) you will need Jesus to turn up for you at regular intervals. You will need faith for the Kingdom of God to arrive in your Sunday School class or in your slum.

You will have to believe things such as "God's work done in God's way, will never lack God's supply" (Hudson Taylor) and believe that God is all-sufficient and that God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that in everything, always having all self-sufficiency, you may abound to every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

You have to truly believe that your ministry, the good works that God has called you to do – are His concern, and He will help you to fulfill them.

Now there are ordinary good works that naturally belong to life such as raising a family, caring for a sick neighbor, supporting your parents, being patient with customers and being honest in all things. These still need the strength, power and sustaining supply of God. But then there are other works that are "on top of" not "instead of" these things. (Missionaries still have to raise a family, help a neighbor etc, they cannot say "because I do X work I do not have to do Y). These extra good works can seem to tip us over the edge of coping. Life is just too complicated to involve doing good works, having a ministry and "getting somewhere in life". I have had to let "getting somewhere in life" slip.

When you are 50 and you have let "getting somewhere in life" slip then you need grace to sustain you, and to keep your heart sweet. So good works require grace and faith from beginning to end.

God wants us to abound to every good work and to fulfill every work of faith with power. So, by faith we need to paint an inner picture of ourselves doing that. We have to forget the struggles and disappointments and problems and believe God for the answers, solutions and provisions that will lead to the fruits of our labors. I often find that success comes about a fortnight after I am absolutely certain that I am going to fail. The problem often becomes a mountain before it finally gets cast into the sea.

When Paul face ministry problems he took a solution-focused faith approach and I will quote the passage at length and I would like you to notice how at every single turn Paul turns away from dwelling on the problem and focuses on believing for the solution:

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 MKJV (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us; (8) in every way having been troubled, but not having been hemmed in; having been perplexed, but not utterly at a loss; (9) having been persecuted, but not having been forsaken; having been thrown down, but not having been destroyed; (10) always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus in the body, so that the life of Jesus also might be revealed in our body. (11) For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus might also be revealed in our body. (12) So then death works in us, but life in you. (13) For we, having the same spirit of faith (according as it is written, "I believed, and therefore I have spoken"); we also believed and therefore speak, (14) knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise us up by Jesus, and shall present us with you. (15) For all things are for your sake, so that the superabounding grace might be made to abound through the thanksgiving of the greater number, to the glory of God. (16) For this cause we do not faint; but though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. (17) For the lightness of our present affliction works out for us a far more excellent eternal weight of glory, (18) we not considering the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are not lasting, but the things which are not seen are everlasting.

It is very easy to get morose, disappointed and disconsolate in ministry – and many ministers of the gospel do! We have to look at our weakness and say “God has put His treasure in an earthen vessel that He might be glorified”, we have to look at our sufferings on behalf of those we minister to and say “death works in us, but life in you”. We have to have faith that these “present afflictions work out for us a far more excellent eternal weight of glory”.

Above all we have to have faith in the eternal consequences of our work for the Lord “..not considering the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are not lasting, but the things which are not seen are everlasting.” Ministry requires us daily to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

To do good works we must have a faith vision of these good works being wrought by Christ in us, and having eternal consequences that abound both to the glory of God and to our own eternal glory. (2Thessalonians 1:12) We have to “see in our spirit” lives being touched and nations transformed. All the great saint of God have had such a clear faith vision e.g. William Booths Vision of Darkest England or Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” (<http://www.aibi.ph/history/>) Like Luther you may nail your vision to the church door, or like Loren Cunningham of YWAM you may start a youth movement.

You must have a clear, Spirit-given, faith vision of the good works that God has called you to do and then you must walk in it, step by step, day by day, by faith and

endurance. You will have to fight your flesh for it, you will have to go into awful places for it, you will have to wrestle the Devil for it – but it will be worth it.

Solution-focused faith sees a wonderful ministry with glorious eternal consequences which is fully provided for and empowered by God – and endures.

Blessings,

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