

GOD HAS A P.L.A.N. FOR OUR LIVES

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is full of accounts of people who God used mightily to achieve His purpose in their generation. When I think particularly of people who impacted their generation, people like Joshua, Gideon, Esther, David come to mind.

Other people used in amazing ways to achieve God's purpose are Noah by building the ark, Moses, who led his people out of Egypt, Jael, the woman who killed the Canaanite army commander Sisera by knocking a tent-peg through his temple.

In the New Testament, we have people like Peter, James and John, Paul, Philip, Stephen, Timothy, Barnabus, women like Mary, Lydia and Dorcas, each had a role to play, impacted lives around them and left us with an amazing example.

God still uses people mightily today!

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them

For each of our lives, God has planned good works for us to walk in. We, like the scriptural heroes that came before us, can be those who God uses in our generation to free His people and build His kingdom.

Today I want to speak about:

- How good works fit into God's PLAN for our lives.
- What kind of works we can do.
- How we can PLAN to do good works.

MESSAGE

Many people shy away when they hear Christians speaking about doing good works. The statement that comes to mind is this one of Paul's:

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

- We are saved by faith alone, not by works!
- This is a gift of God – we can't earn salvation.
- This means that we can't get all proud and say how wonderful WE are – it's all because of how wonderful Jesus is.

Sadly, many believers stop right there, some because they don't know any better and some because it's a great excuse not to get involved with work for

the kingdom. This is flawed thinking though as we need scripture to confirm scripture and there is another, seemingly contradictory section of scripture in the book of James:

James 2:14-17 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

- Here it asks "can faith save him?" - this seems like a contradiction.
- **James 2:26** For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

This is however not a contradiction – only faith in the completed death and resurrection and His work on the cross can save us. These scriptures however point to something deeper – They start to distinguish between:

- Intellectual believing and ...
- Believing with the heart.

Intellectual believing

- **James 2:19** You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!
- This is more like knowledge – To know God is real, but not transferring that knowledge to our hearts and believing with our entire being that we are saved.
- Believing intellectually and believing with the heart are two different things.

Believing with the heart.

When we believe with our minds, nothing much changes, but when we believe with our hearts, everything changes!

- We start to care about others and show it through what we do.
- The love of Christ rises in us and gives us greater compassion.
- Our passion for God's kingdom is stirred up in our spirit.
- What God wants becomes more important than what we want.

DEMONSTRATING OUR FAITH

James 2:21-22 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

God saw Abraham's act of faith when he was willing to sacrifice Isaac, and credited it to Abraham as righteousness. We are saved by faith and not by

works, but from that moment that we are saved onwards, our faith must manifest through our good works.

- Faith and good works go together.
- We show our faith through our good works.

The question today is: If anyone sees us today, will they recognize that we are people of faith through good works that are evident in our lives? Or has our faith being lying dormant and unexpressed?

WE HAVE GOOD WORKS TO DO!

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

- God has a plan for every generation. He has good works prepared for each of us to do.
- God had a role for Esther to play, Naaman had a terrible plan to murder all the Jews **but God had a plan to use Esther** to bring deliverance!

These words ring out loudly when we start looking at God's destiny for our lives: **Esther 4:14b** (NLT) Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"

We love those words – how many times have we been challenged by this same statement? Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?

- **But there is an ominous warning included in the same verse.**

Esther 4:14 (NLT) If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"

- If Esther had kept quiet, God would have raised someone else up to do the work He had prepared in advance for her.
- Her own relatives would have paid the price!

Let us realise that God has a plan for our generation!

- If we don't rise up and start doing the good works God has called us to, He will raise someone else up.
- Ignoring God's call to action will have a detrimental effect on our lives!

God has called this church to reach the people He has in this city, He has called us for a time like this. He has called Cheryl and I to lead this congregation into these good works – It is up to us to say "Here I am Lord, use me!

Let us shine forth as the masterpiece we are in Christ Jesus. Let us rejoice in our salvation and demonstrate our faith by faithfully doing in the good works Christ has planned for us to do.

GOD'S PLAN IS FOR A GOOD FUTURE

Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT) For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

God planned our lives out before we were even born! He has a good plan for us as individuals, and also for us as a congregation.

- Following God's plan will keep us on the right path.
- King Saul failed when he only half-followed God's plan - He chose to keep wealth and not kill the Amorite king.
- David succeeded every time he sought God's guidance and followed God's instructions.
- David failed with Bathsheba when he stayed at home and didn't go to war like kings were meant to.

GOD'S PLANS FOR OUR LIVES

P – Prepared works – God has prepared good works in advance for us to do.

L – Led by God – we need to listen to God's leading so that we can know that which He has laid out for us to do.

A – Anointing and achievement – When we set out to do the good works God has planned for us to do, we will move in His anointing and achieve success.

N – Now is the time – God has called us to take our Promised Land without delay!

S – Salvation belongs to our Good – as we become available- He will save those He brings us to.

WHAT SHOULD OUR PLAN BE?

P – Pray, seek God's face, ask Him to show us the good works He wants us to do.

L – Live out our faith as we leap into action. It's no good saying we have faith, let us show we have faith by doing good deeds.

A – Allow God to use us – we were born for such a time as this.

N – Never give up. **Galatians 6:9 (NLT)** So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

S – Say yes! Yes Lord, I will go for You, yes Lord, I will stand in the gap.

CONCLUSION

Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honour beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility He endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

- God had a plan for Jesus life and Jesus did it with distinction, without being discouraged, becoming weary and giving up – Jesus fulfilled God's plan for His life.
- God has a plan for our lives – we have been placed on this earth for a time such as this.
 - In our personal lives, as well as in the congregation, let us commit ourselves to God's plan.
 - In the days, weeks and months to come, as God's plan for Christian Heritage unfolds, let us throw ourselves wholeheartedly into the work.
- Let us show our faith by doing the good deeds that God has called us to do.

Let us all stand up and declare to the Lord this morning: "here I am Lord, use me!"