water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – July 17, 2021

The Lord be with you.

My son's family has a wonderful dog that's an Australian Shepherd. Now, I don't know if you've ever had any experience with an Australian Shepherd, but just let me tell you this, it needs a job to do. It needs to work. It's active. And you know that's not just something that we would say of Australian Shepherds, it's true of we humans too, that we need a job, we need to be doing something that counts. That makes a difference. Well, even if we're retired, we want to be doing something in this world for God, and his kingdom. We want to do good works.

I'm going to share with you a couple of verses that really encouraged me is, as I think about serving God, about trying to make a difference in our world. I have my Bible open today to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 through 10, I read... For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast, for we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Notice here, the apostle Paul is writing about works about good works, and Paul is saying very clearly that We are not saved by good works, whether we are saved by God's grace through faith. We are not saved by good works, but Paul does say that we are saved for good works, not saved by good works, but saved for for the purpose of doing good works. So good works are not the means of our salvation, but good works are the consequence, they are the result of our salvation, so that we could say that faith alone saves, but the faith that saves us is never alone. We were saying, Paul says, we are created in Christ Jesus to do good works. And so, we're not saved just to get us to Heaven. We are saved to do good works.

Now that takes us to the next part of the verse that today I'm finding so encouraging, as he says, we are God's handiwork. That means God has been working on you, has been working on me. We are God's handy work. Created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. We are God's workmanship, Paul says. We ourselves are at work, God's work. We are God's new creation in Christ to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do. So here is divine pre-arrangement that God has prepared in advance. Good words for you and me to do. God prepares the opportunities, but God not only prepares the opportunities, God prepares us, God equips us, God makes us ready beforehand to do his good works in the world, so that it's not really our work, but it is God working through us. The Good works, God prepares you to do beforehand, well, it's probably going to be different from the good work he prepares someone else to do, but the work is God's not ours. And I find that that takes away all the pressure, the strain, as God works beforehand to prepare you and me for the good works. He's prepared for us.

So, we want to stay close to God. We want to get our signals from God for God to lead us in those good works He has prepared beforehand for us. Now, there's a little poem that helps me as I'm wanting to know just what to do next for God in this world. What to do next as some good work for God in his kingdom. It's a poem by Elenore Sutphin and her poem is titled Do the Next Thing. Here are a few lines of that poem.

Fear not tomorrow's child of the king, trust them with Jesus. Do the next thing. Do it immediately. Do it with prayer. Do it reliantly casting all care, do it with reverence. Tracing His hand, who had placed it before thee with earnest command, stayed on omnipotence, safe-neath his wing. Leave all results. Do the next thing.

I like that.

Leave all results. Do the next thing. And the next thing... Well, it might be doing the laundry, changing diapers, waiting on a customer, talking to a neighbor about Jesus, but as we do the next thing... And we do it the best we can. Well, God prepares us for the next thing and the next thing. As we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand for you and me to do. I'm going to close today with a blessing... A blessing from the book of Hebrews, Chapter 13, verses 20 and 21, Now may the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will. And may he work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever, amen.

God bless you as you do the next thing.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for this. Until next time.