

Built To Serve God (Part 1)

Introduction:

1. Is a person saved and brought into a right relationship with God by his good works? Do we have to be good enough to be saved? Let's read Ephesians 2:8-9.
 - The Bible is quite clear. Nobody is saved from the penalty of sin by being good enough. We are saved by God's grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ.
2. Let me ask another question. Does God expect good works from His children after they are saved? Let's read the next verse, Ephesians 2:10.
3. Are good works a normal part of the Christian life? Yes. In fact, you were created by God as a new person in Christ for the purpose of doing good works. God's Word says that we should **walk** in them. In other words, it should be a way of life.
4. God desires to fully equip you to serve Him and do good works for Him. 2 Timothy 2:21, 3:17
5. God likens the body of Christ to a building (Ephesians 2:21), and each of us are bricks in that building (Ephesians 2:22). You have been built to serve God!
6. There are several building blocks that God will use in your life to prepare you to serve Him effectively and to make an impact on others for Christ.

First building block: your past

1. How many of you have a past? We laugh because it is so true. If we are alive and breathing, we have a past – every one of us! It may be a tale of the good, the bad, and the ugly. But we all have one.
2. Your past is unique to you. Much of your past, you had no choice about:
 - Your parents, your home life, who raised you, where you were born, the financial status of the home you were born in, how many siblings you have, the childhood events you experienced, your teachers, your name, things you went through and were exposed to, or maybe endured, how many times you moved, etc.
3. Some of your past may be filled with wrong decisions and sinful acts. Ephesians 2:2-3
 - These believers that Paul is writing to had a past, and it wasn't all pretty. Can you relate?
4. Paul (the writer of this book) also had quite a past. Paul talked a lot about his past – where he was from, how he was raised, his religious background, etc.
 - Not only this, Paul talked about his past behavior. There are over 25 verses that deal with Paul's ruthless, bloody, and barbaric behavior before He trusted Jesus Christ.
 - Your past is part of who you are (for good or bad). Paul knew this, and did not hesitate to talk about it.
5. Satan desires to destroy you with your past, but God wants to use it for His glory.
 - You may say, "But you don't understand. I come from a messed up family!"

- Do you realize who that qualifies you to work with? Many times we use our past as an excuse as to why we cannot serve God, but God desires to use it.
 - Whatever you have gone through, you can relate to others that may be going through the same circumstances. You understand, and you can minister to them.
6. You cannot change your past, but you **can** change the meaning of it.
- Your past may include a lot of hurtful acts and bad decisions. You can end up saying, “Well, that is what destroyed me,” or “That’s why I am the way I am.”
 - Or it can be, “That’s how much Christ has changed me, and that is why I’m able to help so many people today and serve God the way I do.”
 - Instead of your past being a source of destruction, you have turned that past around and made it constructive. Your message is, “I’m an overcomer through Christ, and you can be too.”
7. This is vividly demonstrated in Ephesians 4:21-32.
- These believers had a past that was full of corruption and deceitful lusts. The Bible calls this our “*old man*.” Our past behavior is a product of our previous identity.
 - But notice verse 21. They had trusted Christ, been taught God’s Word, their minds were being renewed through God’s Word (vs. 23), and God had made them new people in Christ (vs. 24). They had a new identity – saints in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:1
 - Their past lives included lies. In Christ they would be people of truth (vs. 25). Their past lives included dishonesty, corrupt language, bitterness, anger, etc. (vs. 28-31). In Christ their lives were changed, and they were children of light. Ephesians 5:8-9
8. Notice, Paul did not avoid talking about their past, but rather used it to demonstrate the difference that Jesus makes in our lives. The darker a room is, the more the light stands out. Your past may be dark, but what an opportunity to shine the light of Christ!
- This is why Paul did not shy away from his past, but used it as a tool to reach people. Galatians 1:13, 23-24
9. Satan has probably convinced many of you that your past disqualifies you from serving God. But the truth is, it is one of the very things that God will use in serving Him. You have been built to serve God, and your past is part of that.

In Conclusion:

1. You can despise your past and let it make you bitter. Or you can accept it, learn from it, and use it to help others!
2. God wants to take you (and your past), and use you to serve Him and impact lives as only you can!

Come back next week for Part 2 and discover how you were built to serve God!