“What God Is Doing”

Philippians 2:1-13

A brand new book, just out in May 2015 is titled “What Is God Doing?” written by Lance Lambert. Haven’t you ever wondered this exact question? I have. I often ask myself the question “What is God doing in my life right now?”

Well, maybe you’ve asked, like I have, “Why does the LORD take so long, for example, to answer my prayer or to do a particular thing?” Some of you, no doubt, wonder about the purpose of your life. How about the things you do every day at your home or job? Do the ordinary things of life really matter and are they part of the bigger picture of what God is doing through you?

All of these questions relate to two matters: the way God works and *His* plans for *my* life. Whenever God does something and it is all of God, then all the glory goes to Him alone.

As I’ve read through the Bible again and again, I realize that many of the people in Scripture were exactly like you and me. They didn’t have a crystal clear picture of what God was up to. Yet, they walked on in faith, trusting their Father to work everything together for good.

For example, do you remember what Joseph said *after* those long years of not understanding why his brothers had so mistreated him? Here’s what he said. Genesis 50:20 *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”*

You see, it was personal. It was painful. But, it was also purposeful. God has His purposes that he is accomplishing.

C. S. Lewis reminds me of these sorts of questions when he writes “Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense.

What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.” [C.S. Lewis “Mere Christianity].

If anyone could have had the difficulty involved in asking “What is God doing?” it might have been Jesus; except for one major thing. The key to Christ’s success is this. John 8:29 *“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”*

I’ve titled today’s sermon “What God Is Doing.” Shall we pray?

Please open your Bible with me to Galatians chapter one. I’d like to begin reading at verse 15. Galatians one is a personal testimony of a man of God; the man God is still using today in the lives of Christians all over the globe through the things he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote.

Galatians 1:15 *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, (16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (17) Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*

*(18) Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. (19) But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. (20) Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.”*

I hope, by the LORD’s grace, to provide somewhat of an answer to the question of the day “What is God doing?” And my illustration today is the Apostle Paul. Suffice it to say here that the LORD had had his hand upon the Apostle Paul for his entire life. And now, by His grace, He has brought Paul to a personal relationship to Himself through the free gift of salvation found in Jesus Christ.

Folks, God always works in you by His grace. Like you and me, Paul was saved from the penalty and power of his sin by the grace of God. Nowhere does Paul teach salvation by self-effort or by the works of the law.

First, then, just as God had a plan for Paul’s life, He has His plan for you. Look with me at verse fifteen and see that God had *His* plan and *His* purpose for the Apostle Paul from the very day he was born. Galatians 1:15 *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,…”*

Now, practically speaking, if the LORD had a plan and a purpose for Paul’s life from the moment of his birth, does He not also have a plan and purpose for you; one that you entered upon on the day of your birth?

This is pure comfort to my soul. I know that He had His hand upon me when I entered the world in 1952. Notwith-standing a very dysfunctional family life; God was at work. He moved our family into a two family home right behind the Scranton Methodist Church.

And where did I get this very Bible that I’ve used for the past 52 years of my life? That little Methodist Church gave it to me for Christmas when I was ten years old. Granted, none of us knows the mighty hand of God until after, like Paul, after we come to know Him.

Folks, He is a sovereign God. He made you. He knows you. He knows you very well. And He’s glorified when you, like Paul, will say “Thank you LORD that You separated me unto Yourself on the day of my birth. Thank You for calling me to yourself by Your grace.”

Now, that’s not to say I was saved when I was firstborn. I was saved when I was fifteen. Yet, God separated me unto Himself on my birth day.

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Second, God’s purpose for his life was not a small one.

And the LORD’s purpose for Paul is given in verse sixteen. Galatians 1:16 *“To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen;…”* At some point in Paul’s life God showed Paul that *His* plan was to reveal Christ to him and that Paul was to preach Christ to the Gentile world; though, remember, he was Jewish.

Folks, God’s purpose for his life was not a small one. He was privileged to do something, let’s say, out of his element; something quite significant -- to preach the Gospel to the Gentile world; a world much, much larger than the nation of Israel.

Consider what God is doing with you today. Folks, the LORD’s work upon you is so much larger than you; *“to reveal His Son in me.”*

As you know, Christian, you are not your own. I Corinthians 6:19 *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”*

“You are not your own.” That’s what the LORD says. Someone else is in charge. Psalm 100:3 *“Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”*

Your life isn’t just for your personal benefit. The LORD isn’t first concerned with your luxury or even your being comfortable or rich or even healthy. Your life and His work through you, is a work that relates to the advancement of His Kingdom. Think, for just a moment, about how the LORD sees you and what you do each day as it pertains to His Kingdom. Have you asked yourself lately or ever, “How does this relate to the LORD’s Kingdom?” Isn’t His priority that Christ be formed in you? Isn’t His priority that your life touch someone else’s life so they will be further conformed to His character? Here’s what Paul writes elsewhere. Galatians 4:19 *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,…”*

Each of us, myself included, must come to the place in our hearts where we say it whole-heartedly “I am not my own.” God’s purpose for my life is found in the plain fact that He has made me for Himself.

And what is His plan? Galatians 1:16 *“To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen;…”* His plan is to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the heathen.

What is God doing? Is that what’s going on in your life? Is it really God’s plan that He reveal His Son in me so that you can announce Him to others? You might think that your life is just you in your little corner of the world. But folks, God’s invisible hand is upon you to bring glory to Himself as you allow Him to reveal Christ to others. And that’s not small; nor is it insignificant.

“Not I, But Christ Be Honored, Loved, Exalted”

by A.A. Whiddington

Verse 1 “Not I, but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted;
Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard;
Not I, but Christ, in every look and action;
Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word.

First, then, just as God had a plan for Paul’s life, He has His plan for you.

Second, God’s purpose for your life is not a small one.

And third, how you respond to the LORD makes all the difference in the world. Paul writes out his response to God’s voice Galatians 1:16 *“immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:…”*

Paul’s response to God’s working in Him and His directing him and revealing Christ to him is this. He did not turn towards the opinions of men, even the Apostles. The LORD had spoken. That was enough. He had called Paul. And He had set him apart. And he knew that God’s plan was to reveal Christ in him. Do you think he needed the confirmation of men?

In today’s world, I think, if there were Apostles on earth, most of us would say Paul should first clear things with them. But no, Paul didn’t ever want the opinions of men to rise higher than the opinion of God. “Look for what people thought?” And then, possibly lose your way.

Besides, did you know that the other Apostles questioned whether or not Paul had been spoken to by the LORD? That’s right! When Paul did come before the other Apostles, His apostleship was questioned. As a matter of fact, lots of people questioned it. But, I don’t think that mattered to Paul. He just simply declares that God had set him apart for a work; His work. He had called him. And he didn’t need human opinion to convince him of it or to confirm it in him. You see, often what we think matters so much, doesn’t really matter to God. And often what others think overshadows what God says.

The One you really stand or fall before is the LORD. I Corinthians 4:1 *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. (2) Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

*(3) But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. (4) For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”*

All the work that you do on your job; all that you are to your family; all that you are by way of strengths and talents, etc.; all of that is all that God’s calls you to be faithful in. You are His steward blessed with His bestowments. Live as though you are His steward and that one day you will give your account to Him.

Each day you should be glad that your Heavenly Father has His hand upon you. Each day you should be glad that His goal is to reveal Christ through you. And each day you should respond with “LORD, I am being faithful to You.” That’s the response that God is looking for in His children.

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Fourth, focus.

Look again at Paul’s response. Galatians 1:17 *“Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.”*

Now, Apostles are important. But Paul goes off to the one place where he could be sure that no one would influence him other than the LORD Himself – the desert. He went out into the Arabian Desert. Is that where you’d go?

And why would he go there? I’m sure you know some of his reasons. He needed the exact same things you and I need: rest, prayer, quiet, communion, solace, time alone with God, a place to search his own spirit; and I believe he wanted assurance that this is indeed what he LORD has for him.

Arabia, in Paul’s day, extended right up to the border of the city of Damascus. And that’s where Paul went just as soon as he had heard the voice of the LORD.

Someone has wisely said “Sometimes we just need to come to a complete stop. We need to take a step away from our lives, away from ourselves, and reflect. Life does not offer us calm and quiet and solitude. We must take it for ourselves. We need to get away. Solitude is an essential part of survival.

We must take the time to be alone in order to think, feel, reflect, and most importantly, gain insight into what we really need in our life. We spend so much time living and doing for others that we forget about Who the Most Important Person is in our lives. We need time to be quiet.” [Found on [www.thoughtcatalog.com](http://www.thoughtcatalog.com) “Why It’s Important to Get Away” by Kelly Bishop].

Now you would expect Paul to return to Damascus. But, he does not; not until he had had his heart and mind and spirit and his inner man focused.

Maybe that’s what you are missing in your life – focus. Paul had been called to preach the one Person he had rejected his entire life. And now, he was full of Christ and Christ alone. Now, he could and would proceed to do what He had been called to do. And Who, but God could turn the attention of the Gospel directly to the Gentiles?

I’m sure, like you, that Paul needed one thing to solidify this new 180 degree turn in his life. He needed a time away from people and he needed time alone with his LORD. I can only imagine his questions. “Me?” “Are you really asking me to take the Gospel to the Gentiles? I’m totally unprepared for this. How should I proceed? Where should I begin?” Doesn’t he sound like Moses at the burning bush? Doesn’t he sound a bit like you and me?

Next, his time of solace and quiet and communion are over. Now, who here thinks Paul was sufficiently prepared to go out to his ministry to the Gentiles?

Folks, there is a work that God has set you apart for. My hope is that you can see that your life and your lifework are all of His grace. You, too, are in His invisible hand. And any day you re-focus; re-set your heart on the presence of the LORD; focus on the One Who speaks with His still, small voice; that is one of your most significant days.

Why else would Paul go out to the desert and spend time alone with the LORD? He saw the plain face of focus. Folks, the LORD’s work is almost always larger than you. Your life consists of your relationship to Him. Your life is not your possessions or your genius at work. Your time is *His* time. Your money is *His* money. Your home is *His* home. Your talents are *His* talents. Your job is *His* job. Your family is *His* family.

Can you see yourself as you really are? Can you see your life as larger than your own personal viewpoint? Why now see your life in light of eternity? Your life is His life. And he intends that your life touch someone else’s life. Your work isn’t just yours.

Your time isn’t just yours. You are affecting people right now for eternity. Your attitudes, your speech, your behavior, your work ethic; all these things affect other people; the ones God has brought into your life. Whatever your work is, would you see it for what it is? It’s part of a larger work that God is doing. As you focus on Him, His work, His presence, you will quietly and calmly see what He is doing.

In conclusion then. What can you do in light of these lessons from Paul’s life?

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Can you see what God is doing? Will you be like Mary? Jesus said this about Mary. Luke 10:42 *“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”*

Someone once asked “What motivates you?” The answer to that question will determine whether you will walk by grace, nothing more, nothing less. Or whether you will walk by your own strength and wisdom. If you are motivated by what the LORD needs you for, your will find that grace. If not, you will walk without it.

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.” The reason grace is so amazing is because we’re so slow to appreciate it. And all the days that you are developing your appreciation of that grace, you are discovering that God has been dispensing it all along. Then, as we see just how faithful and patient He has been with you, you learn that it’s all been the working of His grace.

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Now you may be here today and never heard the simple message of Salvation by grace. Your need is to see yourself in the Light of the Ten Commandments. Those ten laws were given so that you might admit you were a sinner in need of God’s free salvation. All your sins are are a breaking of God’s commands. And the person who sees himself as justly condemned for his sins is the only candidate who will truly believe the Gospel of Grace.

Grace simply means that your eternal security depends completely upon the work of Another, of Someone Who died and rose again, of Someone Who paid your sin’s penalty completely on the Cross. If religion or anything more than Christ is added to that message, then your salvation is not God-made. It’s man-made.

Normally the flight from Nassau to Miami took 37 year old Walter Wyatt, Jr., an Air Force veteran, took only sixty-five minutes. But on December 5, 1986, he attempted it after thieves had looted the navigational equipment in his Beech-craft twin engine baron. With only a compass and a hand-held radio, Walter flew into skies blackened by storm clouds. When his compass began to gyrate, Walter concluded he was headed in the wrong direction. He flew his plane below the clouds, hoping to spot something, but soon he knew he was lost. He put out a mayday call, which brought a Coast Guard Falcon search plane to lead him to an emergency landing strip only six miles away.

Suddenly Wyatt's right engine coughed its last and died. The fuel tank had run dry. It was around 8 p.m. Wyatt could do little more than glide the plane into the water. Wyatt survived the crash, but his plane disappeared quickly, leaving him bobbing on the water in a leaky life vest. With blood on his forehead, Wyatt floated on his back. Suddenly he felt a hard bump against his body. A shark had found him. Wyatt kicked the intruder and wondered if he would survive the night.

He managed to stay afloat for the next ten hours. In the morning, Wyatt saw no airplanes, but in the water a dorsal fin was headed for him. Twisting, he felt the hide of a shark brush against him. In a moment, two more bull sharks sliced through the water toward him. Again he kicked the sharks, and they veered away, but he was nearing exhaustion. Then he heard the sound of a distant aircraft. When it was within a half mile, he waved his orange vest. The pilot radioed the Cape York, which was twelve minutes away: "Get moving, cutter! There's a shark targeting this guy!" As the Cape York pulled alongside Wyatt, a Jacob's ladder was dropped over the side. Wyatt climbed wearily out of the water and onto the ship, where he fell to his knees and kissed the deck. He'd been saved. He didn't need encouragement or better techniques. Nothing less than outside intervention could have rescued him from sure death. How much we are like Walter Wyatt.

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith. And that, not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Will you, today, admit you are a sinner and deserving of God’s judgment? Will you admit you need for God’s grace to save your soul today?

* Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”*
* Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
* Acts 20:21 *“… repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The word for you is this. Believe on Christ and be saved? Here’s a simple message. Repent and believe.

Today is the Day of Salvation. In order to be saved, here’s what you must do.

* To repent means to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To relieve means to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as

the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins. *“God so*

*loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Here’s the sinner’s prayer. “LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of your grace. I believe that You sent Your Son to the Cross to die for me. Please forgive me of all my sins and make me Your child. Thank you.”

Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”