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The Workshop

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November 3, 2019

Ephesians 2:1-10

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

New International Version

Today we continue our series based on Robert Munger's little book "My Heart, Christ's Home" which likens our spiritual heart to our house. When we invite Jesus to come into our heart and be our Savior what part of our heart do we invite him? Do we keep him on the sofa in the living room where no one else ever sits beside the visiting minister? Or do we also invite him into our family room, that room representing

our free time where we watch tv and play games? How about the dining room?

Today we're going to look at the workshop. For me, I always thought of the workshop as being in the garage like when I was growing up but our first two houses didn't have garages. The second one had a closet in the den that I built a workbench in.

The first real garage we ever had as adults, I put up drywall, installed recessed lights, oak cabinets, a blue tiled shower, insulated roll up garage door and a white tiled floor. That room was amazing. It was designed for that 1965 Mustang Convertible with a 289 that my wife said I could buy when I was in real estate if I successfully closed three big real estate transactions in one month. Unfortunately, I hit a dry spell and it never quite happened before we moved. Instead she gave me a model of the car and I still have it.

The only problem with that garage was that it was so nice it was useless as a workshop. It looked good but it was awful to make a mess on that white tile floor. A lot of Christian lives are like that. They look good but they don't produce anything.

In my next two garages I decided to fix that problem and if I spilled red paint on the floor of the garage, oh well. At least I could produce things in that garage. Where we are now, the garage is not the workshop. For that I have a workshop in the backyard.

Bob Munger in *My Heart, Christ's Home* imagines Jesus asking him *"Do you have a workshop in your home?"* Munger writes *"Down in the basement of the home of my heart I had a bench and some equipment, but I was not doing much with it. Once in a while I would go down and fuss around with a few little gadgets, but I wasn't producing anything substantial.*

I led Him down there. He looked over the workbench and said, "Well, this is quite well furnished. What are you producing with your life for the Kingdom of God?" He looked at one or two little toys that I had thrown together on the bench. He held one up to me and said, "Are these little toys all that you are producing in your Christian life?"

"Well," I said, "Lord, I know it isn't much, and I really want to do

more, but after all, I don't seem to have strength or skill to do more."

One of the things I've learned about making things is that the right tool can make or break a project. One of the tools that's changed my life I purchased at Lowes for about \$7. It's called a miter box and it even came with a saw. In every house we've lived in, I've somehow had to add doors and door trim or casing. For years my trim casings never fit, they were always off and it always bugged me. I would fill the gap with lots of wood filler and try to sand it smooth but it never looked good.

In my Hemet church we had a retired high school shop teacher named John Adams who helped me install and trim out a side door I added to our garage among other projects. When I was struggling with the trim he recommended I buy a little miter box and now I can more accurately trim doors in minutes.

As I was growing up, it seemed that my plumber/electrician dad could fix anything. We owned rental units and he used to say if I was going to own rental units when I grew up I'd have to be able to fix things myself or I'd eat up the profits hiring the work out. So he taught me a lot about fixing things but I still have to hire out a lot.

But what I've found is that if you want to do the majority of home projects you have to have at least five ingredients: 1) a desire to do it, 2) the basic body functions to do it such as functioning hands and eyes, 3) the time to do it 4) the right tools to do it, 5) the patience to do it. With those five basic ingredients comes a fifth one; confidence. Of course there are some projects I've learned the hard way not to touch: anything electrical is one of those.

My dad used to talk about all the "do-it-yourselfers" who used to keep his plumbing business going with their mess ups and I've had more than my share but I still stand on those five ingredients getting home projects completed. Those five things will take a clumsy worker like me and produce something functional and sometimes even attractive.

Bob Munger standing with Jesus in the workshop hears Jesus say to him *"Would you like to do better?"* *"Certainly,"* Munger replied. *"All right. Let me have your hands. Now relax in me and let my Spirit work*

through you. I know that you are clumsy and awkward, but the Holy Spirit is the Master Workman, and if He controls your hands and your heart, He will work through you." Stepping around behind me and putting His great, strong hands under mine, holding the tools in His skilled fingers, He began to work through me. The more I relaxed and trusted Him, the more He was able to do with my life.

Munger wasn't talking just about home projects, of course. He was more talking about doing something productive for God with our life. I've heard guys say they're not ministers, they can't do what I do. They say they could never be a spiritual leader. They could never preach. They could never pray with someone. They could never sit down and talk to someone about how to meet Jesus. That's the minister's job and he can do it so much better. That's flattering. But if you think about it, you've just put my importance up there with the plumber I hired to unstop my toilet because I felt he could do it so much better and quicker than I could. Besides he had the right tools just like the minister would have the right tools.

What the Bible teaches in our text today is that when you invite Jesus to come into your life, you get a whole set of tools to do things you had no idea that you could do.

The writer of Ephesians, some think the Apostle Paul, states emphatically that we are saved by grace which is a free gift from God. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast."* (verse 8-9) That simply means we can never be good enough to save ourselves; there is no amount of good works we can muster to get God to notice us and save us from our sin and for eternity. We are saved by the sheer gift of God's grace to us in Jesus Christ through faith.

I would hope if you've been in church for any length of time you would know about grace. But the question we need to ask is why would God save us? Maybe you don't see yourself as someone worth saving. Maybe you see yourself as a rusty old clunker of a car. Remember about ten years ago the government had a "Cash for Clunkers" program where they would pay you to turn in your old car so they could take it off the road and destroy it? Some folks see themselves like one of those cash for

clunkers cars. I saw some of those cars in a lot where they were stored and some of them were in really good shape but they burned a lot of gas so they were destroyed.

So do you think God looks at you like one of those obsolete clunkers polluting the world or does he see in you in the car equivalent of a 1968 Ford, that is a 1968 Ford Mustang Shelby convertible? If a car collector found a rusty old 68 Mustang Shelby sitting out in a field he would pay big money for that car running or not and then would be willing to invest almost \$100,000 to bring it back to showroom condition. A Shelby Mustang is that valuable of a car.

For that amount of money why not just send it to the wrecking yard and get a new model? Because it's a Shelby. That might not mean anything to you but to a car guy like me that's almost sacrilegious to talk about giving up on a Shelby Mustang. But everyone of us is a Shelby in God's eyes. Ephesians 2:10 says *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* God is prouder of us than the owner of a \$200,000 rare Mustang Shelby at a Concours d'Elegance. That's mind boggling.

My former member, the retired shop teacher John Adams used to always tell me when I had a workshop project I wasn't too certain about and it was actually the same advice my own father used to give me: "You can do it." Then Nike came along and said "Just do it." "You can do it, so just do it."

Let's talk for a moment about your workshop. Maybe it's a sewing room or a tiny corner of your garage or bedroom. It's not so much about a place as it is a mindset. It's where you go to make things you wouldn't normally make. It could be your kitchen. In your workshop you're surrounded by your tools and your ideas. What's the role of Jesus going to be in that workshop?

When my dad was alive, I could always call him when I got stuck on my workshop project. Now our son occasionally calls me for advice but I'm not nearly the mechanically oriented person my dad was. But I'm there for him.

Today we have YouTube for advice. My workshop is equipped with a computer, big screen tv and fast wifi. When I'm stuck on a project I can type in the problem in YouTube and more than likely there'll be an instructional video to walk me through it. YouTube has bailed me out of more messes and taught me a lot about the mechanical world.

But you and I both know YouTube can't solve every problem. I know because I've tried to use it for just about everything and it doesn't always help. It's only one of many tools we can use for completing our projects. What I find most helpful in projects, especially ones I'm not too certain how to complete is to pause before I start or while I'm in the midst of working on it and pray a little prayer: "Lord, please give me wisdom to do what I need to do today." "Thank you for caring about me."

Remember there are six ingredients to completing any project. That includes projects like being asked to bring the morning message, reading Scripture in worship, praying in public, talking to an unchurched person about the faith or fixing a meal or getting an electrical fan to work.

First you have to have a desire to do it. But there's little difference between a desire to do something and a need to do something. For example my wife says "I need you to fix the visor in my car." Do I have a desire to work on that visor? Absolutely not. Does my wife actually have a need for me to work on it? Absolutely. Do I have a need for my wife to be happy and safe? Double absolutely. Desire can come out of need.

Secondly, you have to have the basic body functions to do some tasks. If your hands aren't steady any longer I don't recommend working on things that require precision. If your eyesight is bad don't try projects that require clear vision. I remember having a church member whose husband had Lou Gehrig's disease but he refused to let it stop him from house projects. Before he died, he was down to one functioning arm and leg and with those he completely tiled their bathroom. I met his widow a few years after he had died and asked her how the tile job turned out and she said it was awful and she it all replaced after he died. Know your limitations.

Thirdly, do you have the time to do the project? What will you have to sacrifice to spend time on this project? No one is Superman or Superwoman who can do everything.

Fourthly, do you have the right tools to do the job? Like me trying to cut door trim pieces without a miter box, my projects only looked like a mess without it. There was nothing wrong with me, I just didn't have the right tool. Can you rent or borrow the right tool?

Finally do you have the confidence that you can do it? Does it help you to know that God believes in you? I find that a lot of people just lack confidence and that's what keeps their workshop dark. "I could never in a thousand years do that" is a familiar saying. Maybe you're saying that about something today.

Try to realize that no matter what it is or how hard it seems if you invite Jesus into the workshop of your life, Jesus will say to you "You can do it." The Bible says "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you."

Jesus has full confidence that what he has called you to do he has given you a full bag of tools to get the job done. Don't say "I can't be a spiritual leader" because with Christ you can. Don't say "I can't lead a prayer out loud because with Christ you can. Don't say "I could never invite anyone to church because with Christ you can. Instead say "With Christ, I can do all things." "Come into my workshop, take my hands and use me to make something of value in this world. Amen.