

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

In the world of religion we hear a lot about legalism from ministers that say we cannot "work" for our salvation. That is true. No amount of work will buy us a passport into God's kingdom. The Bible teaches that we were born under the curse of sin and only Christ's life, death and resurrection can redeem us. That is a gift from God that does not depend on any kinds of work that we may do. On the other hand, does it ignore works, can we just simply abandon work and still make it into God's kingdom?

When we study the topic of work we find it to be a broad subject with many different kinds of work. The most important "work" that we can find in the Bible is the work of God and the work His son, Yeshua, came to do. It is true that we all have to "work" in order to take care of ourselves and our families. But we can overdo that type of physical or time consuming work to the point that we forget to do the spiritual work. In order to put God first in our lives we must find the balance and determine if the work that we do is pleasing God. If our work is to acquire wealth for ourselves, it becomes greed. If we use our work to only achieve personal gain it is selfishness. If we use our work for power over others it is a sin. If we use work to escape personal family responsibilities it is sin. If we use work to escape reality it can become sin. If we work to gain status or importance in the world it becomes sin. Clearly, the most important kind of work is "spiritual work"; that kind of work pleases God and benefits many. God judges us by our works and promises us rewards for our spiritual works. The disciples were concerned about their role in God's work.

Many think Jesus was born under the law, therefore we don't have to take him seriously about keeping his Father's Laws.

This opens up a whole other side of works. First we have to know the Old Testament was all Jesus and the apostles used to teach from. There was no New Testament then. The term "curse of the law" simply means until Jesus paid our penalty for us (with his own death) we would always be dead. We would never have the hope of ever being resurrection.

So the first kind of work that we must do to please God is to believe that Yeshua is the Son of God and also believe him, (do what he tells us).. In order to do that we have to know something about God and His plan. We have to spend time studying His word. We have to let His word wash away all the wrong preconceived ideas that we have been fed, and accepted by others. Then we study some more with the attitude of wanting to understand what we are required to do to please Him. We must earnestly seek a relationship with Him. As He answers our prayers, and you can be sure that He will, we will read a lot in the old Testament about His plan to send a "savior" to "redeem" mankind from sin. Then we find in the new Testament where that promise is fulfilled. And we are told that we have to "believe" (by faith) that Christ was that promise. We read that even though we were not witnesses of the events of Christ's life and death we must believe that it was a reality. That belief has not always been accepted by everyone who has been exposed to the "faith" concept. As we continue to study God's word, we have to first exercise faith just believing the Bible is actually God's word. We may go into the study of history, ancient writers, and original languages, etc before we become convinced. After we are convinced we are baptized according to Acts 2:38 and if we have the right attitude we receive a portion of the holy spirit. At this point most are eager to become involved in "the work" of God. We read where Paul says, in Php.4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengenth me" and we ask ourselves, "But, what is the "work of God; is it just believing that Jesus was and is the son of God. Is that all there is to it"?

There is tons of information in the Bible about the topic of "work". For the sake of space and time we will touch on the basics for an answer. Yeshua's work was to give of himself, literally, so that he would be the first of many to be resurrected to eternal life and "to destroy the works of Satan". Every thing that he did was for mankind's good.

John 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

John 5:20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

John 5:36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

Since we are physical we tend to dwell in the physical and think more physical than spiritual. However, Yeshua often used the physical to demonstrate the spiritual. His mind was always geared to the spiritual. The work he referred to was always spiritual. Loving, teaching, healing, prayer, meditation, compassion, giving, judgment, mercy and faith are all in the realm of spiritual "work". Yeshua also did physical work but it was always for the betterment of others.

Deuteronomy 10:18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow and loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment.

Zechariah 7:10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Paul made clear that the workman is worthy of his hire. If one is properly serving in true service to a group of people, as long as that servant is serving them, the group being served should join in contributing to the needs of the servant. It is also clear that when any group or individuals are made aware of unusual hardships on needy people they should respond with assistance, as they are able, not only to believers but to anyone who is truly doing their best to take care of themselves.

However, if one gives their money to an organization to do this for them; they are not growing spiritually by doing this work themselves. Nowhere did Paul instruct the new Gentile congregations to pay tithes to himself or to any other religious headquarters. Paul worked physically as well as spiritually among the new church congregations, refusing to take money from them. If paying tithes was still being enforced in the new testament church Paul surely would have made this known to the new converts. He did command that they give whatever they could afford to the congregations in need, but tithing to a headquarters church was never mentioned. Tithing was a commandment during the time of the Temple for its upkeep and for the support of the Priests, that were selected by God himself, from the tribe of Levi only. Some organizations teach that their representatives are serving in the place of the Priests, and that makes them eligible for the tithes. But the Bible teaches that all believers are all being groomed to be priests.

1 Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

Revelation 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Some teach that Jesus told the Pharisees they should pay tithes, therefore we should pay tithes. Well, yes, they were still under the law of Moses. Yeshua had not taken the place of the high priest at that time, and the Temple still needed supporting, except there is no Temple today. To claim that tithing is still mandatory would also mean that animal sacrificing is still commanded. Those who want to go back to that will be happy to know that in a future age God is going to reinstate many of the laws (Eze. Chapters 40 through 48) that are not required of us during this age of grace. Now we come back to the question, "What is my responsibilities in doing the "work" of God? We have ruled out paying tithes. We have ruled out allowing a man to take place of priest to come between us and God.

There are too many references to "works" (found in both old and new testaments) to mention. However Paul made a list of things that identify both bad works and good works while comparing being under the law versus being under grace.

The Bad:

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

(In other words if you act from the power of the holy spirit you will have no desire to do any of these works, which are breaking one or more of the ten commandments).

19 Now the works (or fruit) of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

If we look closely at these infractions we will see that they are magnified from the "letter of the law" to an even greater "spiritual strength" of law.

The Good:

22 But the fruit (or works) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

These are the works that we as believers should be aware of. Some think that a believer is responsible for going out and preaching the gospel but not everyone is called to preach or have the same gifts as someone else, however we can all do the works (good or bad) as described above. Does that mean we are to ignore the ten commandments? We will let Paul answer.

Read the relative verses, above or below, to see the statement clearer.

Ro 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Ro 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Ro 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Ro 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Ro 7:13-25 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Ro 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

Paul, as well as other writers, make it plain that the holy spirit motivates one to keep the ten commandments. So while we believe (in faith) in Christ Jesus we also believe in keeping his laws (as best as we can) which are listed or read these scriptures Paul is telling us that breaking the ten commandments will work death for us but that doesn't make the commandments bad. They only cause death when disobeyed. However, to obey them gives one life eternally. To solve this problem God sent Christ to die as our redeemer and introduce the age of Grace. That was the work he came to do and our work is to believe it. Jesus kept his Father's laws and so should we.