

WORKS

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.

John 6:28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

And in v. 40 he says, “This is the will of Him that sent me that everyone that sees me and believes me shall have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day”.

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. 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“. Everything 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 1:2 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.

We now come to what many have been (and are presently) taught about doing God’s work by supporting an organized religious group. Many of these organizations encourage their congregations to support the organization, so that the organization can do “the work” through their method of reaching the masses. This type of doing the work limit’s the control of these funds to the organization, relieving the giver of the responsibility. It also encourages their members to give over their control in other ways, freeing the giver of further responsibility; just pray (usually for the organization) and pay and obey. The giver often accepts whatever interpretation of the Bible they

are fed by the organizational appointees (ministers) for their spiritual food. Many members become spiritually lazy and neglect the real “works” that God’s word describes. Most of these organizations have strict tithing rules and if no tithes are paid the visitor is never included as a member. The congregation is never encouraged to study the Bible concerning tithing, but are expected to embrace the church’s traditions and interpretation on the subject. The fact that Paul, Christ, or the Apostles never accepted tithes and that tithes were never instituted even in the OT until the Levitical priesthood was on the scene. They never reveal that most historians relate that the new Testament church has no history of tithe paying, or that the Catholic church even did not require tithes at first but eventually accepted free will tithes and gradually made tithe paying mandatory. It is never discussed that wealthy Job, relating all of his virtues to God never mentioned tithing as one of them. It is also interesting that Joseph only charged those who moved onto the land during the 7 years of famine, one fifth of their crops as payment.

That’s not to say there is anything wrong with giving tithes as a donation, but it should be given freely to a worthy servant or needy persons, and not mandated by a religious organization.

When one joins such an organization usually the member is not given the freedom to share his or her opinions or receive answers to controversial questions that conflicts with the doctrines of the organizational leaders. One is expected to accept what is being taught without further personal study on the question, even though words to the effect that all should spend time studying their Bibles. When men set themselves up as the authority of God’s word, they should be ready to give an answer to any question that is asked about God’s work and or God’s plan for mankind. If they don’t have the answers they have no business setting themselves up as God’s spokesmen; to do so puts them in the same group that Yeshua refers to in Mat 7:21 Mat. 7:20-23 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 ¶ Not everyone 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.

It is true that 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 him 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. 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 forever and ever. Amen.

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

If only one group of "ordained" men of such religious organizations were to be in the place of priests why didn't Paul teach the new converts that during his sermons explaining that Yeshua had replaced the high priests of the Old Testament? Yeshua, like the high priest, during the time of animal sacrificing, is the only one who is worthy to petition to God for us. Putting anyone between Christ and you is an affront to Yeshua. He is now the High Priest. No man can fill that office, no one can get to the Father except through Jesus Christ. The Bible actually warns us against putting our trust in man.

To assume that God needs puny man to carry out his plans for him is an insult to Him. Whether we support a man made "work" makes no difference to Him. What he predicts will happen will take place regardless. He is much more interested in our attitudes than He is in our big buildings, our big congregations, and big monies. Some have done extensive studies on the Nicolaitanes that God condemns in Rev. 2:12-17 and have come to the conclusion it refers to a form of organized man ruled religion.

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, 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, 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 are 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, reveling, 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, makes 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 in the Ten Commandments which motivates one to Good Works. When we 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. 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.