

TO WORK-OUT, TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING

(New Testament Greek Word - *katergazomai*)

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Introduction

Many of us hope that, when we reach the end of our lives, we will be able to look back and say that we accomplished something for God. We don't want to say that our lives were a waste.

This study focuses on the New Testament word that is often translated as "accomplish." Interestingly, this word leads us into areas we don't expect. One of its themes focuses not on what *we* can accomplish, but on what *sin* has accomplished in us. Sin renders us powerless, unable to accomplish anything that pleases God. Thanks be to God, however, that our study doesn't stop there! We discover that God has accomplished some wonderful things *in* and *for* us. And because of what God has done, we *can* accomplish things for God!

Once we realize the significance of God's accomplishments in our lives, we will desire to give *him* (not ourselves) the praise and glory for the accomplishments that *we* do. Without him, nothing would have been possible.

Definition of *katergazomai*

(Based on Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

1. To perform, accomplish, achieve; passive: to perpetuate - Romans 1:27; 2:9; 7:15; 7:17-18; 7:20; 15:18; 1 Corinthians 5:3; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 6:13; 1 Peter 4:3.

2. To work out (that is, to do that from which something results); to bring about, result in (something) - Romans 4:15; 5:3; 7:8; 7:13; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 7:10b; 7:11; 9:11; Philippians 2:12; James 1:3. [A few ancient manuscripts use this word in 2 Corinthians 7:10a and James 1:20, and this is the basis for the King James Version. Most of the ancient manuscripts use a related word (*ergazomai*), which communicates approximately the same message.]
3. To fashion (render one fit for a thing) - 2 Corinthians 5:5.

Several word choices are available, when translating this N.T. Greek word into English. Examples are: *to accomplish, to bring about, to do, to produce, to work out, to commit, to effect (something), to prepare*, etc.

A paraphrase of the verses is given, which tries to include any contextual information that would be helpful for understanding what is being said. Because there are so many ways to translate this word, the word "*accomplish*" will be added in parentheses *after* the English word that was considered the best choice for the context.

Outline

PART 1 - Sin Does (= "Accomplishes") Horrible Things in Us.

A. Sin Produces (= "Accomplishes") Every Kind of Covetous Desire Within us.

Romans 7:8

[Context: The Law made us aware of what sin was; example: coveting.] Sin, used this awareness as an opportunity to *produce* (= "*accomplish*") in me every kind of covetous desire.

B. Ultimately, Sin Causes (= "Accomplishes") Our Death.

Romans 7:13

Sin showed how great its sinfulness is by using something good (the Law) to accomplish evil: it used the Law to *produce* (= "*accomplish*") death in me / us.

C. Even When We *Want* to Obey God, Sin "Accomplishes" Evil Things in Us. We Discover That We Are Trapped by It, and There Is Only One Way to Overcome It.

1. ***NOTE: The word "do" occurs many times in these verses. Only the ones shown in italics come from the word we are studying.***
2. ***What I Want to Do, I Don't Do; What I Hate, That I do.***

Romans 7:15

Sin has made us slaves. The result? I can no longer understand my *actions* (= the things I do / = the things I "*accomplish*"). Things I desire to do: I can't do them. Things I hate to do: I do them.

Romans 7:18

Nothing good lives in my corrupt nature. I cannot *do* (= "*accomplish*") the good things I desire to do.

NOTE: Sin includes not only the doing of *bad* things, but the doing of *good* things for the wrong reasons. We can't even begin to realize how bad our reasons and motives are, until God begins to change our perspective. Even things done for seemingly *good* reasons can be a cover-up for the neglect of other obligations which, according to God, ought to have a higher priority in our lives.

3. *It Is Sin Within Me That Does it.*

Romans 7:17

It is not me, but sin, which is *doing* (= "*accomplishing*") all this in me. [Verse 16: I agree with the Law and I desire to obey it, but am unable to.]

Romans 7:20

If I am doing what I don't want to do, it is sin (living within me) that is *doing* (= "*accomplishing*") it.

4. *Look at the Context. Don't Forget That Victory Is Through Christ (Ch. 8)! (This is the focus of PART 3.)*

Because of Sin's "Accomplishments"...

PART 2 - It Is Our Natural Tendency to Do (= "to Accomplish") Horrible Things ... and (Because of That) to Deserve a Horrible Judgment.

A. Our Natural Tendency Isn't to Do What Is Righteous, but What Is Sinful.

1. *See PART 1, above.*
2. *[KJV Only]: One Specific Example of a Sin Not "Accomplishing" Anything Good: Anger Doesn't "Accomplish" Righteousness.*

James 1:20

Man's anger does not *produce* (= "*accomplish*") God's righteousness.

[NOTE: Most manuscripts use a related Greek word which results in a translation similar to this: "Man's anger doesn't *lead to* God's righteousness." The meaning is approximately the same. (The only issue is whether or not to include it as a part of this word study!)]

B. We Deserve Punishment and Will Receive it - Unless the "Accomplishments" Mentioned in PART 3 (Below) Apply to Us.

1. *Eternal Consequences Are Guaranteed (unless PART 3, below, applies to us).*

Romans 2:9

There will be suffering and distress for everyone who *does* (= "*accomplishes*") evil...

2. *Consequences May Also Occur to Us in this Present Life.*

NOTE: These specific examples involve sexual sins, but Scripture abounds with other examples of consequences for sin in one's life.

Romans 1:27

Men *committed* (= "*accomplished*") indecent acts (sexual perversion) with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perverted conduct. (The women also did it...)

NOTE: The results of refusal to honor God includes not only judgment at the end of life, but also an increasing bondage to sin. Note the three times in this chapter, where it is written that God "gave them over" to sin. See verses 24, 26 and 28, in Romans 1.

1 Corinthians 5:3

Paul's judgment against the one who *committed* (= "*accomplished*") the sexual immorality: The man was to be handed over to Satan. [He was *not* to be considered a follower of Jesus, unless he repented of his sin. 2 Cor. 2:5-8 suggests that the man did repent, and having done so, the people were to forgive and encourage him.]

PART 3 - Only God Can "Accomplish" in Us the Salvation and the Good That We Ourselves Were Powerless to "Accomplish."

A. Our Efforts to "Accomplish" Good by Following the Law Are Useless: the Effect That Sin Has Had on Us Results in the Law Only Being Able to "Accomplish" Wrath.

Romans 4:15

Law *brings* (= "*accomplishes*") wrath, because we have not completely obeyed it. This is contrasted to the situation in which there is "no law" applicable - that is, when we trust God for our salvation.

NOTE: See PART 1, Sections 1 and 2, which show that sin used the good law to "accomplish" bad results.

B. God Works (= "Accomplishes") Things in Us - Things Related to Eternal Life.

2 Corinthians 5:5

[Context: We have an eternal "building" (body) to look forward to.] It is God who *prepared* us (= who "*accomplished*" in us what we now are) for this purpose (that is, for us to be with him, living in an "eternal" body that cannot perish). He has given us his Spirit as a guarantee of what is to come. [Even now, we are "new creations"! - v. 17.]

C. God "Accomplishes" Salvation - and He Uses People to Do So. (In this Example, He Used the Apostle Paul).

1. *Paul Faithfully Proclaimed God's Word; Through Him, Christ "Accomplished" Salvation Among the Gentiles.*

Romans 15:18

The only things Paul was interested in "boasting" about were the things Christ *accomplished* through him. Christ used what Paul said and did, to lead the Gentiles into obedience to God.

2. **Note: As an Apostle, it Was Necessary That Paul Also Do (= "Accomplish") the Things That Proved He Was Truly an Apostle.**

2 Corinthians 12:12

The "signs" of a genuine apostle--signs, wonders and miracles... These were *done* (= "accomplished") among the Corinthians.

[See also Romans 15:18-19: signs and wonders are mentioned in the context of leading the Gentiles to God.]

NOTE: The word "apostle" can be used to simply refer to someone who is sent in behalf of someone else - a messenger. But in most instances, it is used to refer to a specific group of individuals who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life on earth, and who had been called by him for the special task of being the first to proclaim the good news about salvation.

D. The above Verses Focus on the Salvation that God Accomplishes for Us. PARTS 4 and 5 Focus on Some of the Other Things He Accomplishes for Us.

Once God has Accomplished Our Salvation...

PART 4 - God Uses Even What is NOT Good to "Accomplish" Good in (and for) Us!

A. Trials and Suffering: Good Things Are "Accomplished" by Them.

1. ***Things Accomplished Now: Perseverance / Endurance; Godly Character, Hope; Maturity & Completeness; Joy & Rejoicing, Etc.***

Romans 5:3

... suffering *produces* (= "accomplishes") perseverance / endurance... character ... hope [Context: This is one of the reasons we should rejoice in our sufferings.]

James 1:3

The testing of your faith *produces* (= "accomplishes") perseverance / endurance... so that you will be complete / mature [Context: This is a reason we are to be joyful when we face trials.]

2. ***Things to be Accomplished Later: Eternal Glory.***

2 Corinthians 4:17

Our temporary, "light" afflictions are *producing* (= "accomplishing") an eternal glory that outweighs them all.

B. When We Have Godly Sorrow for Sin: God Will Use it to "Accomplish" Good Things in Our Lives.

1. ***The Sorrow That God Uses Is Described as "Godly Sorrow." (It is contrasted with the world's type of sorrow, which only "accomplishes" death. Note also that it is what God does, rather than the sin, that is good.)***

2. [KJV Only]: Repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:10a

Godly sorrow *produces* (= "*accomplishes*") repentance." The results of this repentance is salvation without regrets.

[NOTE: Most manuscripts use a related Greek word which results in a translation similar to this: "Godly sorrow leads to repentance." The meaning is approximately the same. (The only issue is whether or not to include it as a part of this word study!)]

3. *Various Characteristics Related to an Increased Desire for Godliness, a Desire to Do What Is Right, Etc. - All Contrasted with the Results of "Worldly Sorrow."*

2 Corinthians 7:10b-11

The Contrast Between Godly & Worldly Suffering is this: Godly sorrow *produces* (= "*accomplishes*") many good things (verse 11). In contrast, worldly sorrow *produces* (= "*accomplishes*") only death (verse 10b).

[The good things that are accomplished may be different for each set of circumstances. Verse 11 gives us a list of things it accomplished in the Corinthians. This was in response to some things Paul had to reprove them about, in his first letter to them.]

C. Think about This: Sin uses even what is *good*, to accomplish what is *bad*; God uses even what is *bad*, to accomplish what is *good*! (That's one of the reasons Paul could write Romans 8:28!)

Finally, Because of What God Has "Accomplished":

PART 5 - We Can Now Do (= "Accomplish") What Is Good!

A. Because of What God Has Done, We Can Describe Our "Former Lifestyle" of Sin as Being a Thing of the Past.

1 Peter 4:3

The things pagans *choose to do* (= "*accomplish*") - we did enough of these things in the past. (v. 1-2: Now, having chosen to suffer with Christ, we desire to spend the rest of our lives living for God, rather than doing sinful things.)

[We all still struggle with sin; we still have to fight it. (See Section 3, below.) But now we have the ability to resist and overcome it.]

B. Our Obedience (Made Possible by God) Will "Accomplish" Our Salvation. [This is referring to the "*present tense*" aspect of our salvation - see Note 2.]

Philippians 2:12-13

...continue to *work out* (= "*accomplish*") your salvation, with the reverent attitude of fear and trembling. God is the one who is working in you, enabling you to have both the desire and the ability to do this.

[See also Philip. 1:6, which tells us that God began a good work in us and will continue what he began, until it has reached its completion. With God doing all this in us, no wonder we should have such a reverent attitude!]

NOTE 1: This verse focuses on the fact that God works in us, both to give us the *ability* and the *desire* to do the work mentioned in v. 12. Because of this, we give *him* the credit for the results. How can we boast in something that is possible *only* because of him?

NOTE 2: The Bible's concept of "salvation" involves at least 3 aspects: 1) *Past* aspects (examples: justification, redemption); 2) *Present* aspects (example: sanctification - growing in holiness and godliness; the theme of Philippians 2:12-13); and 3) *Future* aspects (example: glorification). All 3 will occur in genuine Christians.

C. We Will Be Able to "Accomplish" All That Is Necessary in Our "Battle" Against Evil. After the Battle Is Over, We Will Still Be Standing, Rather than Being Destroyed.

Ephesians 6:13

Put on the full armor of God (v. 14+) so that you will be able to fight the spiritual battle (v. 10-11). Then you will be able to stand-up against your spiritual enemies. And after you have *done* (= "*accomplished*") everything that is part of the battle, you will be still be standing (instead of being fallen in defeat).

D. Our Expressions of Love to Others Will "Accomplish" Good in Them: They Will Be Filled with Gratitude / Thankfulness.

2 Corinthians 9:11

[The context is about showing love to others, by generously giving to provide for their needs. The proper *attitude* of generosity must also be present - verse 7. Verse 11 is an example of what happens when this love is expressed.] God will provide for your needs, and enable you to continue to be generous. And through us (the apostle and others who helped distribute the gifts), your generosity will *result in* ("*accomplish*") expressions of thanks to God.

[v. 12+: These thanks will be expressed for two reasons: 1) because you, the givers, are "living out" (in obedience) the faith you claim to have, and 2) because your generosity is benefiting so many people (including those who are giving the thanks).]

NOTE: Generosity, when it is an expression of love, is one of the characteristics of a righteous person, according to v. 9 (a quote from Psalms 112:9).