

GOOD NEWS
for the unsaved
WORLD!

(#190)
Works and the coming Day of Judgment.

1

We have seen (review):
God shows us what good works are; he teaches us how to do them, and enables us to do them.

- ✓ God's Word – teaches us about good works.
- ✓ God's creation – is the context in which we can do good works.
- ✓ God's actions – give us examples of good works.
- ✓ God's empowerment – enables his followers to do good works.

- All people have the obligation to do good works; but only those who are following Jesus will do them. *God has both saved us, and prepared the works for us to do!*

For you are saved by grace through faith... created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God **prepared ahead of time** for us to do.
Ephesians 2:8a, 10b (CSB)

2

Our focus today is on our obligation to do good works.
★ **It will have an impact on our future judgment.** ★

- We have already seen that it's not an issue of "faith vs. works." We are saved by God's grace, by means of our faith, and it results in works.
- Since salvation involves God changing our hearts and minds, genuine faith will not be devoid of works.

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.
James 2:17, 26 (ESV)

... the obedience that is associated with faith.
Romans 1:5b and 16:26b (GW)

3

SCRIPTURE TEACHES US WHAT WE NEED FOR DOING THESE GOOD WORKS.

There are many SPECIFIC EXAMPLES of both good and evil works – and we can learn from them.

- This also means we can know the difference (if we are willing to learn). *This means we have no excuse if we choose to do what Scripture calls "evil" – or if we choose to not learn the difference.*
- Even people without the Bible have been given an awareness of some basic "good vs. evil" principles (which they choose to go against); so they are without excuse – Romans 1:28-2:1; 2:14-15.

There are also many GENERAL STATEMENTS and WARNINGS about works – and we can learn from them.

- Half of these statements are warnings about the coming judgment – *all* of which tell us that saved people are included.

4

SAVED PEOPLE with a JUDGMENT BASED ON WORKS?

At the final judgment, we will be judged by the "book of life" and by the "books of deeds" (Revelation 20:11-15). *These books will agree, as two "witnesses" (for or against us), and will determine our eternal destiny. (Compare to the "two or three witnesses" requirement in Deuteronomy 19:15.)*

A good work is not truly "good," unless it honors God.

- Unsaved people cannot do this, because they are empowered by their sinful nature.
- Saved people can do this, because God has changed their hearts, minds and values – using the Bible to accomplish it.
- The works of saved people aren't always completely "good," from God's perspective, because of the residual influences of our sinful natures. But this perfection is our goal. When Jesus returns, that goal will be 100% attained.

5

Ultimately, people do, by nature, the works of their "spiritual father." (Even if other people don't recognize the work's nature.)

- **EXAMPLE:** The religious leaders claimed to be Abraham's children with God as their Father (John 8:39a, 41b). Jesus replied that their works showed who their true father was.

Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love me. ...
You come from your father, the devil, and you desire to do what your father wants you to do.
John 8:42a, 44a (GW)

- We may claim to be different from them... We may claim to love Jesus... *but how do we know if our claim is true?*

"If you love me, you will do what I command."
John 14:15 (ERV)

6

Many people do GOOD works that do not honor God.

- **EXAMPLE: The rich young ruler.** – Putting God *first* was the one thing he *didn't* do (Matthew 19:16-29; Mark 10:17-30; Luke 18:18-30).
 - ✓ He wanted to know what works would result in eternal life.
 - ✓ Jesus told him:

"If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."
Matthew 19:17b (NIV)
 - ✓ Then Jesus quoted the "love for neighbor" commands; and the man replied that he had obeyed them since childhood.
 - ✓ Then Jesus focused on the "love for God" commands – specifically the issue of *putting God ahead of possessions* (Matthew 19:21)... and the man realized that *he totally failed* in this matter.

... he went away sad, because he had great wealth.
Matthew 19:22b (NIV)

7

- **EXAMPLE: Many of the religious leaders.** – They were doing works in order to impress people.

"Be careful! When you do something good, don't do it in front of others **so that they will see you**. If you do that, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ...
When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. They love to stand in the synagogues and on the street corners and pray loudly. **They want people to see them**. The truth is, that's all the reward they will get."
Matthew 6:1, 5 (ERV)
- ✓ One of the reasons Jesus denounced the religious leaders was because...

"They do everything to attract people's attention."
Matthew 23:5a (GW)

8

- **EXAMPLE: Certain preachers of the Good News.** – *What* they preached was good... but *why* they preached it wasn't. They had *sinful motives*.

I'M A BETTER PREACHER THAN PAUL IS!

Some people tell the message about Christ because of their jealousy and envy [= toward Paul]. ... [They] are insincere. They tell the message about Christ out of selfish ambition in order to stir up trouble for me while I'm in prison.
Philippians 1:15a, 17 (GW)
- ✓ In contrast, Paul was more interested in the Good News being preached, than in his reputation as a preacher!

But what does it matter? Nothing matters except that, in one way or another, people are told the message about Christ, whether with honest or dishonest motives, and I'm happy about that.
Philippians 1:18a (GW)

9

MAKING EXCUSES FOR SIN. (Example #1.)
The folly of tearing verses out of context (1 Corinthians 3).

WHAT THE TEXT SAYS

- ✓ The Corinthians were arguing over who was the best church leader. Paul described this arguing as *worldly* and *childish* (vs. 1-3).
- ✓ He then tells them that each leader has a job, but *God* is the one who grows the church (vs. 5-6).
- ✓ In the end, each leader's works will be judged for its worth – its value in *building* up the church (vs. 11-13). They will either be rewarded, or suffer loss (vs. 14-15). Those who's efforts were of no eternal value* will still be saved (v. 15b).
- ✓ **In contrast:** Those who's efforts were *destructive* to the church will themselves be destroyed – not saved (vs. 16-17).

* People can try to "build" the church in many ways. Some ways have no eternal value. Other ways may be good, but are done with wrong motives (Philippians 1:15-18). All that we do will be seen for what it truly is.

10

HOW do people use 1 Corinthians 3 as an excuse to sin?

- They point out the places in vs. 1-4, where Paul tells the Corinthians that they are being "worldly" – and act as though this worldliness described the Corinthian's entire way of life.
- Then they "transfer" the supposed Corinthian condition into a "permission" for them to *choose* to have that type of life.

THE CORINTHIANS WERE WORLDLY... YET THEY WERE STILL CHRISTIANS!

THAT MEANS WE CAN CHOOSE TO LIVE LIKE THE WORLD ... AND WE WILL STILL BE SAVED...

- Finally, they point to v. 15, which they interpret as "getting *no rewards*, but *still saved*," and claim that it "proves" they can choose a worldly life and still be saved.

WE JUST WON'T GET AS MANY REWARDS IN HEAVEN!
- The rest of the context is unimportant to them.

11

Were the Corinthians really choosing to live sinful lives?

- **NO!** The Corinthians were *growing* in their salvation; and Paul was looking forward to increased ministry opportunities because of it.

Our hope is that, as your faith **continues to grow**, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, ...
2 Corinthians 10:15b (NIV)

THE CORINTHIAN SITUATION

- ✓ We have to realize that the Corinthians were saved from a totally godless background. They wanted to follow Jesus, but were still learning *how* to do it. *They needed to grow; they were still "spiritual babies."*
- ✓ The book of 1 Corinthians focuses on their childishness, and points out ways they needed to grow. In contrast, 2 Corinthians shows us that *they were growing* – though they still had a long way to go before they reached maturity.
- ✓ *Their situation was totally different from people today, who want to keep on sinning (or want to excuse others who do so).*

12

MAKING EXCUSES FOR SIN. (Example #2.)
What about the thief on the cross? (Luke 23:42-43)

Does the thief on the cross "prove" that good works aren't necessary?

He said [to the other criminal], "You should fear God. All of us will die soon. You and I are guilty. We deserve to die because we did wrong. But this man [= Jesus] has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you begin ruling as king!"

Then Jesus said to him, "I promise you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Luke 23:40b-43 (ERV)

THE THIEF DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO DO GOOD WORKS... AND HE WAS STILL SAVED!

THIS PROVES I CAN BE SAVED AND DON'T HAVE TO DO GOOD WORKS!

13

What these "excuse-makers" ignore...

1. The thief was only a few hours from death. He did not have time to do much.
2. *Even so, he did what he could.* He publicly confessed that Jesus was king. He also told the other criminal that he needed to "fear God," as well as to admit *his own* guilt and *Jesus'* innocence.
3. This public confession was all he could do... and *he did it.* (The "excuse-makers" seem to ignore this fact.)
4. Most of the people who come up with this excuse are NOT in the last moments of their lives. It's NOT that they are having a "deathbed conversion" and lack an *opportunity* for doing good works. Rather, they have *chosen* to *not* have those good works, and have no intention of changing.

People who "cling" to such excuses tend to be those who are trying to "justify" their (or other's) ONGOING ABSENCE of the changes that Scripture says will occur with salvation.

14

VERSES THAT POINT OUT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN OUR WORKS AND OUR JUDGMENT/SALVATION.

Who makes this connection? *Jesus* – the ultimate authority, along with *Paul* and *Peter* – two of his faithful followers.

- *Jesus* says that this will apply to all people.

For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will **judge all people according to their deeds.**
 Matthew 16:27 (NLT); based on Psalm 62:12.
- *Jesus* says that this will apply to all people.
- The basis for the judgment will be one's deeds.

Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, and they will rise again. **Those who have done good** will rise to experience eternal life, and **those who have continued in evil** will rise to experience judgment.
 John 5:28b-29 (NLT)

15

- *Paul* shows us that this is a serious matter, and it will apply to all people.

For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. **He will judge everyone according to what they have done.**

He will give eternal life to **those who keep on doing good**, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. But he will pour out his anger and wrath on **those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness.**

There will be trouble and calamity for **everyone who keeps on doing what is evil**—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for **all who do good**—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.

For God does not show favoritism.

Romans 2:5b-11 (NLT)
- The outcome of this judgment will be based on "what they have done."

16

In the next two passages, *Paul* focuses on the *fact* that *saved* people will be judged for their works. His emphasis: "This fact is to influence how we live."

- **PASSAGE #1:** This passage is directed toward people who are "judging" each other, based on their own personal preferences.
- *These are matters that can be right or wrong*, based on one's background and/or circumstances in life. God, not us, is the judge in such matters! [These are not moral issues, such as, "do not kill."]

You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written:

" 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.' "

So then, each of us will **give an account of ourselves to God.**

Romans 14:10–12 (NIV); quoting Isaiah 45:23.

17

- **PASSAGE #2:** Judgment and justice is a *necessary* future event. *This should influence how we live!*
- As followers of Jesus, it is fitting to have as our goal a desire to please the Lord, whether we are dead (= in the Lord's presence) or alive (= still in our present bodies).

So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please [the Lord].

For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for **the good or evil we have done** in this earthly body.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 (NLT)

- This awareness of the coming judgment should effect our attitude toward those who are *not* ready for it. This includes **persuading people** (v. 11) and **urging them to be reconciled** to God (v. 20). Those who are reconciled receive God's righteousness (v. 21).
- Also, Christ's love (v. 14) **compels** those who receive it to *stop* living for *themselves*, and to **start living for Christ!**

18

- **Peter** also reminds us that the coming judgment of our works should influence the way we live now. Note its connection to the need for holiness and obedience now.

As **obedient** children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so **be holy** in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."
 Since you call on a Father who **judges each person's work impartially**, live out your time as foreigners here in **reverent fear**.

1 Peter 1:14-17 (NIV)

- These things are also connected to: **purifying oneself** by obeying the truth (v. 22); **being born again** through the message of God's Word (v. 23); and **the need to grow up** in one's salvation (2:1-3).

- **Jesus** gives the following warning to the church at Thyatira, that he will be judging them according to their works.

Then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you **according to your works**.

Revelation 2:23b (CSB)

- We must remember that physical "churches" contain both saved people and fakes. In the previous verse (= the context), Jesus warns them that he will punish the fakes, if they don't repent.
- At the same time, this fact is given as a warning to *all people* in *all* the churches. It applies to *each* of us, whether we are saved or fake. *We need to pay attention to what the Spirit says!*

"Let anyone who has ears to hear **listen to what the Spirit says to the churches**."

Revelation 2:29 (CSB)

- Finally, we have the account of the *final* judgment. All will be there.

Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them.
 I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were **judged according to their works** by what was written in the books. Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was **judged according to their works**.
 Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15 (CSB)

- As mentioned previously, there is also the book of life.
- The fate of those not thrown into the lake of fire is described in chapters 21 and 22.

THIS WEEK'S MISSION!

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO ALL THIS?

↪ **Live in the light of the future judgment!**

If we wait until the judgment has arrived, it's too late.

⇒ Since we have *all* sinned, judgment must happen.

↪ But Jesus can make us ready, and turn it into something we can look forward to!

"Then the king will say to the godly people on his right, 'Come, my Father has great blessings for you. The kingdom he promised is now yours. It has been prepared for you since the world was made.'"

Matthew 25:34 (ERV)


THIS WEEK'S MISSION!

The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Revelation 20:12b (WEB)

If anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15 (WEB)



Unchanged life + name NOT in book of life = UNSAVED.
 Evidence of changed life + name in book of life = SAVED.

(The good works of the unsaved are NOT done to honor God. The changed lives of the saved are not 100% sinlessly perfected until Jesus returns.)

Unchanged life + name in book of life = NO SUCH THING!
 Evidence of changed life + name NOT in book of life = NO SUCH THING!

(The God who saves also changes. It's "both or neither.")

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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