

"Do Works Matter?"

While no one can earn salvation, do our works really matter? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." What does the Bible say about works; and are all works the same? Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's word always tells us the truth about every spiritual question. God's word found in Scripture is complete and all-sufficient. We look to God not human traditions or men for our answers. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

When we speak of "works," some misunderstand. They rightly say one cannot earn salvation through works. Yes Ephesians 2:8 to 9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." We all needed to be saved, rescued, from sin by the Lord Jesus. So, we cannot speak of earning salvation. Now others cite passages speaking of the works of the Law. Galatians 2:16 says, "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus." So, we don't turn to the Law of Moses but trust in Christ for salvation.

Well in spite of this, there are works the Lord requires and He judges if we fail to do them. Paul said that he "received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith" in Romans 1 verse 5. Faith obeys. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." We must do the Father's will. The Lord asked, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" We must obey the Lord's voice. John 3:36 says that, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." So obeying God in faith does matter.

Now we offer this study, Do Works Matter, free! And if you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from James 2:14 to 18, and examine whether works matter.

Our reading is James chapter 2 verses 14 to 18. And there James makes it very clear that we need an active faith.

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

There James makes an important observation. That faith needs to act. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are grateful for Your word that keeps us straight and helps us to do what is right.

Father we pray that our faith will always be active, that we will live what we believe, and Father we pray that we'll always do Your will and love You from our hearts. In Jesus name, Amen.

James makes it clear that an inactive faith, a faith that doesn't do anything, cannot save him. Such a faith is no good, useless, and dead. Later James 4 and verse 17 says, "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." Now doing what is right matters to God. God notices when we obey and He notices when we sin. Faith alone without works is a failure and sinful.

God knows our works; God always knows what is going on in our lives. The Lord Jesus told the church in Thyatira in Revelation 2:19 to 23, "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, (he says) and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works." Later in the book of Revelation, Revelation 22 verse 12, there the Lord Jesus said, "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done."

Now how we live has always mattered to God. David wrote in Psalm 62:11 to 12, "Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work." Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 11 verse 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." The prophet Jeremiah also understood God's ability to see into our hearts and lives. God said in Jeremiah 17:9 to 10 that, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Paul wrote to some Jewish Christians who were practicing what they condemned in others in Romans 2:1 to 5, he says: Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Paul then shows how God will deal with each person in Romans 2:6 to 11: He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

We will be judged at the end of time. Ecclesiastes 12:13 to 14 says, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will

bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." We may ignore our sins, but God remembers them. Sin offends God. The Lord Jesus said in John 5:28 to 29, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and (will) come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

In Matthew 16:24 to 27, God's word says: Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done." On that day, we'll wish we had followed the Lord.

The Lord Jesus urges us in Matthew 24:42, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming." In verse 44 He says, "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will." And Jesus explains then in chapter 24 of Matthew verses 45 to 51, "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

"But if that evil slave says in his heart, (well) 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and (he) begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." My friend will the Lord Jesus find you faithful, sensible, alert, and ready?

The Lord tells three illustrations of what the Judgment will be like and who will enter the Kingdom of heaven in Matthew 25. First, he speaks of ten virgins. Five were wise, and five were foolish. The five wise virgins prepared their lamps properly for the coming of the bridegroom, while the five foolish virgins failed to do so. While the foolish left to buy oil for their lamps, the bridegroom came, and the door was shut to the foolish virgins. They were not ready, and the Lord would not open to them. He said, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." My, wouldn't you hate to be unprepared? Wouldn't you hate to find the Lord did not know you?

Second, the Lord Jesus speaks of the master of three slaves, whom he entrusted with his possessions. The one with five talents gained five more talents, a great sum of money. The one with two talents gained another two talents. And he said to them both, "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'" But the third slave who received only one talent brought back the talent that he received. This third slave was wicked and lazy; he failed to do his duty. The master said, "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." You see the Lord expects us to use what He entrusts to us for His glory.

The Lord Jesus said in John 15:8 to 10, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, (Jesus said) I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." You see living for Jesus is how we love the Lord and how we produce fruit that pleases and glorifies Him. You see our efforts matter!

Third, Jesus in Matthew 25:31 to 45 speaks of sitting on His throne on Judgment Day. He distinguishes the sheep on His right hand from the goats on His left. He welcomes the sheep to inherit

the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Why? Well, He explains, "For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." When Christians serve people in need, they are also serving Christ.

But to the goats, the Lord Jesus will say, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me." Jesus concludes by saying, "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." You see what we do for the Lord matters; and what we fail to do also matters.

Judgment is coming for all people. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5 verses 9 to 10, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Yes, we will be judged by what we do and whether we believe. Romans 14:12 says, "So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."

John wrote about Judgment Day in Revelation 20:11 to 14. It says, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." Now every person who has ever lived will be judged by what is written in the Bible, in the books, according to their deeds.

And whether we believe and whether we obey matters! 2 Thessalonians 1:7 to 10 describes how "the Lord Jesus, one of these days, will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." Yes faith and obedience both are necessary. Is necessary to be right with God and to inherit God's promises. So the question I have to ask all of you is are you prepared? Is your faith a living faith or a dead one. Are you what God would have you to be.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are so thankful that You have written to us in Your word what Your will is. And Father we're thankful that You've given us many reasons to believe in You. And Father through our faith and our love for You help us to be obedient to Your will. To do what is good and right. To stay away from things that are evil and wrong. Father we pray that You will help us every day to be obedient to Your word. In Jesus name, Amen.

As we have seen faith obeys, and obedient faith is what God desires. Let me challenge you to read through Hebrews chapter 11, which reveals the men of old who gained the approval and commendation of God. Faith is absolutely necessary according to Hebrews 11 and verse 6, but the faith described in Hebrews 11 is not a dead faith. By faith Noah built an ark; by faith Abraham obeyed by going into a land of promise; by faith Abraham offered up Isaac; and by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith the people crossed the Red Sea on dry ground; by faith the walls of Jericho fell down; and many other acts of faith are mentioned. Never was the idea of an inactive faith considered. All this tells us to look to Jesus to run the race.

The doctrine of faith alone, a faith that doesn't act, is not wholesome. It is useless and dead. Believers in Christ always did more than merely believe. They repented of their sins, which is not an easy thing but requires discipline. They also confessed their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God. They didn't simply believe; they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Now the New Testament never speaks of a believing Christian who has not been baptized.

Galatians 3:26 to 27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Now those who became sons of God were not people who believed in faith alone; they obeyed by repenting and being baptized into Christ and clothing themselves with Christ. Do what they did in Acts 2:38. Do what they did. Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.

Now we hope our study, of about obedience and about works, has caused you to love God with all your souls and all your heart. Now if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, then send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free. It's 1-800-321-8633. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now SEARCH is also on YouTube! So subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs when you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

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