

What are Worthless Works?

God is interested in deeply our motives. After we are saved and become a believer. The Grace of God teaches us that the motives of our work are very important. Titus 3:8 exhorts us to maintain good works, when it states, *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”*

Any Christian work or act of ours performed outside of the Spirit of Christ will be worthless at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If any of our Christian service is not born out of true love to God and produced for His glory alone -- it will be of no value to us then.

Scripture teaches, even though we have used the *“Gifts of the Spirit”* to produce Christian works, it will all be a lost effort as far as rewards are concerned. God will judge us from our heart motives, not from our outward appearances.

Consider the following Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 4:4-5 *“For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”*

Romans 14:10-13, *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.”*

2 Corinthians 5:9-11, *“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”*

This passage refers to a place where every Christian is to receive the things done in his body, according as he has done whether his works have been good or bad!

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 *“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*

This passage plainly teaches that the work of every Christian will be made manifest, tried by fire to see whether it belongs under the class of good, bad (worthless)

Christian works; and if his works will be burned, he will suffer loss, even though he is saved so as by fire.

With these Scriptures in mind, God tell us in the Word about worthless Christian works

1 Samuel 16:7, *“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”*

What a solemn message God gives us in these words. God had set aside King Saul, Israel's first king, who, Scripture tells us, had *“grown out of his spirit of humbleness and set his heart against God and His Word.”* God had rejected King Saul. He sent Samuel down to Jesse's house to anoint a new king. Jesse had eight sons, seven at home and David, who was taking care of his father's sheep. Jesse got his seven sons ready to pass before Samuel for inspection, hopefully to be anointed as Israel's next king. Samuel was remembering Saul, Israel's first king, who in all his natural build was head and shoulders taller than any man in the Tribe of Benjamin. When the first son, Eliab, passed by, he had the outward appearance of King Saul. He would fit so well into everything King Saul possessed while on the throne. Samuel was ready to pour the oil on his head, anointing him as king of Israel, when God gave him this message, *“God sees **not** as man sees.”* We do not see things as God sees them; we see things from a natural point of view. God continues speaking to Samuel, *“For man looks on the outward appearance!”* Fortunately, we can change that today, in this present life!

Man can camouflage or fake his appearance, but God looks at the heart -- where all motives are born, and true values are revealed. Don't forget, no man can change his heart without God's knowledge. It takes God's help to change the heart -- which is a lot different than the outward appearance!

Actually, our old life *“in the flesh”* before we were saved, was a *“put-on life.”* The world is unreal in its appearance. People spend millions of dollars to make themselves what they are not. Satan has done a pretty good job to fool the man and woman of the world to be only a *“put on”* -- thinking only of *“putting on a good front.”*

How different we were in outward appearance
than what we were at heart -- before we were saved!

People will sometimes paint the front of a house and leave the rest unpainted because *“no one will see it.”* Everyone passes by the front of the house. A store will spend thousands of dollars on its entrance or front. As you pass in its front you would think that it's like the gates of heaven, so to speak, bright lights, gold, silver, and polished brass. If you go out the back door, you would think you're in the slum part of town. The alley behind the building is for the express man, the drunk, and the night watchman; so, if only a few people ever see it, why worry about fixing it up?

Man and women seek to change their appearance and attempt to look according to whatever the present style, fashion, or fad might be. They change their outward

appearance – painting up, padding here and there, maybe even putting on a new roof on the “old house.”

We might be able to “put it over” on some people because of “outward appearance,” but not God -- because He sees the heart, the inner man!

Nothing is settled you -- “For every man’s works are yet to be reveals, tried, and put to test of God’s fire” -- The Judgment Seat of Christ!

Look at these searching words in I Corinthians 13:1-7, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*”

These words were written to born-again believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit and been blessed with spiritual gifts, still Paul (including himself) says that a believer could do all this and still receive no “eternal profit or reward.”

What an unforgettable picture revealing how far a Christian could go in spiritual things – yet producing only wood hay, and stubble works and lose everything at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Note that Paul did not say that these Spiritual gifts did not profit anyone in the Body of Christ, for, indeed they do – but what he did say was, “*Without love, it profits **ME** nothing!*” Paul, as he is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses the words, “*though I...*” Paul is including himself in this warning.

“Charity” – the word used in the King James Translation – does not mean, “give to some needy cause, or to the poor” – but rather, it is the Greek “*agape*,” word meaning “*God’s divine love*” that the Holy Spirit produces in the believer – *if* the believer will let Him. It takes the co-operation of the believer allowing the Holy Spirit to produce this Christ-like characteristic in his every day living.

Verses 4 through of this 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians describe the nature and character of this “*agape*” love -- God’s divine love -- [only possible as the Holy Spirit manifests it in the believer’s life]. This love is a “*living thing!*” It is to be the *motive* behind all we do -- even the use of Spiritual gifts.

Verse one says, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not the motive of love and God’s glory alone in mind, I am become as a `noise gong or a slashing cymbal’ [as one translation renders it]”* That is -- in the eyes and ears of God, but not necessarily in the eyes and ears of the people (even Christians), especially Spiritual babies in Christ.

Verse two, “*And though I have the gift of prophecy, the gift of understanding all mysteries, the gift of all knowledge, the give of all faith, so that I could move mountains, and **have not love -- I AM NOTHING!***”

The Holy Spirit – through the apostle Paul’s writings -- certainly covers a lot of territory by these words! ***Paul had all these gifts of the Spirit operating in his life, yet he states the loss of the right motive would bring him no profit at the Judgment Seat of Christ.***

Paul is not speaking of natural profit coming from men, or the praise of others in this present life -- he is looking forward to the time or receiving heavenly rewards -- “*the Judgment Seat of Christ*” -- when God will make manifest the counsel of the heart -- when all the hidden motives will come to light! Everything that is done for any selfish reason, or vainglory, will go up in smoke and will profit nothing in the light of eternity. Paul is here speaking of lasting Spiritual profit, that is lot different than the standard of profit and success of this world.

When Paul says, that “*I am nothing with the right motive of love*” he is speaking of the time when he will be judged by Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

In verse three Paul states that he could sell all of his possessions, and give it all to the poor; he could even give his body to be burned -- (“*martyred*” – which is what he actually did!) -- and it would ***bring him no profit, if*** he did not do it with the motive of love!

There may be those who, at their death, a great monument, or building, is dedicated in their honor – they may receive high acclaim for what they have done in this life – but, if it has not been accomplished in God’s divine love, at the final day of real rewards, they will receive ***nothing*** – but loss!

[To study the real fruits of love, see the study on “*The Fruit of the Spirit*”]

Notice Jesus clear teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, “*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matthew 6:1-7). And, “*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:16-18).**

God watches and takes notice of our motives. Some get their rewards in this life *only!* Their works are to be seen by men -- men see them -- *“they have their reward.”*

God doesn't overlook even the most trivial service rendered, or seemingly insignificant gift given -- if it is given in love! Look at Matthew 10:42, *“Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones **a cup of cold water** only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”*

God is so interested in the motives behind our deeds -- they are most important to Him. We need to be extremely careful of our *“heart-spirit”* in which our works are done! No matter who you are --- you may never be a missionary, pastor, or church worker --- Jesus invites you to be a *“Water Carrier”* (or any tasks where there is a need) and He promise that you will not lose your rewards, if it is accomplished in a spirit of love!

Let's examine Luke 14:11-14, *“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased -- [whoever promotes himself, shall be humbled] -- and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. -- [the man who makes himself insignificant will find himself important] -- Then said He also to him that bade him -- [up to this point Jesus was speaking to the guest, now He is speaking to the host, a Pharisee] -- When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not -- [just selfishly] -- thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again -- [reward, or repay] -- and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just -- [The Judgment Seat of Christ.]”*

Jesus says that if we want to receive a reward from Him, our acts must not be on the same basis a giving -- knowing that we are going to receive something -- such as, *Christmas giving*. To do something, with the expectation of receiving something in return. Jesus lived what He preached. He never did any acts, in order to receive one in return.

In verse 11 Jesus says that any disciple who exalts himself here in this present life, will be abased at the Judgment Seat of Christ. He how humbles himself in obedience to Christ's teaching will be exalted before the family of God.

In verses 12 and 13, Jesus teaches that the motive behind everything we do is what is important to God -- and will be rewarded *“at the resurrection of the just”* -- showing once again that the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place at the last phrase of the first resurrection.

Verse 14 says that only the things done without any thought of recompense in this life will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ

1 Corinthians 9:25 says, *“Those who are in training are under all manner of self-restraint. They do it in this life just to obtain a wreath that will perish and fade, but we race, strive, for a prize that is imperishable and will never fade.”*

1 Corinthians 10:31 is impossible to misunderstand. It says, “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Colossians 3:17 is another similar passage urging us to give God the glory in all that we do -- “*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” And also verses 23-25, “*And whatsoever ye do, **do it heartily**, as to the Lord, and not unto men; **Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward** of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*”

James gives God’s standard of pure religion to us in the book that bears his name, when he writes. “*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*” (James 1:27).

This is not what most people think of when they hear the word, “religion,” but, when God describes what is religious, He says, “*A pure religion is to minister to the orphans and widows in their affliction.*”

Luke 16:15 says, “*And He -- [Jesus] -- said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knows your hearts: for **that which is highly esteemed among men** is abomination in the sight of God.*”

Read Romans 6:13,16, 19 and 22 and you will see that Paul tells us that, our service to God, now that we are Christians, should be as diligent, and whole hearted, as our service was for self, before we were saved!

God help us to live our life in the light of Eternity!