

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the sole means by which a person is cleansed of sin and forgiven by God who then imputes or ascribes to him or her His perfect righteousness. The person is then seeded with agape love by indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the motivation behind Good Works. Such people are completely rare and unique in this world, and understandably so. They are HOLY to God and He sets them apart¹ for His special purpose. They are not to stand around on display like ornaments on a shelf. They are the WORK of God who is CHANGING them to fulfill His PURPOSE for them in this *physical* life:

EPHESIANS 2:10 For **we are His [God's] workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus **for good works, which God prepared beforehand** that we should walk in them.

TITUS 2:13-14 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might **redeem us** from every lawless deed and **purify [cleanse] for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**

God's children are holy because He has dedicated them for Good Works. Did this hit you? It is CRITICAL to understand. Notice that verse 14 says that Jesus Christ's sacrifice REDEEMS people for Good Works. This is why Good Works are salvational.

It is easy to imagine many ways we can apply ourselves to Good Works. Several are mentioned in the parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25. Good Works can be donations of time, labor, communication, comfort, encouragement, teaching, money, etc. Everyone who has agape love growing in them also has a growing desire to help others. This even brings its own rewards:

LUKE 6:38 "**Give, and it will be given to you: good measure**, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For **with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.**"

Giving, the act of doing Good Works, results in receiving from God. Notice that one must give FIRST before receiving. When God gives, He does so abundantly:

MATTHEW 25:29 'For to everyone who has, **more will be given, and he will have abundance;** but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

That abundance from God allows one to do even greater Good Works. But every Good Work requires a RECIPIENT—someone in need of help. Unless there is someone grieving, afflicted, suffering, lacking, etc., Good Works are nothing more than a mutual pat on the back. Two people who are *not* in need but do good to each other are simply trading niceties. Obviously, someone who is poor, sick, suffering, lacking, or grieving plays a very important role because Good Works would not exist without them.

Those with the means to give are ALWAYS better off than those who suffer. As Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35). Who would not rather give than be the one in need? However, the RECIPIENT of Good Works is also a GIVER. In fact, someone in need can offer something that is *impossible* for a giver. The one receiving help gives *back* by responding

¹ 2 Cor. 6:17.

in meekness, thankfulness, gratefulness, appreciation, and gratitude. What is the result? Increasing agape love among each other!

JAMES 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but **a doer of the work, this one will be blessed** in what he does.

Doers of Good Works are both the giver and recipient. I'll say it again: Good Works require both the giver and recipient to be DOERS. One who gives and the other receives. This is the circle of God's perfect work in us. God imbues us with His agape love. To some, He also gives abundance and, to others, trials. Within this framework are the Good Works that are for the perfecting of agape love:

HEBREWS 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up **love and good works**,

HEBREWS 13:21 **[Now may God] [perfect you] in every good work** to do His will, **[God] working in you** what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

2 TIMOTHY 3:17 *[All Scripture is given]* that **the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work**.

But there is another outcome of Good Works that involves both the giver and recipient. Remember the story of the ten lepers?

LUKE 17:12-14 Then as He *[Jesus Christ]* entered a certain village, there met Him **ten men who were lepers**, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up *their* voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 So when He saw *them*, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, **they were cleansed**.

The ten lepers were recipients of the Good Works (healings) of Jesus Christ. But givers and recipients of Good Works can respond with something that is very pleasing to God. Continuing:

LUKE 17:15-18 And **one of them**, when he saw that he was healed, **returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His [Jesus Christ's] feet, giving Him thanks**. And he was a Samaritan. 17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? 18 "Were there not any found **who returned to give glory to God** except this foreigner *[the Samaritan]*?"

Good Works glorify God! In the story, nine lepers, who were likely Jews, did not return to give thanks and glory to God. (Is that the case among the *ekklesia* today? Those who receive help in time of need but do not glorify God? I certainly hope not.) But without those in need, even Jesus could do no Good Works. This is the reason that Lazarus became sick and died:

JOHN 11:3-4 Therefore the sisters sent to Him *[Jesus Christ]*, saying, "Lord, behold, he *[Lazarus]* whom You love is sick." 4 When Jesus heard *that*, He said, "**This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God**, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

A giver is obviously more blessed (not always with money!) since they are able to help those in need that suffer or lack (again, not always money!). Through Good Works they both GLORIFY

God: the giver out of the abundance from God and the recipient as their suffering or poverty² is eased or lifted. That is one meaning of the following:

ROMANS 5:3-5 And not only *that*, but **we also glory in tribulations**, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because **the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit** *which* was given to us.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see **your good works and glorify your Father in heaven**." (Matt. 5:16). Do only givers have light to shine while recipients are in darkness? I think not. Is not "light" a picture of Jesus Christ³ living in ALL God's people whether they are givers or receivers? Both the giver and receiver of Good Works of glorify God!

Through "tribulations"—afflictions, burdens, sufferings, lack, troubles—Good Works not only connect a giver with someone in need, but they also GIVE glory to God because "we must **through many tribulations** enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22). But Good Works affect more than the just the giver and the recipient:

LUKE 18:35-43 Then it happened, as He [*Jesus Christ*] was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. 37 So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, 41 saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." 42 Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And **all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.**

Good Works cause givers, recipients, *and* witnesses to give thanks, praise, and glory to God! Good Works affect many people:

LUKE 19:37-40 Then, as He [*Jesus Christ*] was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, **the whole multitude** of the disciples began **to rejoice and praise God** with a loud voice **for all the mighty works they had seen**, 38 saying: " 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." 40 But He answered and said to them, "**I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.**"

The crowd that lined the street as Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey CRIED OUT and gave glory to God for the "**mighty works** they had seen." When the Pharisees demanded the Jesus put a halt to their rejoicing, He responded by saying that God would be glorified even if it required the very stones to cry out. Glorifying God is not something that should or can be squelched. Glorifying Him is THE response of those involved in the Good Works of God!

To glorify God is to praise, worship, give thanks, adore, venerate, honor, reverence, and exalt the Most High God. God redeemed His people for the very PURPOSE of doing Good Works in this physical life. They are, perhaps, the greatest GLORY anyone can offer unto God and Jesus Christ!

² Mark 12:41-44.

³ John 8:12.

God works in His people for the purpose of creating children who will share in His agape love, joy, peace, and eternity! That is why, in this life, "... **whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**" (1 Cor. 10:31). Is that true in your life? Do you do ALL things to glorify God? Scripture says, "all have sinned and fall short of **the glory of God.**" (Rom. 3:23). While this compares sinful man to the unimaginable glory of God, I think it is also a case where *sin* causes us to fall short of GIVING glory to God because Scripture also says:

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 For **all the promises of God** in Him [*Jesus Christ*] are Yes, and in Him [*Jesus Christ*] Amen, **to the glory of God through us.**

All—not some, but ALL—the promises of God are given to **us** so that we might glorify Him! In fact, it is not just His promises:

2 CORINTHIANS 4:15 For **all things are for your sakes,** that grace, having spread through the many, **may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.**

EVERYTHING that God has done, is doing, and will do is so that we can glorify Him and Jesus Christ. Obviously, Good Works are a major contributor but when Scripture says God does "**all things**" so that we may abound in glory to Him, does that not also include the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins, begetting by the Holy Spirit, promise of eternal life, promise of unspeakable peace and joy, *and* Good Works? This cannot be over emphasized—ALL of it is for one purpose:

ROMANS 15:6-7 that you may **with one mind and one mouth glorify the God** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore **receive one another,** just as Christ also received us, **to the glory of God.**

What does it mean to "receive" one another? It is literally to take hold of **to oneself**. We are to take hold of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Whether God has provided one the abundance to give or has put another under the "pressure" (the meaning of the Greek word for affliction, tribulation, or trouble) of trials, we are to take hold of each other and be ONE with each other in all things:

ACTS 2:44-46 Now **all who believed were together,** and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, **as anyone had need.** 46 So **continuing daily with one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

And what was the result of this unity? Read the next verse:

ACTS 2:47 **praising God** and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the *ekklesia* daily those who were being saved.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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