

SABBATH THOUGHT 2026-05-09—COVENANT WORKS

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Everyone in the Body of Christ entered into a covenant with God when they swore an oath to obey God and Jesus Christ. (Yes, everyone swears or vows an oath when they enter into covenant with God. Swearing of oaths is not forbidden, contrary to common teachings.¹) That singular group of people is called the *ekklesia* in the Bible, the assembly of called-out-ones and they are called and separated to God as His special people:

TITUS 2:14 who gave Himself [*Jesus Christ*] for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself **His own special people, zealous for good works.**

But how many know what they vowed to fulfill under the New Covenant? Most would likely say it is the Law of God² and they would be correct. However, the Law of God is not simply the “thou shalt nots” of the Ten Commandments, which are mainly a list of what is forbidden—idolatry, taking God’s name in vain, murder, adultery, stealing, false testimony, and coveting. Obeying the Ten Commandments falls short of fulfilling the terms of the New Covenant it is simply avoiding sin. The Two Great Love Commandments require more than just going around saying “I love God and my neighbor” and listening to a sermon for a couple of hours on the Sabbaths and holydays does not assure eternal life.

Works are required under the New Covenant. God’s people are “special” because they are zealous for GOOD WORKS! Love for God requires also loving a neighbor but too often they are simply ignored or avoided. How many actually know their neighbors or help the needy that cross their paths in this world? Love for God, brethren, and the people in this world, and is more than a feeling or uttering the obligatory “Hi, how are you” to someone. It is a deep, heartfelt desire to “**do good [works] to all**, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”³ When it comes to pleasing God, it is more than strict adherence to keeping the Law:

LUKE 17:10 “So likewise you, **when you have done all those things which you are commanded [in the Law of God], say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’**”

When Job was going through his trials, his friend Eliphaz, the son of Esau, basically told him that perfectly keeping the Law (righteousness) does not impress God:

¹ Refer to the booklet [Swearing of Oaths—Does Matthew 5:34 Forbid Them?](#)

² John 14:15, 21; 15:10.

³ Gal. 6:10.

JOB 22:3 *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways blameless?*

In all regards, only agape love FULFILLS the Law of God:

ROMANS 13:8-10 Owe no one anything except to **love one another, for he who loves another [all people, not just brethren] has fulfilled the law.** 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if *there is* any other **commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.**

True agape love goes beyond the letter of the Law and fulfills the Law by Good Works. Without them, obedience to the Law falls short of the perfection of God. One of the ways that Jesus fulfilled the Law⁴ was by revealing what is necessary to receive eternal life under the New Covenant. There are four major requirements under the New Covenant.

HAVING CHRIST’S LOVE FOR THE *EKKLESIA*

One of the commandments of the Law is called the Law of Christ⁵. Jesus said⁶:

JOHN 15:12-14 **“This is My [Jesus Christ’s] commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.** 13 “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. 14 “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

One of the failures within the *ekklesia* is not loving one another as Jesus Christ loves us. This is a COMMANDMENT of the New Covenant, so it is a statute of the Law of God. How much did He love us? He *died* for us. The lack of love within the *ekklesia* is evidenced by all the arguing, bickering, criticisms, accusations, gossiping, condemnations, and segregations, especially within church organizations. There is barely neighborly love (the Second Great Commandment) much less the kind of love where brethren are willing to die for one another. Neighborly love falls far short of the new standard of love among the *ekklesia* commanded by Jesus. But even that is hard to find among all the anger⁷:

1 JOHN 4:20-21 **If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother [as Jesus Christ loves us] whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?** 21 And this commandment we have from Him [*Jesus Christ*]: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

⁴ Matt. 5:17-18.

⁵ Gal. 6:2.

⁶ Also John 13:34-35.

⁷ Also 1 John 2:7-11.

Love within the *ekklesia* is to reflect the love of Christ, not the hatred that goes on today. If that love does not exist, then there is no love for God *regardless* of what someone claims because it is God who judges. If there is any doubt, read the Parable of the Sheep & Goats⁸.

GOOD WORKS

Prayers are an essential part of the New Covenant:

JAMES 5:16 Confess *your* trespasses to one another [*reconcile offenses*], and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

But James also emphasizes that prayers are not a substitute for Good Works:

JAMES 2:14-26 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Often when people hear that someone is in need they say, ‘I will pray for you’ and walk away. What they are really saying is “depart in peace, be warmed and filled.” Church organizations essentially require members to give tithes and offerings. This unspoken demand scares the people who can least afford it to give of their meager incomes out of fear they will lose salvation! In a few cases, a church might assist someone to attend the Feast of Tabernacles but it rarely is enough. The minister and his family, on the other hand, have all expenses paid and stay in the best accommodations. When was the last time a church helped the needy with food, clothing, rent, bills, or repairs? Some brethren live in places that are so dilapidated that the minister refuses to visit them. When was the last time a church leader visited someone in the hospital? People who give their money to a church

⁸ Matt. 25:31-36.

organization while needy brethren go without are saying, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled." James said that faith is perfected by Good Works and a person is justified by Good Works! Those who are justified are regarded by God as righteous! A lack of Good Works means a person not only has Dead Faith but is also not justified by God and the "the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God."⁹ The New Covenant requires doing Good Works. They are not the responsibility of ministers but each member of the Body of Christ:

EPHESIANS 4:15-16 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom **the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies [Good Works!], according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the Body [of Christ] for the edifying of itself in love.**

The New English Translation states this even more plainly:

[NET2.1+] EPHESIANS 4:15-16 But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the Head. 16 From Him **the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part [Good Works!], the Body [of Christ] builds itself up in love.**

Think that works are not required for salvation? Again, read the Parable of the Sheep & Goats¹⁰. It is God's works that establish salvation but the *ekklesia* cannot idly stand by waiting on God to finish His work:

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, **as you have always obeyed [God and Christ]**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out [DO something] your own salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 for **it is God who works in you** both to will and **to do [Good Works]** for *His* good pleasure.

Verse 13 clearly says the purpose of the works of God are so that the *ekklesia* can "work out your own salvation" by doing Good Works.¹¹

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

It is commonly accepted that those in covenant with God are known by their Fruits¹². As discussed in the Sabbath Thought on [2025-11-08—Giving Fruits of the Spirit](#)¹³, Fruits of the Spirit are not traits to possess but gifts that benefit others:

[TS2009] TITUS 3:14 And our *brothers* should also learn to **[practice] good works**, to meet urgent needs, so **that they shall not be without fruit.**

⁹ 1 Cor. 6:9.

¹⁰ Matt. 25:31-36.

¹¹ Heb. 10:24.

¹² Matt. 7:16-20.

¹³ <https://sabbathreflections.org/2025-11-08-giving-fruits-of-the-spirit/>

An absence of Good Works is being UNFRUITFUL. Fruits of the Spirit are meant to bless and aid others. A tree does not produce fruit for itself but for the benefit of others. The fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control¹⁴ only have meaning when they help others. Can someone be kind, good, or gentle without giving kindness, goodness, or gentleness TO others? Love is caring *for* someone; otherwise it is simply narcissistic. Unless joy and peace are given to others, they are meaningless. Paul concluded by saying Fruits of the Spirit require exercising the Spirit:

GALATIANS 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also **behave in accordance with the Spirit.**

RECONCILIATION

In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant¹⁵, Jesus said that it is mandatory to forgive offenses. Within the *ekklesia* is an utter disregard for reconciliation in spite of the fact that Jesus commanded Peter to forgive a brother 490 times:

MATTHEW 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Him [*Jesus Christ*] and said, “Lord, **how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?** Up to seven times?” **22** Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but **up to seventy times seven.**

How many in the *ekklesia* have forgiven an offense even ONCE? People rarely ever say “I’m sorry” anymore. Oh, they say it often enough but for the most minor and trivial things such as bumping into someone. That is meaningless. Saying “I’m sorry” is meant to reflect feelings of grief, anguish, and pain that result from causing serious hurt or harm to someone. Can you imagine being in a crowded train station in Japan and everyone is constantly saying “I’m sorry” every time they bump into others? Is anyone *really* sorry for something like that?? In times past they said “Pardon me” or “Excuse me.” Nowadays they say “I’m sorry” for trivial matters but are silent when there are real offenses.

The *ekklesia* swore an oath to reconcile offenses but victims and offenders BOTH hold onto anger instead. Victims justify their anger because they were offended and offenders justify their anger thinking the victims deserve it. But no amount of anger among the *ekklesia* is justified by GOD:¹⁶

EPHESIANS 4:31 Let **all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.**

COLOSSIANS 3:8 But now you yourselves are to **put off all these: anger, wrath, malice,** blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

¹⁴ Gal. 5:22-23.

¹⁵ Matt. 18:23-35.

¹⁶ Also Ps. 37:8; Gal. 5:19-20; Matt. 5:22; Jas. 1:20; Rom. 12:19.

The New Covenant requires the *ekklesia* to put away, not some, but ALL anger, bitterness, and wrath.¹⁷ Victims and offenders are BOTH required to reconcile. Obviously, an offender who knows they hurt someone needs to humbly repent to the victim. But if the offender does not know they caused an offense, the victim is then required to humbly go to the offender:

MATTHEW 5:23-24 “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there **remember that your brother has something against you, 24 “leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother,** and then come and offer your gift.

Who is the *you* in “has something against **you**?” This can be an offender or victim! Notice what Christ said to victims of offenses:

MATTHEW 18:15 “Moreover **if your brother sins against you [offends], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.** If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

All under the New Covenant swore an oath to grow in Christ’s love for one another, which requires reconciling ALL offenses. The reality, however, is that reconciliation is mostly a Dead Work within the *ekklesia*.

Being under the New Covenant required swearing an oath to obey the Law of God. Ultimately, it is a Covenant of Love. God is working to perfect the *ekklesia* so they become as God and Christ ARE—agape love. If God’s work is fruitful, agape love is manifested as the love of Christ among the *ekklesia*, Good Works unto all, and reconciling offenses. If those of the *ekklesia* desire to please God, then they truly are a “special” people who are zealous for Good Works!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

Steven Greene

<https://sabbathreflections.org>
sabbathreflections@gmail.com

¹⁷ Refer to the Article titled [Righteous Anger](#).