

On Works

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Certainly, the phrase "last day" carries with it the meaning that sin has at last been removed from the earth and God's people, but the seven days between the first day and last day indicate there will be a long period of time before, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" will be accomplished.

Indeed, it requires a lifetime of fighting the burden of having been raised in this world under Satan's constant influence, and effort to cause us to fail. And we will have to continue to fight until the day we perish, or until we are changed.

For us to accomplish what these days picture requires that we strongly consider what is stated in the book of James. In this book, the book that is hated by much of modern Christianity, we are told that we must have works. This book continues to be a thorn in the side of Christianity.

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? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to him, "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? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 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. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? [He is making a valuable statement here.] Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? [Or complete.] 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. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

I have been told in anger by some, that works are not a necessary for salvation. Recently, a lady in United called my wife and asked her to pass on to John Ritenbaugh her appreciation for his being faithful and steadfastly sticking to the truth. When I passed on the compliment, John commented that he was receiving many letters stating that he was wrong, and that one did not

have to perform works to please God, to obtain salvation. They say that once one does a "work," he takes the grace out of the hand of Christ. Moreover, because we teach commandment keeping, we are going to the "hot place. They do not understand that either.

In similar letters that I have responded to, I have received the same type of answers.

Brethren, these days we keep are all about the doing, or producing of the right works.

I would like to read the definition of "works" from *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*: # 2041 — Strong's initially defines "works" as labor, or work performance, the result, or object, of employment, making, or working.

The definition of "works" in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* covers about two and a half pages. The section concerning "works" in James is as follows: Works denotes acts, in which one proves his genuineness and his faith. Good works are the evidence of living faith, as James emphasizes in opposition to those who, while claiming to be saved by faith, lack good works. James asserts that faith that does not change one's life, is dead faith, and faith that results in conversion and, therefore, unto good works, is living faith. [A very simple definition.]

One of the favorite scriptures turned to, to prove that works and faith are not together is Galatians 2: 16, and it is important we understand this correctly.

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

As I was doing a Bible Study on the book of Galatians, I mentioned it to David Grabbe, and he asked if I would like him to send one that he had done. He sent me seventy-three pages. Here is a quote from this very good study:

It is impossible for us, once we have sinned, even once to be in alignment with God of our own volition. Thus, it is impossible for us to ever be saved by works alone! Justification is an act of God by which He declares a person acceptable before Him because Christ has borne the sinner's guilt. However, this is the beginning of the common misconception that faith and works are mutually exclusive. In that the works are of no avail at all, and all one has to do is to "believe." But, that notion is refuted, in Matthew 7: 21-23, where it states, " not everyone that calls me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom, but he that does the will of My Father in heaven."

The interpretation of Galatians 2: 16, by the world, that "belief" is all that is required, cannot be correct, for it is contradicted in James, and

in Romans 2:13, where it states, that" it is not the hearers of the law that are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."

[Again, the law is involved.] As it states, in John 10:35, the scripture cannot be broken. All these verses must complement each other rather than contradict. Indeed, in James it says, "faith without works is dead."

A fine study was done here because it shows that these two verses, Galatians 2:16 and James 2, in the area of works, are really in harmony, and not opposing one another.

In James, it seems to contradict directly, what Paul says in Galatians. Given that the scripture cannot be broken, these scriptures must complement one another. The interpretation of one, or both of them, is wrong when the conclusion is reached that one is justified by faith only.

The faith mentioned in Galatians seems to indicate justification for the new member coming in and having his sins taken by Christ. Whereas the faith mentioned in the book of James seems to be toward sanctification in our working to live our lives in a righteous and a proper fashion.

Again, James 2:20, states plainly that *faith without works is dead*.

In the *Greek Interlinear Bible*, Galatians 2:16, says, "A man is not justified through the works of the law except through faith in Jesus Christ!" This verse is not stating that works are of no use, because they are a must in repentance and obedience. It is saying that works without faith in the blood of Jesus Christ are of no avail; our works must be coupled with faith in Jesus Christ.

This understanding causes Galatians 2:16 to agree perfectly with James 2:20-24. Living faith and works go together in terms of either justification or sanctification. In short, faith and works complement each other.

The church world confuses works, and the law as being "Jewish" and evil. They see all law and works as being under the Old Covenant, and the keeping of those laws as trying to earn one's salvation. In their thinking, Jesus came to do away with the Old Covenant, and its laws, quoting Colossians 2:14. They feel that the Law was nailed to the cross, when in fact; it was our indebtedness to God, for our sins, that was nailed to the cross. Jesus Christ took our sins to Him for us that we might not suffer the penalty.

Why must we have the law? This is important to answer. I am going to quote this from the Berean. This is by Earl Henn:

At this point in the epistle, it occurs to Paul that it would only be normal for someone to ask the question, "What then was the purpose of the Old Covenant?" Thus, verse 19 begins with "What purpose does the law serve?" This broad question covers many more specific ones. Why was it needed? Why did God call Israel out of Egypt? Why does God call us out of the world? Why did God write His Ten Commandments on tables of stone with His own finger? Why did God have Moses write the statutes and judgments in a book? Why did God establish the Levitical Priesthood, the Tabernacles, temple worship, the

washings, the oblations, and the sacrifices?" [Why did God do all this?]
What was the purpose of all the rules, and regulations of the Old
Covenant?

Such questions would naturally come to the mind of anyone reading
Paul's letter since he emphasizes that our salvation through Christ
fulfills the promise made to Abraham. What need is there for another
covenant? [Good question.]

The answer he gives is the key to understanding much of everything
else he says in Galatians: "It was added because of transgressions till
the Seed should come to whom the promises were made." It was
"added," means that the Mosaic covenant was in addition to the one
God had made with Abraham. But what were the transgressions?
Abraham obeyed all of God's laws, commandments, statutes, and
ordinances.

Genesis 26:1-5 There was a famine in the
land, besides the first famine that was in the
days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech
king of the Philistines, in Gerar. Then the LORD
appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to
Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you.
Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and
bless you; for to you and your descendants I
give all these lands, and I will perform the oath
which I swore to Abraham your father. And I
will make your descendants multiply as the
stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants
all these lands; and in your seed all the nations
of the earth shall be blessed; [Why?] because
Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge,
My commandments, My statutes, and My
laws." [Abraham taught God's laws to Isaac,
who in turn taught them to Jacob.]

However, after Israel was in Egypt for many years they forgot them and
lived in ignorant transgression of them. [Just as we, in America, have
lived in transgression of God's laws.] Having absorbed so much
Egyptian culture in their sojourn, they were even ignorant of the
Sabbath day. Paul explains that God "added" the old Covenant because
Israel had gone so far into sin when they lived in Egypt.

[Have we not done the same thing?] Therefore, God had to call Israel
out of Egypt and teach them His laws all over again to prepare them for

the coming of Jesus Christ. He wrote the Ten Commandments, and Moses wrote the statutes and judgments in a book so Israel would have a permanent record of His laws and statutes throughout the centuries. God gave them rituals of worship that made them different from other nations, and He forbade them to have anything to do with foreign pagan customs. Circumcision identified them as a separate and distinct people. These rules and regulations put a hedge around them (Isaiah 5: 5, Matthew 21: 33) to preserve them pure for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Just prior to this scripture Paul quotes in Galatians 3: 12, God says in Leviticus 18: 3 "According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt you shall not do, and according to the doings of the land of Canaan where I am bringing you, you shall not do, nor shall you walk in their ordinances!" [And I might add for us today, according to the doings of the world around us, YOU SHALL NOT DO.]

For years, people have wondered how anyone could have transgressed the laws before they were given. Simply put, Paul is talking about the laws of God, which have been in full force since creation! [That is what I wanted us to understand.]

When he writes that the old covenant was added, "till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made," he means that the Old Covenant was temporary; Christ would replace it with the New Covenant. Rather than saying that any of God's laws had become obsolete, he is explaining how important it was to preserve the knowledge of God's laws in Israel to prepare them for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Thus we see the purpose of the law for all Israel, is to prepare them for the wonderful future God has in store for them, whenever their calling might be.

Psalm 19: 7-11 [This is how important the Law is.] The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. [God wants us to keep His Commandments.]

Just what are the "works" James says we must have? James shows two broad categories in his area on works. The first being a demonstration of one's faith or belief by obedience to God's

laws as shown in his mention of Abraham and the special testing He put Abraham through to prove him.

It is important for us to realize that we have to obey the Law and that we have to do these works.

Genesis 22:1-2, 9-12 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

This trial was to test, or prove Abraham's faith and trust in God, and his obedience. Isaac was offered by his father, and Isaac allowed himself to be offered, (which was no small thing—he was a full grown young man) which demonstrated awesome faith, and the awesome works that were performed by both of them in their submission. Their submission to God was a work.

This act by Abraham prefigured the tremendous faith of God the Father, the faith of Jesus Christ and the work of His sacrifice that those in the past, those today and those in the future might be saved.

James is stating that an individual can have faith, attend church, tithe, keep the holy days, and believe what the Bible says, but never perform the work of changing, which he must do to be saved.

James uses the example of Rahab and her act or work that shows she believed, and had faith in God.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

It has been stated that there is scarcely a more important definition in the Bible, as this states the true nature of faith. The verse could read: "*Faith is the ground, or the cement floor, or the granite floor, or faith is the confidence, the reality, the substance, or the existence of things not seen,*" in contradistinction from what is unreal, deceptive, imaginary.

With faith, the promises of God, of the return of Jesus Christ, the coming kingdom, and our being changed from flesh and blood into spirit and becoming a member of the God family, are

sure and solid in our being, and thus faith promotes the works of faith on our part as a result of that

Hebrews 11:2-3 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. [Our forefathers witnessed by their faith and works of righteousness, and thus gained a good report.] By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Because of faith in God's Word we understand (apart from the great scientific minds of the world), that God arranged the world and universe in order, not by the "Big Bang" theory. We know this because of faith in God's Word that we did not come from green slime, but were created by God.

Hebrews 11:4-5 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had taken him'; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

The difference between the two offerings was that by faith, love and deep appreciation for God, Abel performed the good work of offering a gift in love and gratitude to God. And his righteous example or work, speaks to us today.

Enoch stood for God in what must have been a very wicked time, and testimony or work of his faith, pleased God and thus he was saved.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Why is this absolutely true? Because, without faith and trust in God, and His laws, our works would not be based on God, but on this world's way of living and doing things. In short, we would not be walking with God, thus we could never be a part of the God family. *Can two walk together except they be agreed* (Amos 3:3)? Our faith, and the works that accompany that faith, must be based on God's laws and teachings.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Noah's work was the building of a gigantic ark (the tonnage of the Titanic). It would not have been enough for Noah "just to believe there was a God." His faith, belief and trust in God required that he followed God's instructions.

Hebrews 11:8-9 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

When Abraham was called to go to a place, not knowing where God would lead him, his faith in God produced the work of obedience, and he gathered the large number that were with him and went into a strange land trusting God. That was a work.

Hebrews 11:10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. [Even after these thousands of years we, too, look for the same city.]

Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

Moses' parents, by faith, disobeyed the command to kill all male children and hid him for three months. Their work of faith saved their son.

Hebrews 11:24-29 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

When God called Moses, his faith in God caused him to forego all the wealth and power that would have been his had he wanted it, and to follow God's instructions and to lead His people out of Egypt. His decision to obey God to the fullest was a work that pleased God greatly.

The chapter goes on to say that Israel marched around Jericho as a work of faith, and the walls came crashing down. Rahab saved the spies, and her family, by her faith and trust in God in the work of sending those away that would kill the men Joshua sent. Gideon upon God's instructions, with three hundred men performed the work of stepping out in faith, and delivered

Israel from Midian and their huge army. Barak in his faith waged war with ten thousand men against Sisera who had 900 chariots of iron and defeated him. Again, his work was his obedience to God.

Others listed in this faith chapter, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel who subdued kingdoms, wrought, or worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions (Daniel) through faith and the works produced by that faith.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not hurt by the fire in their standing firm in their faith in God, and by their awesome work of faith in not bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. They caused Nebuchadnezzar to glorify their God to all the people in his kingdom.

Hebrews 11:33-38 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, and were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

The list continues with the faith and works of God's people who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, escaped the edge of the sword, and who out of weakness were made strong, those who grew valiant in battle. They trusted in God and they stepped out.

Some suffered terribly, some were killed, and some tempted with freedom if they would but renounce their belief, and just bow down to a pagan god, and still their work was remembered because of their faith in standing true to God.

Hebrews 11:39-40 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Their faith and works stood in time of trial; they looked toward the kingdom of God, and gave a good testimony, even though they did not receive the promise at that time. And, then we, along with them, will be resurrected together as members of the God family.

Though the world does not see obeying God as a necessity in being saved, the heroes in Hebrews 11 saw it as a must, and the apostles were fully aware that this was what God intended eventually for all of mankind.

Romans 1:1-5 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,

I would like to read this from several different translations and commentators. From the New English Bible:

Romans 1:5 Through Him I received the privilege of a commission in His name to lead to faith and obedience men in all nations, yourselves included, you who have heard the call, and belong to Jesus Christ.

Albert Barnes: The design of the gospel and apostleship is to induce men to obey God. And that the tendency of faith is to produce obedience, which is a work. There is no true faith that does not produce that.

Adam Clarke: Obedience is the necessary consequence of genuine faith. [This is to be proclaimed among all nations; that all might have the opportunity of believing and being saved.]

The apostle Paul was fully aware that God's calling required obedience and change to take place, but this world today does not even begin to understand that.

I was reading something by Rick Warren, and it said that anyone who believes that we have to obey laws is an enemy of the church, that is just how simple it has become. They feel that they are totally free to do whatever they want.

Romans 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Adam Clarke says it slightly different. Shall we abuse our high and holy calling because we are not under the law which makes no provision for pardon?

Right here, Paul is saying that if we try to earn our salvation, the law makes no provision for pardon. But we are under the gospel, which has opened the fountain to wash away all sin and defilement.

Shall we sin because grace abounds? Shall we do evil so that good may come of it? This be far from us.

New English Bible: You know well enough that if you put yourselves

at the disposal of a master to obey him, you are slaves of the master whom you obey; and this is true whether you serve sin with death as its result, or obedience with righteousness as its result

But God be thanked, you who were once slaves of sin, have yielded [have done works to change], whole hearted obedience to the pattern of teaching to which you were made subject, and emancipated from sin, have become slaves of righteousness [to use words that suit your human weakness]—I mean as you once yielded your bodies to the service of impurity and lawlessness, making for moral anarchy, so now you must yield them to the service of righteousness making for a holy life.

I would like to quote from Strong's # 2590 on "fruit." It means fruit from trees. Metaphorically, it means deeds, works, and conduct.

How are we to confront the sin that so easily besets us?

II Corinthians 10:3-6 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

We walk in the flesh, and so walk in weakness, but not according to the flesh. Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to it.

Our warfare is against sin; a deceitful heart, the depravity and moral breakdown of the world around us. Plus, the very real powers of darkness (Ephesians 6) are working to destroy us with all forms of sensuality, corruption, and profaning of what we know is true and correct. Satan wants to destroy us. He has the world, but he wants us now. We have all joined this battle.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, such as the world might use, such as eloquence, wealth, beauty, handsomeness, talent, power, and such things. It is interesting to note what our weapons are in this fight against all the lies that have been promulgated on the world by Satan. Our weapons are something that has been discussed repeatedly through these days, so God must really want us to understand it. Our weapons, simple as it may sound are the truth and the righteousness of God.

It is absolutely essential that we have our foundations on granite. Without that, we are going to be fooled, and taken off the track if we are not on our toes.

Our weapons are the truth and righteousness of God. We measure all against this plumb line. Again, you might review on your own time Ephesians 6:10-19.

This, of course, requires that we truly work to study and pray. You have to know, should we keep the Sabbath? Are the Holy days to be kept today? Did Christ and the apostles keep them? Are they still in effect? Should we tithe? I have had letters like that recently, with angry responses.

This world, under Satan, has had control of our minds since birth, and much of the garbage he puts forth still pulls at us. Thus, our fight is to pull down those fortifications that he has placed in us with the truth of God, and by working to live righteously. This is what our job is, this is what will please God, and it will benefit us greatly.

We do this by putting down the imaginations and arguments that are wrong and against God. We do this by measuring what Satan, and this world, teaches against the Word of God. In short, wrong reasoning is proven wrong by God's Word, and cast down. This is the job that we have in front of us. It is not just something that the ministry does.

II Corinthians 10:6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Whether a minister in readiness of mind to aligning his church, or an individual's personal readiness to avenge all disobedience that is