

The Word *Work*: Scriptural Misapplication With Serious Implication

By **David Lee Burris**

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY @

SUBJECT NOUN "WORK"

: ACTIVITY IN WHICH ONE EXERTS STRENGTH OR FACULTIES
TO DO OR PERFORM SOMETHING.

ACTION VERB "WORK"

: TO EXERT ONESELF PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY ESPECIALLY
IN SUSTAINED EFFORT FOR A PURPOSE

From the beginning... "God gave man a job to do. Adam was put into the Garden of Eden and told "to tend and keep it." God despises idleness. Of the slothful man he said, "So your poverty will come like a prowler & your want like an armed man" (Proverbs 24: 34). One of our own proverbs is that an idle mind is the devil's workshop & idle hands are the devil's tools. God has always required man to work in the physical realm. 'Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need' (Ephesians 4: 28)."
– *Guardian of Truth Magazine*

HE WHO STEALS MUST STEAL NO MORE

**Rather, he must
labour with his
own hands**

SO THAT HE WILL HAVE
SOMETHING TO SHARE
WITH ONE WHO HAS NEED.

EPHESIANS 4:28

Knowing-Jesus.com

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Genesis 3: 17 - The keyword in the sentence of the man is the "soil." The curse ([Genesis 9:25](#)) of the soil is the desire of the fruit trees with which the garden was planted, and of that spontaneous growth which would have rendered the toil of man unnecessary. The rank growth of thorns and thistles was also a part of the curse which it occasioned to man when fallen. His sorrow was to arise from the labor and sweat with which he was to draw from the ground the means of subsistence. Instead of the many spontaneous fruits of the garden, the herb of the field, which required diligent [soil] cultivation, was henceforth to constitute a principal part of his support. And he had the dreary prospect before him of a returning at length to the ground whence he was taken. He had an element of dust in him, and this organic frame was eventually to work out its own decay, when it was apart from the tree of life.

Descriptive Versus Normative Definition of Work:

Most people seem to **assume** that the word “works” (Greek *ergon*) is used in one and only one sense in the Bible; however, the word is used in four different ways in the New Testament.

1. There are “sinful works,” which Paul calls “works of darkness” in Ephesians 5:11 and “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19. The Ephesians obviously were not saved by “works of darkness.”
2. Paul often refers to “works” in the sense of “works of the law” of Moses (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16)—the old, annulled Law of Moses (Hebrews 8:7-13), which Paul mentions in Ephesians 2:15 as having been abolished.
3. Paul occasionally addresses **meritorious** works by which we are **not** saved (Titus 3:4-7), since, as noted earlier, sinful man could never “earn” salvation and spiritual blessings from our perfectly holy and just God.
4. Then there are works resulting from obedience of faith (James 2:14-24; Acts 26:20; Luke 17:10). These “works” are the active responses of those who trust in the gracious, saving plan and power of God. – *Apologetics Press*

Normative Definition: The Theology of Work

Eschatological Discontinuity @ Sanctification & Sabbath

The **ontology of work** means that work transcends and is more than a functional essence. Work can't simply be made subordinate to the human as if it were only ordered to humanity. Work cannot be reductionistically construed as simply a means to an end; be these human or other natural ends. There is more to the essence of work than its useful results for humanity, other beings, and nature.

Theologically the sabbath is the crown of God's creation. All work, therefore, is to be permeated with the ethos of the sabbath. This principle means that work is not simply an activity undertaken to achieve a derivative, albeit useful, human or natural end... Emerging from human essence, work is a thing in itself, ordered to itself and standing in itself before God.¹

The ontological aspect of work locates work's instrumental and relational aspects totally and resolutely both into an eternal, and thus an absolute framework. The ontology of work means - work as a whole, including its constituent parts, is embedded into the fabric of both this physical world and the one to come. This legitimates both the instrumental and relational aspects of work in such a way that their results (continued human existence and human flourishing) can be claimed to be absolute and fundamental ethical goods.

Therefore, they have an ultimate heavenly and not simply an earthly existence and resultant value. With the ontological aspect then, these other two aspects of work (instrumental and relational) and their results (continued human existence and human flourishing) are guaranteed an ethical grounding and ultimate value from an eternal perspective.²

¹ Cosden, D. (2007). [A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation](#) (p. 184). U.K.; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster.

² Cosden, D. (2007). [A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation](#) (p. 186). U.K.; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster.

O.T. Jewish Economy Separated Sacred/Profane “Work”

N.T. Apostolic Approval Distinguishes Work/Rest/Play

Eschatological Readiness Is Not An Excuse For Idleness

“The occasion for the first letter to the Thessalonians arose when one of the leather workers apparently died. Those remaining members were concerned that this person would miss out on the Second Coming because he had died slightly too soon — but Paul clarifies in the letter that actually the dead will be raised first, and then “we” will be taken up to join them. Obviously, the situation envisioned here is that the End will be coming sooner rather than later, certainly within the readers’ lifetime. This letter is one of Paul’s most deeply felt writings — it is palpable that he really loves these guys and does not want them worrying. Shifting the scene to Second Thessalonians, the tone has shifted dramatically. Instead of the tender consoler, the Apostle Paul here is playing the role of the taskmaster. Apparently, some of these laborers have decided to quit their jobs in anticipation of the End, and the author clarifies that the End is not coming quite that soon — in the meantime, everyone should continue contributing to the community. Two points stand out to me. First, this letter is almost certainly addressing a community of able-bodied men with a set profession. Second, it is responding to a real scenario where people are voluntarily refraining from work out of what the author believes to be a misguided apocalyptic enthusiasm. “What a beautiful coincidence! *Or is it?* The idea that because (the End, the Apocalypse, the *éschatos*) for our salvation doesn’t at all mean that we can be idle, stop working and succumb to sloth... Thus, Paul criticizes the *misguided apocalyptic enthusiasm* of idle but able works.” – Adam Kotsko

Entourage Is Not Work Or Hobby But Profane Idleness

PATRONAGE & RECIPROCITY: Manifestations of Gratitude

Even in personal patronage (in which the parties are not on equal footing), however, public honor and testimony would comprise an important component of a grateful response. An early witness to this is Aristotle, who writes in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that “both parties should receive a larger share from the friendship, but not a larger share of the same thing: the superior should receive the larger share of honor, the needy one the larger share of profit; for honor is the due reward of virtue and beneficence” (*Nic. Eth.* 8.14.2 [1163b1-5]). Such a return, though of a very different kind, preserves the friendship. **Seneca emphasizes the public nature of the testimony that the recipient of a patron’s gifts is to bear. Gratitude for, and pleasure at, receiving these gifts should be expressed “not merely in the hearing of the giver, but everywhere” (*Ben.* 2.22.1): “The greater the favor, the more earnestly must we express ourselves, resorting to such compliments as:...‘I shall never be able to repay you my gratitude, but, at any rate, I shall not cease from declaring everywhere that I am unable to repay it’ ” (*Ben.* 2.24.4). Increasing the fame of the giver is part of the proper return for a benefit, and a gift that one is ashamed to acknowledge openly in the hearing of all, one has no business accepting in the first place (*Ben.* 2.23.1).**

A second component of gratitude that comes to expression in relationships of personal patronage or friendship is loyalty to the giver, that is, showing gratitude and owning one’s association with the giver even when fortunes turn, and it becomes costly. Thus Seneca writes about gratitude that “if you wish to make a return for a favor, you must be willing to go into exile, or to pour forth your blood, or to undergo poverty,

OR, . . . even to let your very innocence be stained and exposed to shameful slanders” (Ep. Mor. 81.27). Wallace-Hadrill writes that despite the fact that, in theory, clients were expected to remain loyal to their patrons, in practice, if a patron fell into political trouble or if his or her fortunes began to wane, the **patron’s entourage** of clients would evaporate.⁵¹ Such practice, however, was contrary to the ideal of gratitude, according to which a person would stand by (or under) the person’s patron and continue to live gratefully even if it cost the individual the future favors of others, or brought him or her into dangerous places and worked contrary to self-interest. The person who disowned or dissociated himself or herself from a patron because of self-interest was an ingrate.

The principal of loyalty meant that clients or friends would have to take care not to become entangled in webs of crossed loyalties. Although a person could have multiple patrons, to have as patrons two people who were enemies or rivals of one another would place one in a dangerous position, since ultimately the client would have to prove loyal and grateful to one but disloyal and ungrateful to the other. “No one can serve two masters” honorably in the context of these masters being at odds with one another. Finally, the grateful person would look for an occasion to bestow timely gifts or services. If we have shown forth our gratitude in the hearing of the patron and borne witness to the patron’s virtue and generosity in the public halls, we have “repaid favor [the generous disposition of the giver] with favor [an equally gracious reception of the gift],” but for the actual gift one still owes an actual gift (Seneca *Ben.* 2.35.1). The point of the gift was not, after all, to obtain a return but to create a bond that “binds two people together.”³

³ deSilva, D. A. (2012). [Honor, patronage, kinship & purity: unlocking new testament culture](#) (pp. 94–156). Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Bruce W. Winter's first book in the Cambridge Book Series of First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World was **Seek the Welfare of the City: *Christians as Benefactors and Citizens.***

The title of Winter's book is directly linked to Jeremiah 29:4-7 -

(4) Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: (5) Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. (6) Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters - that you may be increased there, and not diminished. (7) *And seek the peace [welfare] of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.*

Benefaction & Citizenship Topics Subjected to Author Analysis -

Eschatology, Benevolent Mission, Public Arena, Patron/Client Relationship, Political Quietism, Financial Independence, Civil Litigation, Personal Enmity, Unrighteous Magistrates, Civic Obligations, Caesar Cultism, Civic Feasts, Social Status, Social Mobility, Christian Calling and the Aedileship Oath of Office. The last chapter is of exclusive focus on the Corinth City Treasurer Erastus mentioned Acts 19:22 & Rom 16:23.

1994 Winter Book Excerpt, pgs. 42 - 43

*Paul would not endorse a Christian continuing as the recipient of private benefactions by way of the client **parasitic relationship** with a patron even though it was widely accepted in the secular world as an important element in the social fabric of public life. This relationship would have been the one reason why some citizens apart from the rich in the city of Thessalonica, or in any other city in the empire, did not have to work...*

[Paul] was initiating in Gentile regions a radical social ethic which he regarded as binding on Christians...

*From the early days of his ministry in Thessalonica, Paul set out to change the established convention of the providentia relationship between patron and his client... He reminded them yet again, in greater detail, of what he had taught them concerning **work** when he was initially with them. See - 2^d Thess. 3: 8-11. Paul had already taught the church in Thessalonica in an earlier letter, instruction them to do their **work**, to **earn** their living, ‘as we charged you, so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.’ See - 1st Thess. 4:10-12.” **Note: the idleness problem preceded the eschatological aspect in the second letter.** [Note: Between 1st & 2^d Thessalonians there had been earthquake and famine. Some saw eschatological meaning & some had returned to the client-patron convention to get grain for their families.]*

1994 Winter Book Excerpt, pgs. 49 - 53

“The patron’s very purpose in establishing a financial relationship with a client was that the latter would not need to attend primarily to his own affairs. He was being supported by his patron in order to give attention to the latter’s concerns in the public domain. Paul intends... attending to one’s own business meaning working with one’s own hands in order to provide for one’s own needs...

‘Being a busy-body’ contextually suggests that it is much more likely to be a description of the activity of a client supporting his patron’s cause in politeia... Paul is concerned with the public association of Christians with a lifestyle that should commend itself to the outsiders... Paul’s purpose was to wean such persons away from the welfare syndrome, be their source a wealthy Christian or non-Christian patron.”

1994 Winter Book Excerpt, pgs. 201 - 204

*The welfare of the city was seen to be two-fold. It was 'physical' and 'spiritual', and in the former case it was revolutionary in certain respects. It linked wealthy Christian members of the city into the civic benefaction convention. At the very same time it expanded the definition of 'benefactor' to encompass all those in the Christian community who had the capacity to meet the needs of others from self-generated resources. It required all to be doers of good. This involved the renunciation of the client's full-time role in politeia forcing Christians to withdraw from **unproductive existence where they were part of the paid retinue of a patron.***

Unlike the secular trends of the first century with the development of a welfare syndrome favoring those with status and/or wealth, the Christian city community was to be discriminating in the distribution of 'benefactions' to its members, 'honoring' only those who were genuinely needy - the godly Christian widows without relatives.

IF ANYONE WILL NOT WORK, NEITHER SHOULD HE EAT

10 ... we commanded you this, that **IF ANYONE WOULD NOT WORK, NEITHER SHOULD HE EAT!**

11 For we hear that **THERE ARE SOME WHO WALK DISORDERLY AMONG YOU, NOT WORKING AT ALL...**

12 **We command and exhort those who are such, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that THEY WORK WITH QUIETNESS AND EAT THEIR OWN BREAD.**



2Thes 3:10-12 MKJV

➤ **...WE DID NOT BEHAVE OURSELVES DISORDERLY AMONG YOU, NEITHER DID WE EAT ANY MAN'S BREAD FREELY, but WE WORKED WITH LABOR and travail night and day, so that we might not be heavy on any of you (...to make ourselves an example to you, to imitate us).**

2Thes 3:7-9 MKJV



— Lope Columna

Normative Definition: Jesus On Work & Works
Questions of Bible Definition Resolved at Prime Source

MATTHEW 12 @LORD OF THE SABBATH

1At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

2And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!”

3But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

5Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? 6Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple. 7But if you had known what *this* means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (NKJV)

Matthew Chapter 12 Verses 1 through 4: Physical Work

Pulpit Commentary

It has been suggested that he was now on his way to the synagogue spoken of in ver. 9 (but see note there). Wherever he was going, it must have been within about three quarters of a mile distance (two thousand cubits; see Dr. Lumby, on [Acts 1:12](#), "a sabbath day's journey;" and Schurer, II. 2:102). **On the sabbath day.** Defined in the Received Text of Luke by the anomalous term "second-first," for the genesis of which see especially Westcott and Hort, 'App.' **Through the corn; the corn-fields** (Revised Version, as also Authorized Version in the parallel passages). If it was barley harvest, the time would be probably the beginning of May; if wheat harvest, as seems more likely, about the beginning of June. **And his disciples were a hundred.** So that it was not for his own sake that our Lord acted as he did. **And began.** They could therefore hardly have eaten much when the complaint was made. **To pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.** It was legal to pluck corn from a field through which one passed ([Deuteronomy 23:25](#)), and it is said to be allowed still; but as it was held by the scribes to be a form of reaping, and perhaps of threshing also, it was considered illegal on the sabbath (cf. Edersheim, 'Life,' 2:56). Matthew 12:1

Verse 2. - **But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him.** The Revised Version (**but the Pharisees, when they saw it, said unto him**) retains the simple order of the Greek, which more vividly represents the Pharisees as a party opposed to him. **Behold.** They suggest that he had not noticed it. Were the disciples behind him (cf. [Matthew 8:23](#))? **Thy disciples.** Notice that all the accusations brought against the disciples in this Gospel concern food: [Matthew 9:14](#), as regards abstaining from it upon fixed days; [Matthew 15:2](#),

as regards eating it without taking extreme precautions against ceremonial pollution; in the present passage, as regards avoiding any profanation of the sabbath for its sake. **Do**. At this moment. **That which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day** (ver. 1, note). Matthew 12:2

Verse 3. - **But he said unto them, Have ye not read**. Our Lord answers them by showing that the principle of the action of his disciples was sanctioned in the Scriptures to which they implicitly appealed. He calls their attention first (**more Rabbinico; cf.** on ver. 5) to the Prophets (i.e. the former prophets, according to the Hebrew division), as teaching by example that holy things are of secondary importance compared with the benefit of God's people; and afterwards to the Law, which implies that the sabbath itself is of secondary importance compared with work necessary for the sanctuary. He then affirms that in the present case there is One present who is even greater than the sanctuary. He goes on to say that their complaint, however, was really due to the lack, not so much of intellectual as of spiritual knowledge; they had no **rapprochement** with the God of love, or they would not have condemned those who, both because they were men and because they were disciples of the Son of man, stood above the sabbath. **What David did, when he was a hungred, and they that were with him** ([1 Samuel 21:1-7](#)). Matthew 12:3

Verse 5. - Matthew only. Or. A second example, if the first does not convince you. **Have ye not read in the Law**. Beyond which there is no appeal. Jewish authors often appeal to Scripture in the order of Hagio-graphs, Prophets, and, last of all, Law. He here refers to [Leviticus 24:8](#) (cf. also [1 Chronicles 9:32](#)), but Bengel's suggestive remark that Leviticus was read in the services at that very time of year is vitiated by the double uncertainty, first, what time of year it really was; and secondly, what is the antiquity of the present custom of reading the whole Law every year.

Jerusalem Talmud Maasrot 2:4:10

¹⁴²*A different text with similar meaning in Sifry Deut. 266; a different baraita Babli Baba Mezi'a 87b. It is written (Deut. 23:25): "If you come into your neighbor's vineyard"*¹⁴³*The verse reads: If you come into your neighbor's vineyard you may eat grapes to all your soul's desire until you are satiated, but do not put anything into your own vessel."* I could think that this means everybody; the verse says: "Do not put into your own vessel," but you may put into somebody else's vessel.

Who is this? This is the laborer¹⁴⁴*Who harvests into the farmer's vessel. "You may eat grapes."* Do we not know that in a vineyard there is nothing to eat but grapes? Why does the verse say, you may eat grapes¹⁴⁵*What is the practical difference between "you may eat in the vineyard" and "you may eat grapes in the vineyard"?*

The same argument Yerushalmi Baba Mezi'a 7:5.? From here [it follows] that if he works fig trees he can't eat grapes, vines he can't eat figs. "All your soul's desire," all your inclination may be. "All your soul's desire," anything that is free of tithes.

What you eat without obligation also the laborer may eat without obligation¹⁴⁶*This & the following parallel argument refer כנפשך to the employer's soul and desire, not the laborer's. This is the interpretation in all parallel sources..* “All your soul's desire,” from here that the laborer should not eat more than the value of his wages. From here did Rebbi Eleazar Ḥisma¹⁴⁷*A Tanna of the third generation, student of R. Joshua in the Academy of Jabneh. His statement is in Mishnah Baba Mezi'a 7:4, Tosephta Baba Mezi'a 8:8.* deduce that the laborer shouldn't eat more than the value of his wages, but the Sages permit it. From where that his wages are called his soul? Rebbi Abbahu in the name of Rebbi Yose ben Ḥanina, it says here “his soul” and it says at another place “his soul” as it is written (Deut. 24:15): “For that he carries his soul.” Just as “his soul” there means his wages, so here “his soul” means his wages. “Until you are satiated,” that he should not eat and vomit¹⁴⁸*He should not induce vomiting to free his stomach for more food..* “Until you are satiated,” that he should not peel figs or suck out grapes¹⁴⁹*Tosephta Baba Mezi'a 8:8. The laborer has to eat all that is edible..*

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

But when the Pharisees saw it,.... Who went along with him, or followed him, being employed to make observation on his words and actions,

they said unto him; Luke says, "unto them", the disciples: it seems, they took notice of this action both to Christ and his disciples, and first spoke of it to the one, and then to the other, or to both together:

behold thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day! they mention it with astonishment, and indignation. What they refer to, is not their walking on the sabbath day: this they might do, according to their canons, provided they did not exceed two thousand cubits, which were a sabbath day's journey (f) nor was it their passing through the corn fields; though, according to them (g),

"it was not lawful for a man to visit his gardens, "or his fields", on the sabbath day, to see what they want, or how the fruits grow; for such walking is to do his own pleasure."

But this they knew was not the case of Christ, and his disciples, who were not proprietors of these fields: nor was it merely their plucking the ears of corn, and rubbing and eating them, which were not their own, but another man's; for this, according to the law, in [Deuteronomy 23:25](#) was lawful to be done: but **what offended the Pharisees was, that it was done on a sabbath day, it being, as they interpret it, a servile work, and all one as reaping; though, in the law just mentioned, it is manifestly distinguished from it. Their rule is (h).**

"he that reaps (on the sabbath day) ever so little, is guilty (of stoning), , and "plucking of ears of corn is a derivative of reaping";"

and is all one as its primitive, and punishable with the same kind of death, if done presumptuously: so **Philo the Jew observes (i), that the rest of the sabbath not only reached to men, bond and free, and to beasts, but even to trees, and plants; and that ' , "it was not lawful to cut a plant, or branch, or so much as a leaf", on a sabbath day: and it may be what might make this offence of the disciples the more heinous was, that they plucked these ears, and ate them, and so broke their fast before morning prayer; for a man might not eat anything on a sabbath day until morning prayers were ended in the synagogue, nor indeed on any other day; for they used not to eat bread till after they had offered the daily sacrifice, which was about the third hour of the day, or nine o'clock in the morning; nor did they eat till the fourth hour, or ten o'clock (k).**

What David did when he was an hungred; which was the case of the disciples, and is therefore mentioned; it being also the circumstance which could, and did excuse what was done by David and his men: and the Jews themselves own, that in case of hunger the showbread might be eaten, by those that were not priests; not only that which was removed from the table, but that which was upon it; yea, even when there was none to put in its room (l); and that David was in the utmost distress, and therefore desired it, and it was granted him on that account. They represent him as thus saying to the priest (m),

"when he found there was none but showbread, give it me, that we may not die with hunger; , "for danger of life drives away the sabbath";"

Matthew Poole's Commentary

Ver. 3,4. Mark and Luke add little, only Mark specifies the time, *in the days of Abiathar the high priest*, and saith, *when he had need, and was an hungred*. We have the history, **1 Samuel 21:1-15**. David was upon his flight from Saul, upon the notice of his danger given him by Jonathan, **1 Samuel 20:1-42**, and being hungry, he asks of the high priest five loaves of bread; the high priest tells him he had none but *hallowed bread*, which the high priest gave him, **1 Samuel 21:6**. What the shewbread was may be read, **Leviticus 24:5-9**: it is expressly said, a stranger shall not eat thereof. Now (saith our Savior) notwithstanding this, David and his followers, being an hungred, did eat thereof, though strictly, according to the letter of the law, none but the priests might eat it. But some object: What was the purpose? It was not upon the sabbath day_____

Answer:

1. It was either upon the sabbath day, or immediately after, for it was to be set on every sabbath day, and to be eaten *in the holy place*, **Leviticus 24:8,9**, and the high priest told David, **1 Samuel 21:6**, that it was taken away to set hot bread in the room of it.

2. But secondly, that which our Savior produces this for, was to prove a more general proposition, which being proved, the lawfulness of his disciples' act would easily be inferred from it. That was this: That the letter of a ritual law is not to be insisted upon, where some eminent necessity urges the contrary, in the performance of some natural or moral duty.

The law of nature commandeth every man to feed himself when he is hungry. The moral law confirms this, as it is a means to the observation of the sixth commandment, and especially on the sabbath day, so far as may fit us for the best sanctification of it. The law concerning the shewbread was but a ritual law, and that part of it which restrained the use of it when taken off from the holy table was of lightest concern, as it commanded it should be eaten by the priests only, and by them in the holy place. Where the life, or necessary relief, of men was concerned, the obligation of the ritual law ceased, and that was lawful, both for David and the high priest, which in ordinary cases had not been lawful. Works necessary either for the upholding of our lives, or fitting us for sabbath services, are lawful upon the sabbath day.

Though the law concerning the sabbath be a moral law, yet it is *jus positivum*, not a law natural, but positive, and must be so interpreted as not to destroy the law natural, which commands men to feed themselves; nor yet to destroy itself. The scope and end of it is to be considered, which is the keeping of a day as a day of holy and religious rest. What labor is necessary to such keeping of it is also lawful.

Matthew Chapter 12 **Verses 5 through 8:** *Spiritual Work*

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Or have ye not read in the law,.... [Numbers 28:9](#) by which law the priests were obliged, every sabbath day, to offer up two lambs for a burnt offering; to which were annexed many servile works, as killing the sacrifice, flaying it, cutting it in pieces, and laying it on the altar, cutting of wood, and putting that in order, and kindling the fire: from all which, it might be observed, **how that on the sabbath days, the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless.** There were many things, which, according to the Jewish canons, the priests might do on the sabbath day; particularly they might slay the sacrifice: it was a rule with them, , "that slaying drives away the sabbath" (u). They might also knead, make, and bake the showbread on the sabbath day: their general rule was, as R. Akiba says, that what was possible to be done on the evening of the sabbath, did not drive away the sabbath; but what was not possible to be done on the sabbath eve, did drive away the sabbath (w): so they might kill the passover, sprinkle its blood, wipe its inwards, and burn the fat on the sabbath day (x), with many other things. **What exculpated these men was, that what they did was done in the temple, and for the service of it, upon which an emphasis is put; and agrees with their canons, which say, that there is no prohibition in the sanctuary; , "that which is forbidden to be done on the sabbath, is lawful to be done in the sanctuary"** (y): and whereas, it might be objected to the disciples of Christ, that they were not priests; and what they did was not in the temple, but in the fields;

Matthew Poole's Commentary

Though the law concerning the sabbath be a moral law, yet it is *jus positivum*, not a law natural, but positive, and must be so interpreted as not to destroy the law natural, which commands men to feed themselves; nor yet to destroy itself. The scope and end of it is to be considered, which is the keeping of a day as a day of holy and religious rest. What labor is necessary to such keeping of it is also lawful.

The time of the sabbath is not more holy than the shewbread; and as David in a case of necessity might make a common use of that holy bread, so the disciples in a case of like necessity might make use of a little of that holy time, in such necessary servile work as might fit them for their sabbath service. Thus, it was lawful by the law of God, and if the Pharisees hadn't been ignorant, or had understood what they had read, they would never have disputed this, the instance of holy David might have satisfied.

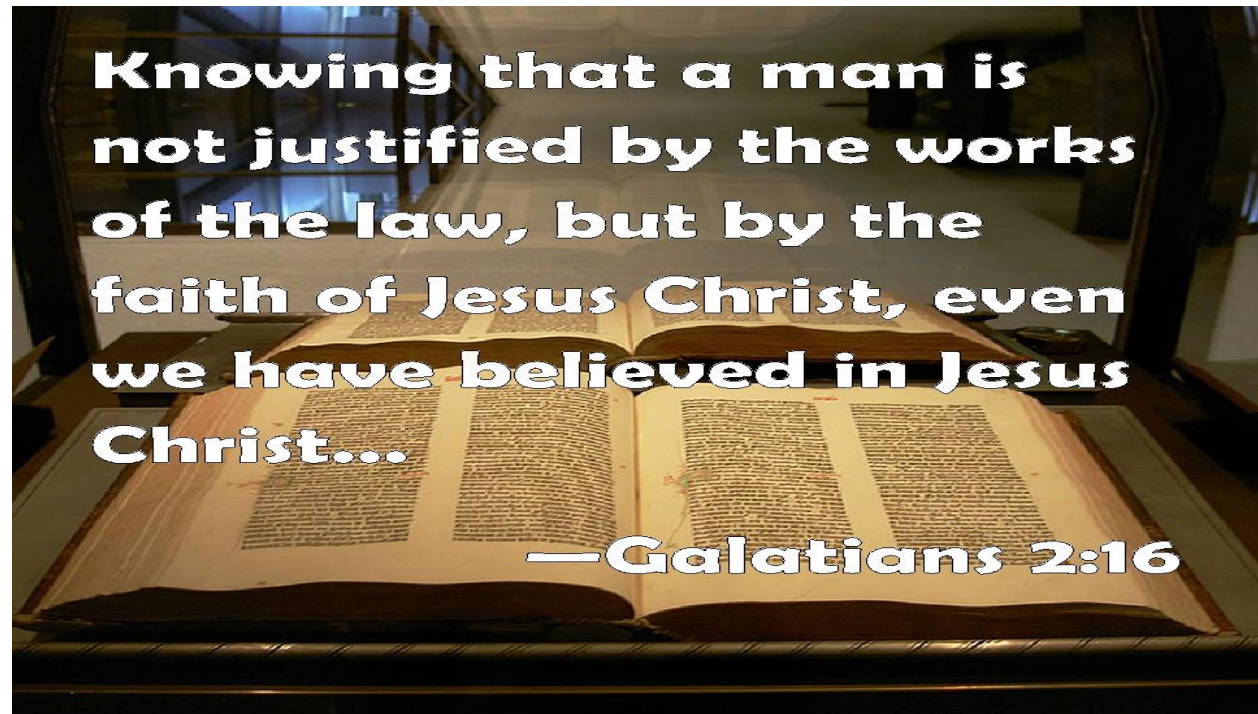
So that this little kind of labor could only be a breach of one of their bylaws, by which they pretended to expound the law of God, in which he showeth they had given a *false interpretation*.

"But how doth this agree to what our Savior is speaking to?"

***Answer:* This establisheth a second rule, That works of piety, and tending to fit us for acts of piety, that cannot conveniently be done before, are lawful on the sabbath day.**

WE AREN'T SAVED BY THE WORKS OF THE O.T. LAW

Paul often refers to “works” in the sense of “works of the law” of Moses (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16) - the old, annulled Law of Moses (Hebrews 8:7-13), which Paul mentions in Ephesians 2:15 as having been abolished.



James Chapter Two – Saved By Works – Not Faith Only!

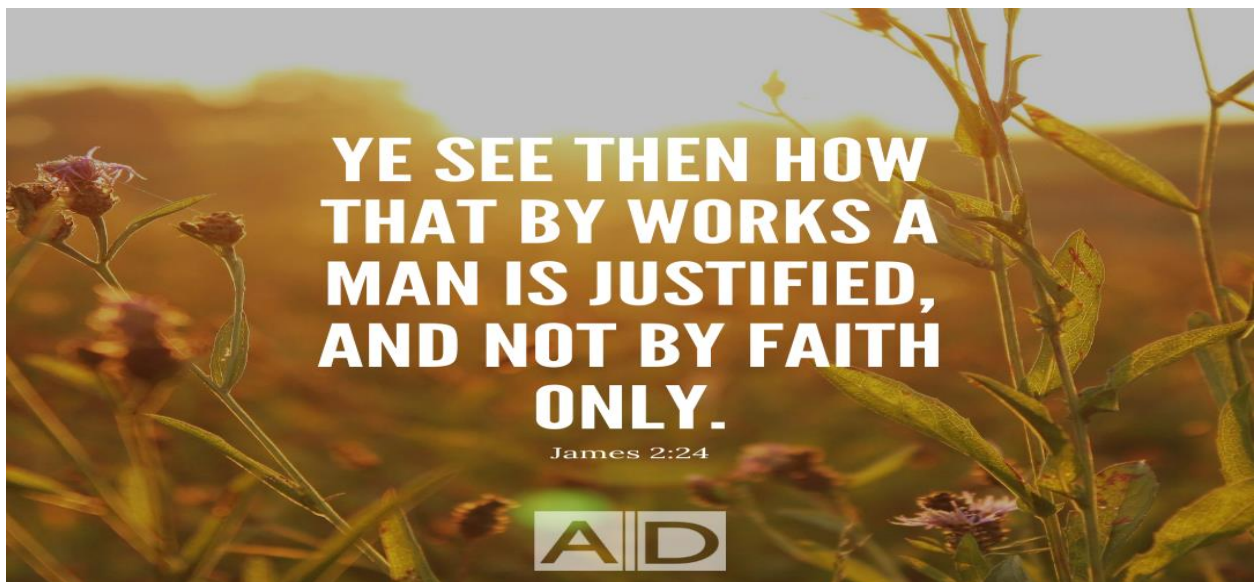
Faith Presented Unbiased. *The setting is that of an assembly of the saints where two men enter, one rich and was dressed accordingly and the other poor and typically dressed. The presentation of faith observers will note is seen in the treatment these two visitors receive. When the two men are treated differently, the royal law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” has been violated and the faith has been shamefully misrepresented.*

The Law of Liberty. *No point of the law may be violated with impunity. Christians must speak and act in harmony with the law of liberty. “We must be uniform in our practice of faith.” The primary reason is because judgment is coming! Mercy will be sought and found by those extending mercy to others and denied those lacking in such compassion extended toward their fellowman.*

Justification By Works. *The three main points within this chapter are unified by its theme of “the demonstration of faith.” Salvation is emptied out of a non-demonstrative faith (v. 14). An obvious requirement of daily sustenance left unsupplied constitutes a “dead faith” (vv. 15-17). James wrote, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (v.18). The existence of faith is verified in the corresponding actions it generates.*

Moreover, the only time the term 'faith only' appears in the Bible is verse 24: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only!"

Necessary Conclusions. The royal law and law of liberty find expression in the topic of justification by works. The law of God establishes the rule of conduct or action and limits behaviors & activities to the standard of acceptability as authorized by the revealed word of God, the Bible. Thus, we must be unbiased in our presentation of faith, vv. 1-9. We must be uniform in our practice of faith, vv. 10-13. Finally, we must also be undaunted in our performance of faith, vv. 14-26. Together, this is the "demonstration of faith" about which James wrote.



Bible Definition & Theology of Work(s)

Garden Discontinuity: Toiling of Humanity

Manual & Mental Human Work Should Correspond
Constructive Like God Not Destructive Like Satan

Sanctified Work: Functional & Relational

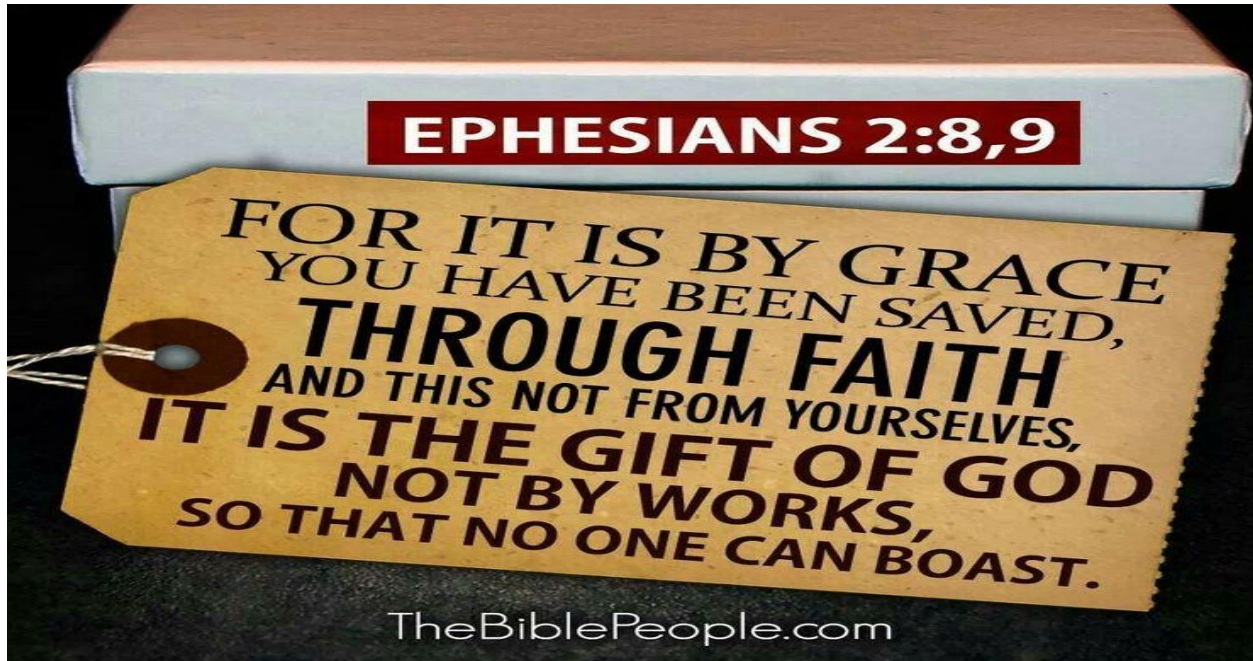
As Tony Vela pointed out in his Matthew Class at Memorial Church of Christ – In Matthew Chapter 12 Verses 1 through 4 - Christ was instructing his Pharisee Critics on the correct interpretation and application of Deuteronomy 23:25. During the process of doing this - **Jesus provided a definition of physical work as God intended.** As Tony states “God defines the difference between ‘work’ (using a sickle) and ‘not work’ (plucking by hand).

Glorified Works: Pious Works of Salvation


In this article I had attempted to follow up on Tony’s insightful observation by extending his line of thought a little further. In my opinion, if we examine verses 5 through 8 – a case can be made that Jesus Christ is providing us a double-definition for both physical and spiritual work. The Lord says those that perform pious actions in obedience “aren’t to blame” & “guiltless.” - dllb

WE CAN'T EARN TO DESERVE OUR SALVATION.

Paul occasionally addresses **meritorious** works by which we are **not** saved (Titus 3:4-7), since sinful man could not ever “earn” salvation or any spiritual blessings from our perfectly holy just God.



We Are Not Saved By Works.



- ◆ **Sense of the term “works” defined in context –**
 - ❖ Contrast of systems – (3:27,28)
 - ❖ By grace through faith – not merited due to perfect Law keeping – (4:4; 9:32; 11:6; cf. Gal. 3:10-12)
 - ❖ Obedience stressed by Paul in Romans – (Rom. 1:5; 4:12; 6:16-18; 16:26)

18

Different Kinds of Works



- ◆ **Works of the Law of Moses** (Rom. 3:28; 4; Gal. 2:18)
- ◆ **Works of merit** (Rom 11:6; Eph 2:8)
- ◆ **Works of Our Own Righteousness** (Tit 3:5)
- ◆ **Works of God** (Jn 6:28)
- ◆ **Works of God's Righteousness** (Acts 10:35; 1 John. 2:29; 3:7; 3:10)
- ◆ **Works of Faith** (1 Th. 1:3; Ja. 2:14-26)
- ◆ **Good Works** (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 3:8-14)

BAPTISM IS NO MORE A WORK THAN BELIEF!

"THEREFORE THEY SAID TO HIM, "WHAT SHALL WE DO, SO THAT WE MAY WORK THE WORKS OF GOD?" JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM, *"This is the work of God,* THAT YOU BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM HE HAS SENT." JOHN 6:28-29

Objection: “Baptism is a meritorious work, whereas we are saved by grace, not works.”

“Works” or “steps” of salvation do not imply that one “merits” his salvation upon obedient compliance with those actions. Rather, “steps” or “a process” signifies the biblical concept of preconditions, stipulations of faith, or acts of obedience—what James called “works” (James 2:17). James was not saying that one can earn his justification (James 2:24). Rather, he was describing the **active** nature of faith, showing that saving faith, faith that is **alive**—as opposed to dead & therefore utterly useless (2:20) - is the only kind that is acceptable to God, a faith that obeys whatever actions God has indicated must be done. Obedient or active trust is the only kind that avails anything. Thus, an obedient response is essential.

The actions themselves are manifestations of this trust that justifies, not the trust itself. But notice that according to James, you cannot have one without the other. Trust, or faith, is **dead**, until it leads one to obey the specifications God assigned. Here is the essence of salvation that separates those who adhere to biblical teaching from those who have been adversely influenced by the key Protestant reformers. The reformers reacted to the unbiblical concept of stacking bad deeds against good deeds in an effort to offset the former by the latter (cf. Islam). Unfortunately, the reactionary reformers went to the equally unacceptable, opposite extreme by asserting that man need “only believe” (Luther) or man can do nothing at all (Calvin). The truth is between these two unbiblical extremes.

From Genesis to Revelation, faith is the trusting, obedient reaction that humans manifest in response to what God offers. This is the kind of “justification by faith” that Paul expounded in Romans. Like red flags at the very beginning (1:5) and at the end (16:26) of his divinely inspired treatise, he defined what he meant by “faith” with the words “obedient faith” (*hupakoein pisteos*), i.e., faith that obeys, obedience which springs from faith.⁴

This fact is precisely why God declared His willingness to fulfill the promises He made to Abraham: “because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Genesis 26:5). Hence, in Romans Paul could speak of the necessity of walking “in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had” (Romans 4:12). Until faith obeys, it is useless and cannot justify.

The Hebrews writer made the same point in Hebrews 11. The faith we see in Old Testament “men of faith” availed only **after** they obeyed God-given stipulations. God rewards those who “diligently seek Him” in faith (vs. 6). Noah “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” **when** he “prepared an ark.” If he had not complied with divine instructions, he would have been branded as “unfaithful.” The thing that made the difference, that constituted the line of demarcation between faith and lack of faith, was **obedient action**—what James called “works,” and Paul called “faith working thru love” (Galatians 5:6). In this sense, **even faith is considered a “work” (John 6:29).**

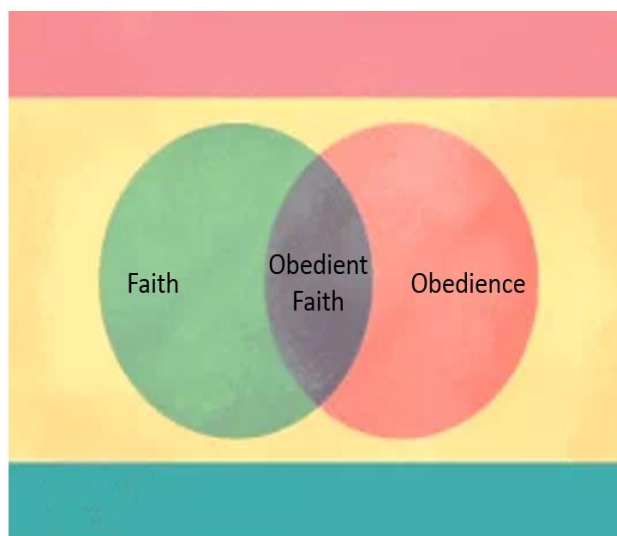
Hebrews 11 repeatedly reinforces this eternal principle: (1) God offers grace (which may at any point in history consist of **physical** blessings, e.g., healing, salvation from enemies, land or property, or **spiritual** blessings, e.g., justification, forgiveness, salvation from sin, being made righteous, etc.); (2) man responds in obedient trust (i.e., “faith”) by complying with the stipulated terms; and (3) God bestows the blessing.

It would be wrong to think that man’s obedient response **earns or merits** the subsequent blessing. Such simply does not logically follow. All blessings God bestows on man are undeserved (Luke 17:10). His rich mercy and loving grace is freely offered and made available—though man never deserves such kindness (Titus 2:11). Still, a non-meritorious response is absolutely necessary if an unworthy man is to receive certain blessings. — *Apologetics Press*

AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

