

“Great winds and storms help fruit-bearing trees. So also do corruptions and temptations help the fruitfulness of grace and holiness. The storm loosens the earth around its roots, so the tree is able to get its roots deeper into the earth, where it receives fresh supplies of nourishment. But only much later will it be seen to bring forth better fruit. In the same way, corruptions and temptations develop the roots of humility, self-abasement and mourning — in a deeper search for that grace by which holiness grows strong. But only later, will there be visible fruits of increased holiness.”

John Owen

THE BAPTIST CATECHISM

AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813

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27. Q. How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A. Christ executeth the office of prophet in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation (John 1:18; 1 Pet.1:10,11, 12; John 15:15; and 20:31).

28. Q. How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?

A. Christ executeth the office of priest in his once offering up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice (Heb. 9:14, 28) and reconcile us to God (Heb. 2:17), and in making continual intercession for us (Heb.7:24, 25).

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Sunday Morning 11:00 AM

Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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THE WORK OF GOD

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. John 6:28-29

The simplest of Biblical concepts are invariably met with the greatest degree of difficulty in that the pride of man insists on finding a place. Our Lord gave a straightforward answer to the question of this group. They spoke of works; He defined for them “The Work of God.” They immediately followed with the demand for proofs which appeal to sight rather than faith. Their personal quest for a way of life that would accommodate their pride and reasoning left no place for the words of the Lord wherein the only way of salvation was described. While the approaches may vary and the words may differ, the religious endeavors of men remain as guided by depraved hearts wanting acceptance with God on their own terms.

There were two things recorded that caused Jesus to marvel. One was the faith of the centurion whose servant Jesus healed. This man’s faith was displayed in professing to Jesus an understanding of His being and power. He could command men and be obeyed. He saw an absolute sovereignty in Christ that incorporated all things and so healing His servant did not require His presence. Jesus marveled that such a display of faith should be exhibited by a Roman in the midst of an unbelieving nation. The second thing that caused Jesus to marvel was the unbelief of the people in His own country. They were amazed at His wisdom and knowledge. They were even astounded at the mighty works He had done. But, they could not

get past the fact they only knew Him as the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of Mary’s other children. Thus, we read, *And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching. Mark 6:6.* We make reference to these things in that they show the absolute necessity of faith in accordance with the divine assessment.

Whether stated or implied, the insertion of works as a necessity is an essential part of the answer of men to God’s demands. While salvation is clearly declared as by grace alone, merited by Christ alone and received by faith alone, the typical rebuttal is that men must make a material contribution. Arthur Pink observed: “The sinner wants to do something to earn it (salvation). It was thus with the woman at the well: until Divine grace completed its work in her, she knew not the gift of God. It was the same with the rich young ruler: ‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ It was the same with the stricken Jews on the day of Pentecost: ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ It was the same with the Philippian jailer: ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’” Pink went on to observe that our Lord depicted the prodigal declaring that he would become a hired servant to be saved from a failed life. The answer in every case was to do as Christ instructed here: “believe on Him whom he hath sent.”

Some questions remain. What of works? Perhaps, the best answer is given by James. *Yea,*

a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. James 2:18. He continued, in that passage, to show that Abraham's faith drove him to offer his son Isaac and would have had the Lord not prevented him. Faith without works is meaningless and dead. But, salvation does not come by works: *Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:9.* We are not created by good works; we are created unto good works.

Is faith a work? Of two things, we may be certain. Faith is essential to pleasing God. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6.* And, faith is not meritorious. *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. Romans 11:6.* As surely as all things pleasing to God have their origin in Him, so faith is the work of God. It is that which occurs as a result of life sovereignly imparted by the Holy Spirit and it is that wherein one is exercised to complete trust in Christ for all that is required. It is by means of God-given

senses that one is enabled to see what the Pharisees could not see and Jonah did: "salvation is of the Lord" and the faith which apprehends it is the "gift of God."

It is this work of God that the world, the flesh, and the devil conspire to hide from them that are lost and to dull the vision of in true believers. How often are we caught up in thoughts of a better way or an improvement we might make for things to be better. Can anything be greater than simply walking in full confidence in what Christ has done as our redeemer, and is doing as our intercessor. As we would go about seeking to serve Him we do well to be often returned to this thought. This is the Work of God and as we believe on Him the things that pertain to Him become the order of our day. We would return to that which Jesus said to the group previous to our text: *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. John 6:27.* Not only are we directed to believe on Him, but also to realize that He is the substance, yea the meat which endures to eternal life. He is the reward of the Work of God. *bhs*

WHY DOES JESUS FIND the faith of the centurion so astonishing (Matt. 8:5-13)? The centurion assures Jesus that as far as he is concerned it is unnecessary for the Master to visit his home in order to heal the paralyzed servant. He understands that Jesus need only say the word, and the servant will be healed. "For," the centurion explains, "I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (8:9). Why is this such an astonishing evidence of faith? Three factors stand out. The first is that in an age of not a little superstition, the centurion believed that Jesus' healing power did not lie in hocus-pocus, or even in his personal presence, but in his word. It was not necessary for Jesus to touch or handle the servant, or even be present; he needed only to say the word, and it would be done. The second is that he came to such confident assertions despite the fact that he was not steeped in Scripture. He was a Gentile. What grasp of Scripture he had we cannot say, but it was certainly less than that enjoyed by many of the learned in Israel. Yet his faith was purer, simpler, more

penetrating, more Christ honoring than theirs. The third astonishing element in this man's faith is the analogy he draws. He recognizes that he himself is a man under authority, and therefore he has authority when he speaks in the context of that relationship. When he tells a Roman soldier under him to come or go or do something, he is not speaking merely as one man to another man. The centurion speaks with the authority of his senior officer, the tribune, who in turn speaks, finally, with the authority of Caesar, with the authority of the mighty Roman Empire. That authority belongs to the centurion, not because he is in fact as powerful as Caesar in every dimension, but because he is a man under authority: the chain of command means that when the centurion speaks to the foot soldier, Rome speaks. Implicitly, the centurion is saying that he recognizes in Jesus an analogous relationship: Jesus so stands in relationship to God, and under God's authority, that when Jesus speaks, God speaks. The centurion, of course, was not speaking within the framework of a mature Christian doctrine of Christ, but the eyes of faith had enabled him to penetrate very far indeed. This is the faith we need. It trusts Jesus' word, reflects a simple profundity, and believes that when Jesus speaks, God speaks. —D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God Vol. 1*

THE MISSING SUPERNATURAL AFFLATUS

And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. —Luke 24:49 Where adequate power is present almost any means will suffice, but where the power is absent not all the means in the world can secure the desired end. The Spirit of God may use a song, a sermon, a good deed, a text or the mystery and majesty of nature, but always the final work will be done by the pressure of the inliving Spirit upon the human heart. In the light of this it will be seen how empty and meaningless is the average church service today. All the means are in evidence; the one ominous weakness is the absence of the Spirit's power. The form of godliness is there, and often the form is perfected till it is an aesthetic triumph. Music and poetry, art and oratory, symbolic vesture and solemn tones combine to charm the mind of the worshiper, but too often the supernatural afflatus is not there. The power from on high is neither known nor desired by pastor or people. This is nothing less than tragic, and all the more so because it falls within the field of religion where the eternal destinies of men are involved. POM090-091 Lord, I'm going to set aside some time today to "tarry" in seeking an assurance of the Holy Spirit's work in our church. I'll do my homework in giving good leadership, but again today I affirm my prayer that the Holy Spirit would come in real power in our church. Amen. — A. W. Tozer, *Tozer on Christian Leadership*

"A man has been found guilty, shall we say, of a heinous crime and has been sentenced to death. He is now in prison, awaiting the day of his execution. A friend comes to visit him. This friend calls out: "I have good news for you!" Eagerly the condemned man asks: "What is it?" The answer comes: "Be good." In that message there is not so much as a shred of good news. It is most cruel mockery. Yet many a self-styled minister of Christ holds forth to sinners under the sentence of eternal death a precisely equivalent message as gospel." - R. B Kuiper