

What will you be doing in the NEXT LIFE?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

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Are YOU one who won't be there -- because you're deceived into a false salvation? Nothing is more misunderstood than the difference between "GRACE" and "WORKS." Here is one of the most important booklets ever published.

THIS OUGHT to disturb you -- a pointed question put to me by a man in Middlesex, England.

That is, unless you are one of the very few who really does understand this difference. Don't be too sure you know! Even most of the clergy do not!

The BIG Question

This man in Middlesex, England, had received his first three copies of The PLAIN TRUTH. He had been shocked out of complacency.

He wrote:

"As a lifelong 'unquestioning' believer in evolution, the most immediate impact of your magazine has been to shatter my complacency on the subject. However, this presents me with a problem, insofar as, IF I accept that God created mankind, and that there is, therefore, an afterlife, I simply cannot imagine what one 'does' for an eternity. This is proving to be something of a 'stumbling block' for me." He asked for help.

You need to understand. Almost NO ONE DOES!

A woman explained recently what she expects to be doing through eternity.

"I expect to just be sitting at Jesus' feet, looking up into His face," she exclaimed. And this idea was so deeply implanted in her mind, nothing could shake her out of it!

It is perhaps ten times harder to UNLEARN error than to learn new truth. And nearly everyone who believes in God at all -- or makes any profession of Christianity has had one idea so deeply implanted in mind that it is simply taken for granted -- and almost impossible to root out!

It is this -- stated in my own terms (which may not be the way others would state it):

When you were born, you were started on a one-way railroad trip -- your life's journey. Because of Adam's sin (or because you are a sinner) a switch in the railroad track at the end of your journey is turned automatically to shoot you down to hell. But IF, at some time during your life's journey you "profess Christ" then that automatically throws the switch at the end of your life's journey so that when you die you will be shot immediately up to heaven. And what will you be DOING through all eternity? Just sitting at Jesus' feet, happily looking up into His face -- or, as some may have it, playing on a harp. In any case the concept is that you'll have NOTHING TO DO, but just "enjoy" idleness and ease forever and ever! This false concept totally blinds its followers' eyes to the meaning and purpose of the Christian life after initial conversion after becoming a Christian.

There may be variations in the way differing sects or denominations, or different people conceive of it -- but that's approximately the generally accepted idea -- taken for granted -- and so deeply rooted it's almost impossible to get the TRUTH, as GOD reveals it in HIS WORD, into such minds.

Now I wouldn't enjoy lounging around in idleness with nothing to do for even three days -- let alone for eternity!

But THAT explains, I think, WHY some ministers falsely accuse me of "proclaiming a salvation by WORKS." Since we are to be SAVED, as your Bible states repeatedly, by GRACE, therefore these people simply cannot conceive of any WORKS whatsoever. They don't understand that the Christian life is one of TRAINING for WHAT WE SHALL BE DOING through eternity IN THE NEXT LIFE. They miss the WHOLE PURPOSE of salvation!

Does that word "grace" sound a little technical -- a little theological?

"Grace" is a term used in the Bible. It means undeserved FREE GIFT -- and unmerited PARDON.

Nowhere does the Bible teach earning your salvation by your own "WORKS." But what most do NOT understand is that the Bible DOES teach, over and over again, that we shall be REWARDED according to our WORKS!

That has EVERYTHING to do with the question: "WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING IN THE NEXT LIFE -- FOR ETERNITY?"

It has little or nothing to do with whether you GET THERE -- but everything to do with what will be your STATUS -- what you will be doing in the next life IF YOU are SAVED BY GRACE.

Please believe me, THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OF YOUR LIFE! YOU NEED to understand it. It's very VITAL to YOUR ETERNITY!

There's a Vast Difference!

WHY is it that so very FEW understand the great difference between being "saved by GRACE," and "rewarded according to WORKS"? To UNDERSTAND, YOU need to know what "salvation" is, and what "reward" means.

But first, UNDERSTAND. The word "works" translated from the Greek ergon means deeds, actions, business -- without regard, except as indicated by use in the sentence, to whether physical work, action or labor, or spiritual acts of righteousness. The Bible uses this word primarily in two ways, and there is a vast difference.

When joined with "law," as, "the works of the law," primarily in Romans and Galatians, it refers to the RITUALS of the Law of Moses. These were physical WORK -- labor! These laborious physical rituals -- "the works of the law" -- were a SUBSTITUTE for Christ and the Holy Spirit, and were in force only until Christ. They were then ABOLISHED. There were certain other secular laws, such as statutes and judgments, that were not abolished. Nor, of course, the great spiritual Law, the Ten Commandments, which define righteousness, the transgression of which is sin.

But where the word "works" appears alone, unassociated in the context with the "works of the law," usually refers to acts of RIGHTEOUSNESS -- that is, GOOD works. In some instances the context uses the word in the sense of evil works.

In this booklet we are concerned with “works” in the sense of GOOD works -- righteousness -- not with “works of the law,” rituals which were abolished.

“Salvation” means being saved from the penalty of sin -- which is DEATH -- for eternity -- eternal punishment (not eternal punishing!). But to be SAVED means, also, “preservation.” In this case, preservation of LIFE. One verse in the Bible explains BOTH: “For the wages of sin is DEATH; but the gift of God is ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

The “wages” you EARN by the “works of SIN is eternal DEATH. It is ETERNAL PUNISHMENT -- and since the punishment is DEATH, and not life, it is eternal DEATH. You now have only a chemical, temporary, physical existence, sustained by breathing, eating, drinking, and your physical heart continuing to beat and circulate your blood. Stop breathing, stop your heart beating, you die -- you cease to live -- almost instantly. Stop eating and drinking, and you’ll die in 45 or 50 days. This physiochemical life is only temporary.

So, to PRESERVE LIFE eternally means the GIFT of ETERNAL LIFE -- spirit life -- self-sustaining, INHERENT life.

Salvation, then, means to PRESERVE YOU FROM eternal death, the “wages” or consequences of sin, and to GIVE you inherent ETERNAL LIFE.

So, then, ETERNAL LIFE is something YOU DO NOT NOW HAVE. It is something you have no power to supply, or give to yourself.

You can’t earn it by “WORKS.” No human ingenuity or scientific effort can prolong human life eternally. The only life that is eternal is SPIRIT life. A physical being cannot turn himself into a spirit being. Spirit life comes as God’s free GIFT. Neither can you yourself erase the PENALTY of sins you have already committed -- that is, PREVENT eternal DEATH. For “ALL have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). That includes YOU! You have brought on yourself the eternal DEATH sentence, as a penalty!

The Bible teaches NOTHING about an “immortal soul.” On the contrary, it teaches, twice, that “the soul that sinneth, it shall DIE” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). Jesus said the “soul” can be DESTROYED in gehenna fire (Matt. 10:28).

What your own “works” have earned for you is the “wages” of ETERNAL DEATH.

You see, everyone has “WORKS” -- either good, or bad! And your bad works have earned the wages of eternal DEATH. Good works can earn something, too -- which I will explain later -- but it is NOT “salvation” or eternal life!

Jesus Christ only, of all who have been human, has immortality (I Tim. 6:16). GOD is IMMORTAL (I Tim. 1:17). He has given eternal life, inherent, to Jesus, who has eternal life inherent in Himself (John 5:26). We may receive it, as God’s GIFT, through Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23). God has eternal life INHERENT. He has it TO GIVE. You do NOT have it! You must go to GOD to get it!

But, your sins have CUT YOU OFF from God! (Isa. 59:12.) You are so CUT OFF that you cannot reach Him! There is an impassable BARRIER between you and Him, brought on by your SINS!

How, then, can you gain ACCESS to Almighty God (the Father), to receive from Him eternal life and salvation -- AS HIS GIFT? Well, Isaiah says, “Let the wicked forsake his way” (Isaiah 55:6-8) -- the way of SIN. And, further, “GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD [of sinners], that He GAVE His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should NOT PERISH, but have everlasting LIFE” (John 3:16).

Yes, but How?

The answer is in Romans 5:8-10:

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, awhile we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being NOW justified by His blood” GET THIS! “Being NOW justified” -- HOW? -- by “works”? No, by Christ’s DEATH -- by His blood. He shed His blood and DIED. He paid the death penalty for you, in your stead.

So, IF you repent of sinning -- that is, turn around to go the OTHER WAY -- forsake YOUR way -- the way contrary to God’s Law, and turn to GOD’S WAY -- the way of His Law -- if you have thus REPENTED of sinning, and have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior accepted His DEATH as PAYMENT IN FULL for YOUR sins -- accepted Him as personal Savior not only from the PENALTY of past sins, but as living Savior to save you from SINNING (now and in the future) then you are NOW forgiven past guilt -- you are now JUSTIFIED of your guilty past.

But “justified” refers to the guilty past, not to the FUTURE!

So, CONTINUE this scripture: “... Much more, then, being now justified by HIS blood, we SHALL BE saved from wrath through Him.” Notice, being “SAVED” is yet in the future. We are now “justified,” by God’s grace -- by Jesus’ DEATH -- and SHALL BE (future) “saved.”

But, continue, verse 10 of Romans 5: “For if, when we were enemies, we were RECONCILED to GOD by the death of His Son” Here, you see, being JUSTIFIED by Christ’s death is ALSO being RECONCILED to God by His death. In other words, we have at last, through Christ’s death established CONTACT with God.

Now continue, same sentence: “... much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved BY HIS LIFE.”

Not already “saved.” But “shall be saved.” And HOW? Saved by the “blood of Christ”? -- by His DEATH? NO!!! By His LIFE! We are justified of past guilt, which had cut us off from access to God, by Christ’s DEATH -- but SHALL BE, in the future, SAVED by His LIFE. He ROSE from the dead. He is a living Christ!

Not saved by your “works” saved by Christ’s LIFE, after having been forgiven your sins, and reconciled to God by Christ’s DEATH.

HOW Eternal Life Comes

So, with the sentence of eternal DEATH paid for US -- our past sins which put a barrier between us and God, JUSTIFIED -- we are now RECONCILED to God -- given access. And HE has ETERNAL LIFE inherent -- self-contained life -- to GIVE.

How, then, do we receive it from Him?

Notice a couple of pivotal scriptures: “For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). God has imparted eternal life to the living Jesus Christ, whom He raised from the dead. Now, further: “And this is the record, that GOD hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life [eternal]; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (I John 5:11, 12).

Yes, we are to be saved by the living Christ -- saved BY HIS LIFE! That is, GIVEN eternal life as a GIFT, through HIS life -- not through His death!

But, specifically, How? Let the Apostle Peter explain: “REPENT, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall RECEIVE the GIFT of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). On real REPENTANCE of sinning - - a turning around to go the other way -- to QUIT sinning -- and on faith in Jesus expressed by water baptism (Acts 8:35-37), God has promised WE SHALL RECEIVE HIS HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT. Not by our “works” -- but by GRACE!

But how does THIS give us eternal life -- salvation?

“IF the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall ALSO [by a resurrection] quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11).

Well is, then, the receiving of the Holy Spirit SALVATION? Is one already “saved” when he receives this Spirit?

GOD’S WORD SAYS NO! Not FINALLY! You are at that stage merely an heir of God -- not yet an INHERITOR of salvation -- of eternal life. Still human -- mortal -- not yet immortal! It is the presence of eternal life conditionally -- provisionally.

The scripture above quoted spoke of God’s Spirit DWELLING in you. IF this Spirit is dwelling in you until death (the first), or AT THE TIME of the RESURRECTION -- at Christ’s coming -- THEN you shall be either resurrected IMMORTAL, or, if still alive, CHANGED from mortal to immortal instantaneously (I Cor. 15:50-52 and I Thes. 4:13-17). Then you shall be immortal -- composed of SPIRIT -- no longer human and composed of material flesh and blood. Then you, too, shall have life inherent -- be FINALLY saved.

The receiving of the Holy Spirit, NOW, is the TOKEN PAYMENT -- or the EARNEST payment from God on the gift of eternal life. Notice: “... Christ ... in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our INHERITANCE, until the redemption of the purchased possession ...” (Eph 1:12-14). The Moffatt translation renders it in more understandable English, “... the long-promised Holy Spirit, which is the pledge and installment of our common heritage, that we may [in the future] obtain our divine possession”

Those who have received God’s Holy Spirit are NOW not yet inheritors or possessors of this eternal life -- of this salvation. They are NOW HEIRS of God -- co-heirs with Christ (Gal. 3:29). They are now still mortal, not immortal. They are now BEGOTTEN sons of God -- not yet BORN of God. They are now in the CHURCH of God -- not yet in the KINGDOM of God.

May We Go on Sinning?

But now what of that scripture that says: “... ye are not under the law, but under grace”? (Rom. 6:14.)

Now that you are UNDER GRACE -- does this mean you are given license to disobey God’s Law?

Listen to GOD’S answer: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God FORBID! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:1-2.) Later, verse 12: “Let not sin [transgressing God’s Law] therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Once again, verse 14: “For sin [transgressing the Law] shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the Law, but under grace.” The very next words show PLAINLY this does not mean you are free to BREAK God’s LAW -- to DISOBEY God, “What then? Shall we SIN [break the Law], because we are not under the Law, but under grace? GOD FORBID! Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

GRACE does not mean license to SIN. And the BIBLE definition of SIN is: “Sin is the transgression of the LAW” (I John 3:4).

You were UNDER THE LAW, when the Law stood over you, claiming its penalty. When Christ paid the penalty, and satisfied the claims of the Law, you were no longer under the Law, but under GRACE.

It is the FALSE prophets of our day who try to deceive you into believing “GRACE” means permission to BREAK GOD’S LAW! We are being saved FROM SINNING (now and in the future) as well as from PAST sins. Christ came to save us FROM sinning -- not to save us IN sin.

WHY the Holy Spirit?

I have been showing you, step by step, the way of “salvation.” Where are you, now? You have been reconciled to God -- your past forgiven -- and you have received God’s Holy Spirit. But why?

God’s Spirit, first of all, is His very own LIFE injected into you -- the begetting of ETERNAL life. You are now an HEIR of God -- a joint-heir -- a co-heir with CHRIST. Not yet an inheritor. The Holy Spirit injects into you also the characteristics of God. First of these is LOVE -- not carnal or human love, but DIVINE love -- God’s love.

And why? In order to KEEP GOD’S LAW -- that’s why! How is God’s Law fulfilled? “LOVE is the fulfilling of the Law” (Rom. 13:10). But carnal human love cannot fulfill it. WHY? Because the Law of God is a SPIRITUAL Law (Rom. 7:14). It can be fulfilled only by a SPIRITUAL love, which is THE GIFT of God. It is “the love of GOD shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5). And, again, God gives His Holy Spirit only to “them that OBEY Him” (Acts 5:32).

Also it requires FAITH to keep God’s Commandments. And your faith is not strong enough. It requires CHRIST’S faith -- the same faith He exercised and lived by during His human lifetime. God also GIVES YOU this very same FAITH, by the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit also imparts to you spiritual comprehension -- POWER TO UNDERSTAND spiritual truth, and wisdom, and patience, and spiritual POWER! All these are imparted to you from God, by the Holy Spirit -- as His GIFT! But these are given to you to LIVE BY -- to USE, in order to GROW spiritually in knowledge and grace and to overcome.

MUST There Be “WORKS”?

I have tried to make it PLAIN that we cannot EARN salvation by “works.”

Yet EVERYONE does produce “works” -- either good or bad. Your evil “works” -- disobedience of the Commandments -- will EARN YOU the penalty of DEATH. But what about GOOD works? Do they earn anything?

INDEED THEY DO!

Are good "WORKS" required?

INDEED THEY ARE!

But WHAT, then, do they EARN?

They do NOT earn "salvation." They do NOT earn eternal life. They will NOT get you into the Kingdom of God!

Well, then! What DO they earn?

Ah -- that is the point of this booklet!

You are not JUSTIFIED by "works," nor "saved" by "works," but you are to be JUDGED by your "works," and "rewarded" according to your "works."

This thing called "WORKS" -- MEANING DEEDS, GOOD OR BAD -- CANNOT PUT YOU INTO God's Kingdom of IMMORTALS. You get IN by GRACE! But, once in, your "works" during this present life -- during your Christian life after being "converted" and receiving God's Holy Spirit -- DO determine WHAT OFFICE, or POSITION, or RANK, or degree of GLORY, YOU shall have!

This is what ALMOST NO ONE seems to have understood!

First notice what Jesus said -- AFTER His resurrection -- inspired after the year 90 A.D.: "TO him that OVERCOMETH will I grant to sit with me in my THRONE ... (Rev. 3:21). Further: "And he that OVERCOMETH, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give POWER OVER THE NATIONS: AND HE SHALL RULE THEM ..." (Rev. 2:26-27).

Notice again, "... hast made us unto our God KINGS AND PRIESTS: and WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH (Rev. 5:10).

Notice what is said of those in the first RESURRECTION, at Christ's coming: ... and they lived AND REIGNED with Christ a thousand years Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, AND SHALL REIGN with Him a thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6).

Notice, in these scriptures, the "saved" are to REIGN with Christ in the coming WORLD GOVERNMENT, the Kingdom of God. And notice the requirement of OVERCOMING, and keeping Christ's WORKS and also of ENDURING TO THE END! NOTICE! Jesus said "he that ... keepeth my works unto the end."

Now notice further: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall REWARD every man ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS (Mat. 16:27). Nowhere does the Bible teach being "SAVED" by our "works," but it does teach the degree of reward according to "works."

Alexander the coppersmith did great evil to the Apostle Paul, and Paul says: "... the Lord reward him according to his works" (II Tim. 4:14). Notice this distinction! This man did EVIL works. He won't get salvation at Christ's coming. He will be REWARDED -- that is, PAID WAGES according to his WORKS -- and the WAGES of SIN is DEATH -- eternal PUNISHMENT. "WORKS" means the wages you earn -- or the REWARD to be given -- either good or bad. Evil works (sin) can EARN eternal punishment, but GOOD WORKS can EARN a better position or office in God's Kingdom IF YOU get there -- but it cannot earn salvation!

Now notice Remains 4:4: “Now to him that WORKETH is the reward NOT reckoned of GRACE, but of DEBT.” Salvation is not paid as a DEBT, but is GIVEN by GRACE -- undeserved GIFT. But “WORKS” earn wages, paid as a debt.

So what we WANT is not GRACE or WORKS, but GRACE and WORKS.

The “GRACE” will get us into God’s Kingdom -- give us Immortality as God’s GIFT. The works will EARN us -- that is, QUALIFY us for a better office -- an opportunity for bigger SERVICE -- for doing MORE GOOD, once we are born into God’s Kingdom.

Degree of Reward

Notice, now, Jesus’ parable of the “pounds.”

Jesus’ disciples wrongly supposed the Kingdom of God was to appear in their lifetime. To CORRECT this error, Jesus spoke this parable.

“... Because they thought the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom, and to return’” (Luke 19:11-12). That is, Jesus Himself was going to heaven to receive for Himself the Kingdom of God and to return to earth. Now continue:

“And He called His ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, ‘Occupy till I come.’ But His citizens hated Him, and sent a message after Him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us’” (verses 13-14). Jesus had come “to His own,” the Jews -- the remnant of the Kingdom of JUDAH -- and “they received Him not” (John 1:11), so Jesus turned to “the lost sheep of the House of Israel” (Matt. 15:24), and sent His twelve apostles to them (Matt. 10:6). That is, to the so called “Lost Ten Tribes” of Israel. They were then, most of them, in Northwestern Europe and the British Isles (for proof, request our free book, “The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy”).

But continue Jesus’ parable:

“And it came to pass, that when He was returned” -- now speaking of what will happen at Christ’s return -- “having received the Kingdom, then He commanded these servants to be called unto Him, to whom he had given the money, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading” (Luke 19:15).

This is speaking of every converted true Christian, to whom God has GIVEN of His Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts. Every one, at that time entering God’s Kingdom as an INHERITOR -- as a POSSESSOR, no longer just an HEIR -- actually then “SAVED” -- will be called to an accounting -- JUDGED, to determine WHAT POSITION in God’s Kingdom he has qualified for. And NOTICE that this REWARD will be according to his “WORKS” in this present mortal life. Continue, verses 16-19:

“Then came the first, saying, ‘Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.’ And He said unto him, ‘Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.’ And He said likewise to him, ‘Be thou also over five cities.’”

NOTICE CAREFULLY! They got into God’s Kingdom by GRACE (as numerous other scriptures make plain). But they are rewarded -- that is, given authority, or rule, or position, according to their “WORKS” according to how well they did with what they had to do with WHILE CHRIST WAS IN HEAVEN -- that is, during their mortal Christian lives.

Continue now:

Beginning verse 20 -- read it in your Bible -- the ones who GAINED NOTHING in this present mortal life -- the ones who had no good “works” -- who did not grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ (II Peter 3:18) -- not only was not given ANY position -- but even had TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM even the spiritual gift he had been given! In this parable, the English pound, the main English unit of money -- worth approximately \$2.50 United States money -- is used as a symbol of spiritual value.

This parable teaches what has been shown by other scriptures in this booklet -- that the Christian must OVERCOME; he must GROW spiritually -- grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ (II Peter 3:18).

We are beings SAVED to SERVE -- and if we do not qualify to serve, we may have taken away even the salvation we thought we had!

IF you do not have good works, you have evil works, or sin, which earns the penalty of sin -- DEATH!

The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) shows the same thing, showing that each is judged by what he has to do with. But the one who makes no PROGRESS after his initial “conversion” is cast as an “unprofitable servant into outer darkness” (Matt. 25:30).

Life Is a Race

Finally, SEE WHERE ALL THIS LEADS US. Man is MORTAL, without inherent life, possessing in himself only a transitory, physical, chemical EXISTENCE.

God is IMMORTAL, composed of Spirit, having self-contained life inherent within Himself. He made mortal man to be formed and shaped like He is, but composed of matter. ETERNAL life comes as GOD’s GIFT. It comes through the gift of God’s Holy Spirit, GIVEN after the prior conditions of real REPENTANCE, and FAITH in Christ.

But, once receiving the GIFT of the Holy Spirit, entering upon the Christian life, this Christian life is pictured as A RACE in a stadium, or in a contest. We must TURN FROM SIN (and the Bible definition of SIN is: transgression of God’s Law -- I John 3:4). Notice: “Wherefore ... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

FURTHER, Paul wrote: “And this I do for the Gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but ONE receiveth the prize? So RUN, that ye may obtain. And every man, that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [those unconverted] do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we [Christians] an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so FIGHT I ... lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [REJECTED]” (I Cor. 9:23-27).

We must STRIVE to overcome. We must fight temptation and sin. The Christian life was pictured by Jesus as the hard, ruddy, difficult way -- NOT the easy way that leads to destruction.

So, SALVATION -- being BORN INTO God’s Kingdom -- depends not only on once receiving the Holy Spirit, but BEING LED BY God’s Spirit through life (Rom. 8:14), and God’s Spirit DWELLING IN US, at the end of life’s race. That is, at the time of death, or of Christ’s coming, whichever comes first.

God's impregnating Holy Spirit is received by GRACE, as God's GIFT, not as a debt or compensation earned; not by "works." But, once we receive the Holy Spirit, it does not remain bottled up; it does not stagnate; it is not static -- it FLOWS in outgoing concern (LOVE) to fellow man, and in worship, reverence, obedience to GOD. It flows into us from God. We can love God only because He first loved us -- our love toward God is only a return of His love, which he gives to us.

This spiritual LOVE -- the HOLY SPIRIT -- must be kept on that RETURN CIRCUIT -- fulfilling God's LAW -- flowing back to GOD by fulfilling the first four Commandments, and out to neighbor fulfilling the last six.

The parable of the sower and the seed illustrates this. There were four classes. The first heard the Gospel Message, but it never conceived -- they never were converted. They may still have a chance- -later. A second class was converted, with great joy, but simply had no spiritual depth of character, and endured only for a while, but yielded to temptations UNTIL they fell away -- that is, CONTINUALLY, till they QUIT TRYING. A third was converted, received God's Spirit, but let the cares of this material life -- earning a living -- or former unconverted associates -- keeping one foot in the world -- seeking the PLEASURES of this world's materialism -- and they brought forth NO FRUIT to perfection. So THEY lost out! YOU MUST BRING FORTH FRUIT -- make spiritual PROGRESS -- develop spiritual character! In other words, good works.

Too many, today, are preaching a FALSE salvation of "NO WORKS."

Your "WORKS" won't get you converted -- won't earn you God's Spirit -- won't earn salvations I have made PLAIN in this booklet. BUT THE LACK OF GOOD WORKS CAN GET YOU LOST, if persisted in!

The fourth class of the parable are they, "which in an HONEST and GOOD HEART, having heard the Word, KEEP it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). In Matthew's account of this same parable, those finally SAVED, enduring to the END of life's race, brought forth fruit -- some thirty fold, some sixty, some a hundred. ALL of these were saved! ALL of these go into God's Kingdom.

But those who bring forth a hundredfold, during their Christian lives, will receive a higher REWARD, or position in the Kingdom, than those who produce only thirty fold!

SALVATION comes as God's free GIFT, by GRACE.

But the DEGREE of office, once in the Kingdom -- once made IMMORTAL -- the rank, the position, the degree of glory -- this is what you must QUALIFY FOR, by the fruits you bear in THIS LIFE. Your degree of REWARD will be according to your works!

THAT is the teaching of God!

We Must Produce "Fruit"

SALVATION, I repeat again and again, is GOD'S FREE GIFT -- not something you can earn. BUT, once you have received God's Holy Spirit -- BY GRACE -- that Spirit in you must produce FRUIT!

The Bible again explains it this way: Jesus says He is the Vine -- we are the branches (John 15:1, 5). Here we are likened to a grapevine and its branches. The BRANCHES did not get themselves joined on to the main vine by their own efforts. We did not become joined to Christ -- receiving -- His Holy Spirit by our "works," but it was His doing -- His GIFT -- it came by GRACE.

BUT once joined on, with the SAP flowing from the Vine into the branch (a picture of God's Holy Spirit flowing from Him into us), we must produce fruit. If we don't -- then what?

Notice this whole picture, in John 15. God the Father is the Husbandman -- the Vine-dresser -- the chief Gardener, who PRUNES the branches. Now notice verse 2: "Every branch in me that beareth NOT fruit He taketh away." If, once having received the Holy Spirit, we do not produce spiritual fruit, we shall be cut off from Christ -- and (verse 6), shall be cast into the fire and BURNED UP -- referring to the final Gehenna or hellfire!

The Holy Spirit is GIVEN to us -- we didn't deserve or earn it -- but given to PRODUCE FRUIT. HOW? Jesus pictured the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39) as rivers of "living water" flowing from Him into us, and on out of us. How will it flow on out of us? A "river" flows down a riverbed. The spiritual riverbed down which God's Spirit FLOWS is GOD'S LAW. This "living water" of God's Spirit is the LOVE that fulfills the Law. The FRUITS, then, are simply the WAY of righteousness -- keeping God's Law. We must be DOERS of the Law, not hearers only -- "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). This DOING produces fruit -- develops character -- trains us for a more glorified position in God's Kingdom.

Oh, one will vehemently object, THAT'S "WORKS." No -- it's righteousness. But IT IS NOT OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS! God's Spirit GIVES us the FAITH that makes obedience possible. This is the FAITH that SAVES! It is God's GIFT. And the LOVE that fulfills God's Law is His love, flowing into and out of us -- NOT OUR LOVE! It is not SELF- righteousness -- it is GOD'S righteousness, GIVEN to us.

What KIND of Works?

One further passage of Scripture should COMPLETE the picture.

It is in the third chapter of I Corinthians in the Revised Standard Version. Notice carefully:

Some of these Gentile converts at Corinth wanted to be followers of Paul, others of Peter, others of Apollos. Paul was pointing them to CHRIST, and showing what human "nothingness" he and Apollos were.

"What then is Apollos?" he asked (verse 5). "What is Paul?" And he answered, "Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but GOD gave the GROWTH." Paul was showing them that he and Apollos, mere humans, were as NOTHING compared to GOD. The spiritual GROWTH -- the FRUIT BORNE -- the WORKS -- came through God's Holy Spirit. The apostle continued:

"So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." Notice -- God GIVES the spiritual growth -- the fruits borne. It is GOD'S righteousness. "He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor" (verse 8). Once again, our WORKS do EARN wages -- either good or bad. Evil works earn eternal DEATH. Good works earn a better position or reward in God's Kingdom -- IF you get there by GRACE. Now continue:

"For we are fellow workers for God; YOU are God's field, God's building" (verse 9). Apply that to this very Work of GOD today. Today God is using me, our active staff of

several hundred, and our growing family of Co-Workers who contribute financially -- all FELLOW WORKMEN for God. Our WORK in carrying out Christ's Great commission -- proclaiming His Gospel around the world by radio, television and printing press -- our ministers counseling with and baptizing those being converted -- the PRAYERS and financial support of other FELLOWWORKMEN -- will EARN a better position -- a higher glory if we make it into God's Kingdom.

But we shall be SAVED only by GRACE, undeserved -- as God's GIFT. Yet our WORK, as instruments in GOD'S HANDS, which HE uses in HIS WORK, is the most important Work or activity on earth today! And it contributes greatly to our individual and personal SPIRITUAL GROWTH!

But continue:

Paul says further, "According to the commission of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it" (verse 10). He now pictures THE CHURCH AS A BUILDING being built. Continue: "Let each man take care how he builds upon it." Now referring to each individual member as well as the Body of Christ -- the Church, as a whole.

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST" (verse 11).

Continue: "Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble -- each man's WORK will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the WORK which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward" (verses 12-14).

Christ Does the Works "in Us"

The FOUNDATION did not come by OUR WORKS! That was GOD'S doing. He GAVE us the FOUNDATION to build upon. That foundation is CHRIST -- and it is "Christ IN us" (II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27), by the Holy Spirit! God's Spirit -- Christ IN you -- was GIVEN by GRACE, not produced by our WORKS. BUT you must continue to BUILD upon that "Foundation." We must OVERCOME. We must GROW spiritually (II Peter 3:18).

Now notice the MATERIALS mentioned in building the superstructure of the building. The most valuable is mentioned first -- GOLD. Second in value and QUALITY of building materials is mentioned next, SILVER. Next, precious stones; next, wood -- far less valuable. But now we come down to CHEAPNESS, and INFERIOR QUALITY - - HAY! Hay might be used in covering a tropical-zone hut -- but it is very inferior building material. Yet, a horse could eat it -- it has some little value. But, lastly, we come to STUBBLE! You couldn't even build a hut with stubble. A horse wouldn't eat it. Its value is about NIL. It's fit only to be BURNED!

Must Build Character

In this scriptural passage, we are primarily concerned with BUILDING character.

But now Paul speaks of TESTING the quality of a man's building by FIRE. Let's understand it! Continue: "If any man's work is BURNED UP, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (verse 15). WHAT is that "fire"?

To understand this, we need to turn to the 3rd chapter of Malachi. It speaks of Christ, as the Messenger of the (new) Covenant, suddenly coming to His Temple. This, like so many prophecies, is dual in application. It refers only typically to Christ's first coming -- primarily to His second coming!

"... And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant ... But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's FIRE, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the ETERNAL an offering in RIGHTEOUSNESS (Malachi 3:1-3).

Plainly, this is speaking of Christ's second coming as KING of kings, to set up WORLD GOVERNMENT over ALL NATIONS. Then we who have received God's GRACE -- in whom is the Holy Spirit, then made immortal -- shall stand before Him for judgment as to what reward, or position, we have qualified for. Christ Himself is that refiner's FIRE, that will burn up the dross. But the pure gold, silver, or precious stones we have BUILT on the foundation of CHRIST will then be MANIFEST -- it will come through the test. But the hay and straw will be burned up.

Again, of those who, BY GRACE, do receive SALVATION, and are born IMMORTAL into God's Kingdom at Christ's appearing, Christ says He will bring them "through the FIRE, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, 'It is MY PEOPLE:' and they shall say, 'The ETERNAL is my God (Zech. 13:9).

Now back to I Corinthians 3:13-15. It ought to be plain, now!

This is speaking of begotten children of God, who have received God's Holy Spirit -- that is, CHRIST in them, in Spirit -- as the FOUNDATION. Some people, once converted and receiving God's Spirit, do begin to live by every word of the Bible, as Jesus said we must (Luke 4:4). They have had their hearts in GOD'S WORK for our time. They have prayed for it daily -- prayed for God's guidance and protection of those of us active in it -- contributed generously and cheerfully toward it financially.

They have sought, and found, the TRUE VALUES of life. They have striven to overcome. They have studied to know God's WAY -- to show themselves approved unto GOD. They have kept close to God, by daily Bible study and prayer. They have BUILT RIGHTEOUS, SPIRITUAL, STERLING character! In other words, they have built on the FOUNDATION with gold, silver, and precious stones. These have survived the TEST. They came through the fire. These are the ones who "brought forth fruit" -- whose "pound" gained "ten pounds" -- who will be given authority over MUCH.

But there are MANY -- and I personally know of many such -- who with JOY have received God's Holy Spirit -- their conversion as Christians -- and have remained in a GOOD ATTITUDE, but whose "WORKS have been of inferior quality, pictured by the hay and stubble. Most of their "WORKS" of their Christian lives will be burned up, when the final examination comes. Their reward -- status in the Kingdom -- position qualified for -- is very small, yet THEY, themselves, will be saved by God's grace! They

suffer the LOSS of higher position -- greater authority for service and doing good -- but they themselves will be saved.

We are SAVED by GRACE, through Christ's FAITH -- given as God's GIFT. But whatever "REWARD" -- status, rank, position, degree of GLORY -- is conferred, once we are changed to immortality IN God's Kingdom, will be according to our "works" in this present mortal life -- and according to the character and quality of those works.

And remember, even the WORKS come through God's Holy Spirit -- the works of righteousness are not our self-righteousness, but GOD'S righteousness. That's the KIND of "WORKS" I believe in and teach!

WHY the Christian Life?

WHY do most of those who claim to be the very CLERGY of Jesus Christ say there are NO WORKS WHATEVER" in the Christian life?

Because of their false pagan and unscriptural doctrine about what "salvation" is. Their conception of salvation seems to be an eternity of idleness and ease -- with nothing to do. The development of the very CHARACTER of the living GOD -- preparing for RULERSHIP -- qualifying for SERVICE -- have no place in their false pagan theology.

Many times I have asked, over the air, and in The PLAIN TRUTH, "WHY, if there are 'no works' to the Christian life, is not one taken immediately, upon first accepting Christ, to his 'reward'? WHY must the converted Christian -- if he is 'already saved' finally, if he has been already 'born again' -- go on suffering IN THIS LIFE? WHY does the Bible say, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous,' and 'All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution?' WHY not avoid all this suffering? WHY doesn't God take new converts immediately to 'glory' -- or wherever, or whatever, they conceive as the eternal state of the saved?"

The answer is that God put humans on this earth for a PURPOSE! That PURPOSE is stated in Genesis 1:26 -- God is actually reproducing Himself! God is the Supreme Spiritual CHARACTER -- holy, righteous, perfect. We, to be actually BORN of Him -- BORN into His FAMILY as HIS divine children -- must be changed, not only from mortal to IMMortal -- not only from human to divine -- but from our human nature and sinning character, into HIS DIVINE Nature (II Peter 1:4) and into His HOLINESS and PERFECTION of character (I Peter 1:16; Matt. 5:48). And that must be developed, through the Christian life! It means overcoming, growing in knowledge and character!

We are to become a NEW CREATION (Gal. 6:15, margin). God's spiritual creation is still going on, in us! We are now mere CLAY of the dust of the ground. God is the Potter -- we are the clay (Isa. 64:8). We must, on our own decision, with our own complete submission, and even with our own effort accompanying, yield so that the Master Potter may completely remake, refashion, reshape our vile characters into the holy, righteous, spiritual and perfect character of GOD.

Your Part in GOD'S WORK

In my over fifty years' intensive, rich, active experience, since God changed MY direction into HIS WAY, I have observed that the very first need of every Christian, who is to GROW and develop this spiritual character, is to have his heart completely in THE

WORK OF GOD, which the living Christ has called His servants to do, as His instruments! Our “works” are our part in GOD’S WORK -- getting His true Gospel to the whole world as a witness -- preparing the way for Christ’s coming. We are merely His INSTRUMENTS. It is GOD’S WORK! Those who condemn “WORKS” are condemning the Great GOD who is the actual DOER through us as His instruments and Co-Workers! It is not, after all, our works!

Those who are self-centered, caring nothing for the WORK OF GOD, having not enough outgoing concern to want to help GET CHRIST’S MESSAGE out to this blinded, deceived, dying world, fall away. Those who center their whole “Christian” life and activity on developing their own selves spiritually, whose hearts are not in or concerned about this great OUTGOING worldwide WORK OF GOD, actually directed by the living CHRIST, develop only INWARDLY, until they shrivel up spiritually and fall by the wayside! Those whose hearts, their active, constant, earnest, fervent PRAYERS, and their tithes and offerings are in GOD’S WORK continue to EXPAND spiritually -- they become HAPPIER -- they become greatly BLESSED -- their lives become richer and fuller -- and their faces beam in smiles. They RADIATE! They PROSPER!

The New Testament is literally filled with instruction on Christian living -- leading a new, different, sparkling, joyous life -- or, perhaps more correctly, allowing Jesus Christ to live such a life -- GOD’S WAY in them!

How WONDERFUL is God’s Way!

SALVATION comes -- if we are willing -- as God’s FREE GIFT -- by GRACE!

But we must be changed. There is DOING, not hearing only (Rom. 2:13). There is development of a new righteous CHARACTER. Yet, even that is CHRIST IN YOU actually DOING it! Actually, even the “works” are primarily done by HIM! But how WONDERFUL that there are righteous “WORKS” in the true Christian life -- opportunity for more than salvation, priceless though that be -- opportunity for higher position, rank, opportunity to serve, higher GLORY!

END