

Armando Rodriguez

The Oracles

Dead Works

Basic Principles #1

THE ORACLES

Dead Works

Armando Rodriguez

Covenant Publisher
Corpus Christi, Texas

Copyright 2016 by Armando Rodriguez
All Rights Reserved

To my wife Teresa and children for their love and support

Preface

In the letter to the Hebrews, the author offers a stern rebuke to those believers who had shown no evidence of growth. He had just taught them about the high priesthood of Jesus and how he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Father. He had instructed them about how Jesus had learned obedience by the things he suffered and that being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all those who obey him. The author of the letter had much more to unveil, but paused to express his disappointment for their dull hearing. "You ought to be teachers by now, he said, but instead, you still have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God." Instead of eating strong meat, you are still drinking milk. You are yet unskilled in the word of righteousness and are unable to discern between good and evil. The writer called them babies.

The author of the letter provides the reader with a list the six basic principles of the doctrine of Christ. He called them the basic principles of the oracles of God. Historically, an oracle, was known as someone through whom a god would utter hidden knowledge or a divine purpose. Upon close review of these doctrines or basic principles, it will become evident that God was revealing his secrets to those who had embraced Him. The believers to whom this letter was written had fallen short of God's expectation. They had failed to master the knowledge found in the six basic oracles of God. According to the writer, the recipients of this letter should have already grasped these foundational principles. It was not the case. Note the six basic doctrines outlined by the writer to the Hebrews:

- Repentance from Dead Works
- Faith Toward God
- Doctrine of Baptisms
- Laying on of Hands
- Resurrection of the Dead
- Eternal Judgment

The problem we find in this letter is not uncommon. As I visit churches here and abroad, I have found that most believers are unable to express or voice an opinion about the basic principles of the doctrine of Christ which I have listed above. The writer of the letter encourages the reader to move on to perfection, but maybe it would good to pause and review these six teachings before we proceed. It may be that a lack of our understand of the basic doctrines of Christ may cause us to stumble as we move into a higher plan of service to God. As we study these basic principles of the oracles of God, we will discover not only hidden knowledge, but also God's wonderful plan.

This study, we will focus on the first of six doctrines: **"REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS."**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One

Works in the New Testament

Chapter Two

What are Dead Works?

Chapter Three

What is the Work of Christ?

Chapter Four

Dead Works vs. Good Works

Chapter Five

New Testament Examples of Good Works

Conclusion

Chapter One

Works in the New Testament

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,
let us go on unto perfection; not laying again
the foundation of repentance from dead works ...”

When dealing with the issue of repentance from dead works, it is necessary to point out that while Scripture condemns dead works, it does so in order to highlight the truth we are to embrace.

Dead works can never produce regeneration, justification, righteousness, sanctification or glorification. Full salvation is secured for us ONLY by the Work of Christ, not human effort.

WORKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the passage, we have quoted above, the reader is called to repent from dead works. This grievous sin assumed that God’s full salvation could be earned or purchased by the works or merit of men. The nine authors of the New Testament are clear regarding the inability of the human race to produce anything worthy of God’s saving grace. The Scriptures portrays our condition by proclaiming the following:

- There is none righteous
- None understands God
- None seeks God
- All have gone out of the way
- All have become unprofitable
- None does good
- Our throat is an open sepulchre
- Our tongue uses deceit
- Our lips have the poison of asps
- Our mouth is full of cursing
- Our feet are swift to shed blood

- Destruction and misery are in our ways
- We have not known the way of peace
- There is no fear of God before our eyes
- We are all guilty before God
- We have all fallen short of the glory of God

Due to our nature (described above) and its predisposition to sin, we are not able to produce any work that is worthy of God's gift of salvation. Is it any wonder that the prophet Isaiah states that, on a good day, our best works are but menstrual rags? (Isa. 65:5) Job in his reflection concerning human nature states, "how much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinks iniquity like water?" (Job 15:16) David also informs us that "the LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." God declared, "they are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy..." (Psa. 14:2-3).

The writers of the New Testament consider the idea of paying for God's salvation as preposterous. I am not saying that human beings are incapable of doing good things, but we can never stand before God and pay for the eternal gift He is offering the human race. The price for salvation was paid for by Jesus Christ through the work he accomplished. As we read through the pages of Scripture, we are able to see that historically, our works have fallen short of satisfying God. The Bible speaks to the type of works we have repeatedly produced. Note the list of a few examples. We produced:

- Dead Works
- Evil works
- Works of the flesh
- Unfruitful works of darkness
- Unprofitable works

Prior to repentance, we were called evil workers and children of disobedience. We could only produce dead works in regard to salvation. Our works were said to be inspired by the spirit of this age and had the power to bring men into bondage. The truth is that a bad tree cannot produce good fruit unless its branches have been grafted to God's vine.

After repentance, however, we are said to become capable of producing good works. They are not produced to secure salvation, but because we have secured it. When we repent, we receive a new nature that brings with it new desires. After receiving eternal life, we do good works because it is in our new nature to do so. We do good works because it brings us great joy. Our work is never in vain. We relish the privilege to be co-workers with God and a blessing to the world. Scripture teaches that when we do good works, God is glorified and we are rewarded. What a delight. We do what we enjoy and then God rewards us for doing it. The

process is simple. Upon hearing, receiving, and practicing God's Word, it works effectually in us. The Word of God infuses a divine life into us and opens the way for Father, Son and Holy Spirit to indwell us. Good works are produced by God through us.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT ARE DEAD WORKS?

The writers of the New Testament warn us concerning dead works. Dead works compete with the work of Christ as a means of acquiring full salvation?

The New Testament provides a list of practices (dead works) performed in order to acquire salvation. They include:

- Circumcision
- The Deeds of the Law
- Observation of Days
- Observation of Months
- Observation of Times
- Observation of Years
- Ceremonial Laws related to Meat
- Ceremonial Laws related to Drink
- Ceremonial Laws related to Holydays
- Ceremonial Laws related to New Moons
- Ceremonial Laws related to the Sabbath Day
- Voluntary Humility
- Worshipping of Angels
- Abstinence of Certain Practices (touch not, taste not, handle not)
- Blood of Bulls and Goats
- Relationship to Abraham
- Membership in the Jewish Race
- Membership in the Jewish Religion
- Offerings according to the Law of Moses

Note that most of the practices (dead works) are religious in nature. The Jews touted the keeping of the law as a dead work. Paul informs us that the law was just a shadow of good

things to come. Again, he points out that Christ is the substance of all the shadows cast by the civil, ceremonial and moral law. The law of Moses was to be a school master that served the purpose of bringing us to Christ. Most of the items listed above are not evil in and of themselves. They become evil when we think that their practice is sufficient to earn us salvation. (Regeneration, justification, righteousness, sanctification and glorification) Dead works possess no power to produce anything of eternal value.

We are called to repent or change our mind about thinking that any human-work can ever buy God's wondrous gift of salvation. The religious Jews of the New Testament declared that except a man be circumcised or practice the Mosaic law he could not be saved. This dispute was settled by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The leadership of the church announced that any insistence on practicing any item on the list provided above was constituted as **tempting God** and **putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples**. Paul declared that those who teach a work-based salvation bring a **curse** and **judgement** upon themselves.

If we cannot do anything to secure salvation, then what must we do to be saved? The writers of Scripture unanimously affirm, "The just shall live by faith." I would ask, faith in what? We must embrace, believe and have faith in the Work of Christ if we are to secure God's great gift of salvation. Full Salvation is a process that includes the following:

- Regeneration (Receipt of Nature)
- Justification (Declaration of Innocence)
- Righteousness (Imputation of Perfection of Christ)
- Sanctification (Process of Transformation into image of the Son)
- Glorification (Receipt of an Immortal Body)

Note these steps as we discuss the Work of Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT IS THE WORK OF CHRIST

Moments before his death on the cross, Jesus cried out and declared, “It is finished!” What was finished? His redemptive work! His birth, life, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and glorification were all part of the work that Jesus came to accomplish. The writer to the Hebrews informs us that Jesus offered one sacrifice for ever and then sat down at the right hand of God. Paul constantly declared, full salvation comes to us by his grace, not human effort. The word ‘grace’ means unmerited favor. God brings salvation to us because of his love, not because of any merit resident in us. Scripture teaches that the purpose of God stands, not of works, but of him that calls us. We are informed that salvation is not of him that wills, but of God who shows mercy. God is the one who gives repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. He has made a new covenant and Jesus is its messenger. The new covenant has put the laws of God into our heart and mind and we have been sprinkled from an evil conscience. Father sent His Son to carry out a work that would bring salvation to us. Let’s review what has been accomplished as a result of the Work of Christ.

REGERNATION AND JUSTIFICATION

Scripture teaches that prior to becoming aware of the Work of Christ, the Holy Spirit brings us to life. (Regeneration) Upon being spiritually raised from the dead, we are granted a measure of faith and are made aware of the fact that Jesus has justified (declared us innocent) us freely by his grace. Justification comes to us through the redemption that is in Jesus. He paid a price (his life) for us. As we come to him with an empty hand of faith, we receive faith and undeserved kindness. Prior to repentance, we were guilty before God due to our law-breaking. We brought upon ourselves the curse of the law and awaited punishment for our captial crimes. An eternal death sentence was hanging over us. We had no legal representation before the court of heaven until Jesus stepped up. Through his work of death, we were justified (constituted and declared to be innocent). Jesus cancelled out our law breaking debt. Through his work of death, we were freed from punishment and eternal death. Through the work of his burial, we were provided a clean slate. Jesus was sent by Father to condemn sin in the flesh and provide us with remission of sins. Scripture makes clear that ‘our sins and iniquities he will remember no more.’ When Jesus was buried, our sin was buried along with him.

Our faith focuses on the effectiveness of the Work of Christ. It is Jesus who saved us from our guilt. It is Jesus who rescued us from the punishment and curse of eternal death. (through his crucifixion and death). It is Jesus who saved us from our debt of sin (through his burial).

The writers of the New Testament are in agreement. No regeneration or justification is possible apart from the finished work of Christ. The just are to live by faith in what Jesus accomplished through his work (**crucifixion, death and burial**). Through these, he secured our regeneration and justification.

Now, there is no condemnation (guilt) to those who believe in what the work of Christ has accomplished. There is no fear of eternal death and punishment. Jesus lifted the curse and has

lavished upon us the blessings of heaven. We conclude this section by stating again that the just shall live by faith in the Work of Christ (crucifixion, death and burial).

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Our faith in his work (**perfect human life**) is also counted for righteousness. Jesus was a perfect law-keeper. It is by his perfect life that we have been reconciled to God. It is not enough to have a clean slate (forgiveness of sins). If we are to stand in God's presence, we are required to possess perfect righteousness. The problem is that by nature we are unrighteous. We were born in sin. The solution is that by nature Christ is righteous. He was sinless and never broke the law.

When we repent and believe in the work he accomplished, Jesus imputes/transfers his law-keeping righteousness into our account. Today, we can stand and enjoy the presence of God because we who believe have now acquired the robe of the righteous Jesus. Because of his perfect life, Jesus has granted us atonement (made us one with God) and provided us with the righteousness necessary to stand in before God.

The Jews believed that human beings had to earn righteousness by practicing the law, but the Scriptures informs us that we have all sinned/broken the law and have fallen short of God's glory. Righteousness is imputed, not earned. We can only acquire it by believing in the Work Christ has accomplished. What work is this? His work of living a sinless life. He imputed his righteousness to us so we could in turn experience fullness of joy in God's presence.

Jesus, by his righteousness (perfect life), brought the free gift upon all men unto justification of life. His obedience made us righteous. Grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus.

Dead works (law keeping to gain God's favor), on the other hand, were too weak to deliver the necessary righteousness that allows us to stand in God's presence. We conclude this section by stating that the just shall live by faith in the Work of Christ (His sinless life which imputed his righteousness to us)

SANCTIFICATION

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews informs us that we are sanctified by the offering of Jesus once for all. The Work of Christ (sanctification, holiness, being conformed into the image of Christ) that God began in us will continue until the day he returns. In reference to sanctification, Paul declares, faithful is He who called you who will also DO IT. The Work of Christ through his resurrection has brought to us a new nature. Scripture teaches that if any man be in union with Christ, old things are passed away, behold all things are made new. This is the process of sanctification. As we remain in union with Christ, we are changed from one degree of glory to another. We are conformed to his image and likeness. In addition, as we walk in the Spirit, we are transformed into a channel of life and blessing to the world. This

process is made possible by the Work of Christ (resurrection). After his resurrection, he ascended and was glorified. He was made both Lord and Christ and sent to us the Holy Spirit who is now completing the work of transforming us into God's masterpiece. We conclude this section by stating that the just shall live by faith in the Work of Christ (**His resurrection**). Because of his resurrection work, we have become partaker of His divine nature and are in the process of becoming like him. It is the Work of Christ (perfect life, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and glorification) which has accomplished for us full salvation. (regeneration, justification, righteousness, sanctification, glorification)

GLORIFICATION

The Scripture informs us that we will also be glorified because of the work accomplished by Christ (**Resurrection/Glorification**). When Scripture declares that we will be glorified, it refers to the receipt of a new resurrected body. His working will change our vile body and fashion it into his glorious body. Paul indicates that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is not only present but is at work in us. Our mortal body will be brought back to life. Glorification will deliver to us a body that is eternal in the heavens. When we die, our body will be planted as a seed, but will be raised in incorruption. It will be sown in dishonor and weakness, but will be raised in glory and power. We now own a natural body, but will one day possess one that is spiritual. Our body now bears the image of the earthly, but it will one day bear the image of the heavenly. When we come to die, the Resurrection Work of Christ will cause our body to put on immortality and we will enjoy the glory of God's presence forever.

ENTRANCE INTO GOD'S PRESENCE

Jesus has brought to us a better hope. He made things perfect and we can now draw near to God. Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant. He is the high priest of good things to come. By the offering of himself, he perfected for ever those who are sanctified. We can now enter with boldness into God's presence because of HIS WORK THROUGH CHRIST. He has provided us with a new and living way. We can now draw near to God with full assurance of faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEAD WORKS VS. GOOD WORKS

WHAT ABOUT DEAD WORKS

Again, the process of salvation includes regeneration, justification, righteousness, sanctification and glorification. The writers of the New Testament agree that salvation is made possible only by the work Christ has accomplished in his birth, perfect life, death, burial, resurrection and and glorification. The Jews, on the other hand, made the Work of Christ of none effect by declaring that salvation was possible by producing works that were worthy of God's salvation. In their ignorance, they failed to submit to God's righteousness. They did not walk uprightly regarding the truth of the gospel. They led their followers to weak, beggarly elements and cast the believers into confusion. Paul argued that if their version of the gospel was true, then Christ would profit them nothing and the believer had fallen from grace.

The Jews peddled various methods of acquiring salvation - Law-keeping (Civil, Ceremonial and Moral), circumcision, membership of the Jewish race and religion.

Scripture clearly teaches that it is only the finished Work of Christ that is sufficient to secure our full salvation. The just shall live faith in the WORK OF CHRIST. It is his exclusive activity that secures the benefits of salvation. The author of the letter to the Hebrews admonishes its reader to repent of the idea that human beings can produce works in order to secure salvation. The thought is an insult to heaven and will bring a curse upon those who refuse to abandon the mindset.

WHAT ABOUT GOOD WORKS?

What does scripture say about good works? Again, it is important to understand that good works can only be produced by someone who has already accepted the work Christ has accomplished. Because we have received a new nature, we now possess the motivation to do good works. We do produce works in order to gain anything from God; we do them because it brings us great joy.

Scripture calls us to abound in the work of the Lord. We are to be co-workers together with God. Good works are called the work of God. They are the fulfillment of God's moral law (10 Commandments).

Our good works are God's work because they begin with God's work in us. When we receive a new nature (eternal life), God's mighty power begins to operate in us. God produces in us to both will and do his good pleasure. The facts are:

- Christ gave himself that we should be zealous of good works

- We are created in Christ unto good works.
- God has ordained good works that we should walk in them.

It is God's effectual working of power that make us a minister and channel of His life. We strive to do good works according to his working. It is His power that works in and through us mightily. It is God who fulfills all the good pleasure of his goodness and work of faith with power. God establishes us in every good word and work. We seek to be prepared for the master's use unto every good work. What are we saying? God works upon and in us in order to produce good works that then flow through us. Our good works are in fact God's work through us. It is important to understand what transpires in us upon receipt of God' nature.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW NATURE

There are certain desires evident in those of us who receive God's life and nature:

- We seek to do and abound in works of faith
- We seek to be thoroughly furnished and ready to do all good works
- We seek to produce good works
- We seek to be fruitful in and manifest every good work
- We seek to be rich in good works
- We are careful to maintain good works.
- We show ourselves a pattern of good works in our doctrine

CHAPTER FIVE

EXAMPLES OF GOOD WORKS?

Jesus taught us to do our works before men that the outsider may in turn glorify Father. Are there examples of good works in Scripture? Yes! What follows are a few samples found in the New Testament. Those who have become recipients of God's eternal life (New Nature) are now God's channels of blessing. We do good works by:

- Doing the work of ministry
- Seeking to edify the body of Christ
- Seeking to increase in the knowledge of God
- Bringing up children
- Lodging strangers
- Washing the feet of the saints
- Relieving the afflicted
- Seeking to be a vessel of honor
- Seeking to be sanctified
- Visiting the fatherless in their time of need
- Visiting widows in their time of need
- Keeping oneself unspotted from the world
- Attending to our personal spiritual growth
- Allowing the fruit of the Spirit to flow through us
- Allowing the gifts of the Spirit to work through us
- Providing financial support for those who teach God's Word
- Witnessing
- Meeting the needs of the saints
- Doing the will of God
- Enrich saints in word and deed
- Keeping the 10 commandments

(This is not a comprehensive list of good works found in the Bible)

CONCLUSION

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

There are many who have embraced a false sense of security. They may think that good intentions or the desire to be a better person is sufficient to gain God's offer of salvation. However, it is necessary to understand the work accomplished by Christ and to approach God in faith concerning His provision. We must come before God with an understanding that we cannot save ourselves from our fallen and depraved condition. We must acknowledge our inability to save ourselves and accept the provision God has made through the Work of Christ. God has no desire that anyone perish, but that we all come to the knowledge of the truth.

God desires to bring us to life by dispensing into us His nature. God offers freedom from the guilt of sin and deliverance from its penalty. He offers to impute the perfect righteousness of Christ to us and transform us into His masterpiece. He promises an eternal body that will put on incorruption, immortality, bear the image of the heavenly and be raised in glory and power. Eternity will lavish upon us the bliss and glory of the presence of God.

(For questions or comments, please e-mail me at Arrodriguez1new@gmail.com)

OTHER BOOKS AND QUICK READS

BOOKS

The Narratives of Christ (Gospel)
Is God Speaking? (Minor Prophets)
God's Life-Changing Curriculum (An Agent of Change)
Worship (In the New Testament)

QUICK-READS

The Authority of the Believer
Transforming Power
Redeemed from the Curse (Entitled to the Blessing)
Emotional Intelligence (Models: A Brief Review)
Why He Came
The Kingdom (13 Parables)
Divine Transition
Divine Expectation
Unclaimed Wealth
Times of Refreshing
Unlocking God's Diary
The House of James
The Will of God (In James)
The Pure Gospel (Galatians)
Paul's Vision of God (Ephesians)
The Journey
The Oracles: Repentance from Dead Works #1
The Oracles: Faith Toward God #2
The Oracles: Baptisms #3
The Oracles: Laying on of Hands #4
The Oracles: Resurrection of the Dead #5
The Oracles: Eternal Judgement #6

For a free book, send me an email:
Arrodriguez1new@gmail.com