

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,  
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## Are We Saved by Works?

**W**orks have gotten a lot of bad press over the years. Those who do not understand the place that works have in salvation are quick to quote passages like Romans 4:1-6 and Ephesians 2:8,9. Those who speak of the importance, or even the essentiality, of works are referred to as being legalistic and Pharisaical, which is a little humorous since Jesus never criticized the Pharisees for being involved in works. To the contrary, Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees for their lack of doing (Matthew 23:3). We never find Jesus putting the Pharisees down for striving to keep the law. God is displeased when people break the law, not keep it (James 2:10).

The question is, are we saved by works? Most religious people will immediately say no, if for no other reason than it sounds bad to say yes. And the reason it sounds bad to say we are saved by works is because man has been saying we are not saved by works for such a long time. Actually, the answer to that question is both yes and no, depending on what kind of works are under consideration. If one is referring to meritorious works whereby one can earn justification, the answer is no. Those are the kind of works that Paul had in view in passages like Eph. 2:8,9. On the other hand, if one is speaking of works of faith, that is, works that are produced by faith in God and His Son, Jesus, then the answer is yes. Those kind of works do save (James 2:14-26). In verse twenty-four of the stated passage, James says specifically, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Can there be any doubt, in view of this passage, that works save? The honest Bible student will have to affirm what the scriptures affirm, and the scriptures affirm that works save.

The kind of works that James refers to is just another way of referring to obedience. Paul used the word works in that same way. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Notice how Paul used the words "works" and "obeyed" interchangeably in this verse. To work out your own salvation is to obey God. Without obedience there can be no salvation (Heb. 5:9).

It should also be noted that these kinds of works play a part in both attaining and maintaining salvation. To be saved a person must obey the gospel (Romans 1:16). Obeying the gospel involves works. Anytime there is action that must be taken, that action is a form of work. From this standpoint, even faith is a work (John 6:28, 29). Repentance is a work. Confession is a work. Baptism is a work. These are not meritorious works. They are not things that one does and then is in position to say, "now God owes me salvation." They are actions taken as a result of one's faith in God. They are works that allow us to take advantage of God's grace and enter into fellowship with Him. Without doing these works, one is destined to be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9). So, are we saved by works? Absolutely, as long as you are referring to the right kind of works.

Not only are we saved by obeying God, our newly required justification and fellowship with God is maintain by our obedience. To have an association with God, one must walk in the light (1

John 1:7). Walking in the light certainly involves obedience to God. We must do God's will (Matthew 7:21). Only then will we hear those precious words "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Furthermore, these types of works are not things that we can do for a while and then quit. We must be steadfast in our labor (1 Cor. 15:58). We must be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

This does not mean that we are perfect. We all sin from time to time (Romans 3:23). By God's grace, however, we will still be saved as long as we have an obedient mind and a repentant heart. Do you have faith in God? If so, show Him that you do by your faithful obedience to His Word. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling!

*Don*

## **A Busy Day**

**For the Christian every day is a busy day**

**by Billy Norris**

1. *He will spend time daily with the word of God.* The Bereans who searched the scriptures daily were judged as noble, or fair-minded. "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures *daily* to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Their daily search had good results, for many of them believed the teaching of Paul (Acts 17:12). In days gone by every one in the congregation was encouraged to be a daily Bible reader. Records were kept in the classes. Youngsters were brought up to search the scriptures daily. If evidence could be compared, it possibly would show that knowledge of the word of God then was more advanced than at the present time. A part of the Christian's day should be devoted to searching the scriptures.

2. *He will spend time daily in prayer.* Christ taught His disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). This sounds very much as if He intended for them to engage daily in prayer. In the parable of the persevering widow, He taught "that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Lk. 18:1-8). Paul admonished, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). This statement might be compared to "Eat without ceasing." One could not eat every moment day and night, but if he ceased eating, he would die. Eat with regularity. Eat daily. Pray with regularity. Pray daily. Thus pray without ceasing. A part of the Christian's day should be devoted to speaking to his Father.

3. *The Christian's day includes self-denial and cross-bearing.* "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me" (Lk. 9:23). The context of this scripture shows what it means to deny self and bear the cross daily. To deny self and bear the cross daily means never to be ashamed of Christ and His way, but to willingly bear the burdens associated with true devotion and consecration to His cause daily. The Christian's day will surely include self-denial and cross-bearing.

4. *He will spend time daily exhorting and admonishing others of like precious faith.* "But exhort one another *daily*, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). Destructive forces were trying to persuade the Hebrew Christians to turn back to the law of Moses, which had served its purpose, and had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Christians needed to be together daily to exhort and encourage one another to stand firm and true against the persistent, undermining Judaizing influences. Further, they needed "to consider one another in order to stir up love and good works," one of those good works being the faithful assembling of themselves together. In the face of powerful evil influences they could admonish one another. The Christian's day should include exhorting and encouraging one another.