

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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FEARING GOD AND WORKING RIGHTEOUSNESS

Will God commit those who have never heard of Jesus Christ to exist forever in a place of punishment? There are those who insist that this is declared in the Bible, but they present no exhaustive teaching on the subject.

If you had lived upon the earth before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, what would you have done, what could you have done to make yourself acceptable to God? What would have been your duties and responsibilities in relationship to Him? Does the Bible give any answers to these questions? I believe that it does. It provides positive information that will solve the problems set forth in the questions asked above.

The duties of men in relationship to God are many. Notwithstanding, His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Duties before Him may vary under different administrations. What He has at times required of some, He may not at other times require of others. The Biblical words that are the subject of this study set forth a general principle that is applicable to all men at all times under all conditions. The Apostle Peter, under full control of the Spirit of God, declared this principle in the household of Cornelius, the Centurion: **"In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him"** (Acts 10:35).

We can rest assured here that God through Peter said what He meant and that He meant what He said. We should, therefore, take Him at His word and believe accordingly. It will be accredited to us as an act of faith if we do so. If any man at any time in human history desires acceptance on the part of God, then let him fear God and work righteousness. Anyone who have ever done so or will now do so will not be rejected by Him. He will be accepted.

The declaration made by Peter was not a new revelation. Solomon declared this same general truth when he closed the book of Ecclesiastes saying: "**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments (precepts), for this is the whole duty of man**" (12: 13).

The prophet Micah declared the same truth when he said: "**He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God**" (6:8).

Of course, it will be plain at once to the careful Bible reader that the Israelites who had divine legislation from God (Rom. 9:4) and the Gentiles (nations) which did not have the law (Rom. 2: 14) would have a different understanding from God as to what would be their "works of righteousness."

In view of these truths, it is most pertinent that all should ask themselves the questions: "Am I living my life in the fear of God? Am I working righteousness in His sight?" It may be that you have only put on a little religion and have ignored these two great principles of God. It would be good if all of us would put into action Paul's words in 2 Cor. 13:5: "**Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.**"

In Acts, Chapter 10, we read of the Roman centurion Cornelius, and are told that he was "**a devout man; and one that feared God with all his house**" (Acts 10:2), that he gave much alms to the people (Israel), that he prayed, and when he prayed, he prayed only to God. These things being true, we can say without hesitation, even dogmatically, that he was a man whom God had accepted, and that he was accepted by God even before Peter proclaimed and offered Christ to him.

These truths concerning Cornelius are very hard for religious men to accept since they contradict and deny many of their ideas that are firmly held. One of these is their belief in the total depravity of all men. Out of this has grown the idea that no man can come to God and be related to Him unless he comes as a member of some organization such as a church or synagogue. This has led many to think that this Roman must have had a Jewish background, either by birth or as a proselyte; for they cannot see how anyone could be declared devout and said to be accepted of God unless certain organizations and ceremonies entered into the picture. They have never learned that an arrangement had been established by God whereby anyone could be a child of God, a member of His family. But such an arrangement was a divine reality, so the first words of Peter to Cornelius assured him that he had already been accepted of God, and this on the basis of his fear of God and his works of righteousness.

The process that accomplished this is made clear in the Word. Cornelius had come into the knowledge of the existence and reality of God, as had every other man that came into the world. This came from the work of the Logos (Word) Who was in the world for this very purpose. This revelation of God made it possible for him to exercise faith. He could come to God believing this revelation, knowing that He was also the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb.11:6). Even as God had intended, so he did. He sought God, groping after Him, and found Him (Acts 17:27). His response to the work of the Logos was equivalent to receiving Him. He was given authority to become a child of God.

From that day forth Cornelius the Roman soldier came face to face with many situations in his life that demanded God be considered. It became his "work of righteousness" to do what he knew to be right and refrain from what he knew to be wrong. If he could not decide, he could talk to God about it and guidance would be given. When he arrived in Palestine as an officer in the Roman army of occupation, he at once saw the terrible sufferings of the people. He did not close his eyes to their need. He gave much alms to the people (Acts 10:2).

These are the things we learn from the record given of one individual, but the question that arises immediately is whether he was the only one, or were there myriads more like him? I believe there were many more, uncounted, unknown, unrecognized. The companion question is "Are there any today who, like Cornelius, have gained acceptance by fearing God and working righteousness?" I believe there were untold millions in the past who gained an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God, of whom we know nothing, but will know in that day when God makes His judgment of all the living and all the dead at His blazing forth (epiphaneia) even the day of His government upon the earth. Even today there may be unknown millions who have gained acceptance by fearing God and working righteousness.

If we could see with the eye of God the total history of any man in relationship with God it would have to begin in every man with the work of the Logos in his behalf. The "true light" which enlightens every man that comes into the world has operated to force upon him and make a part of his being the knowledge that above all beings there is One Who is Supreme; and this One requires recognition, reverence, and acceptance. The knowledge God gives makes these things possible, and if man responds to the divine workings, it will result in what the Bible calls "the fear of God."

The fear of God, which is the primary duty of all men, is based primarily on the recognition of Him. The words revere and reverence will much better express what God seeks from man than our English word "fear."

Reverence for God is manifest in the high regard, in the habitual respect, in the deep veneration, and in the personal exaltation we give to Him. Let us learn from the Psalmist: "**Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD**" (Psalm 112:1).

It has ever been the duty of all men to fear God. It is the first of the two basic components that make a man acceptable to God. It is your primary duty today. Furthermore, it is a duty that any man on earth can perform; and the more He practices it the better he will be at doing it. A man can fear God without any ritual, ceremony, ordinance, church, synagogue, chapel, shrine, pastor, priest, or bishop.

The second component is that all men shall work righteousness. However, at this point the greatest possible confusion seems to enter. This is because the average person thinks that to work righteousness means to practice religion. Simply stated, it means to do what you know to be right in God's sight and refrain from what you know to be wrong. Paul stated the negative side of this which can be seen in a more accurate translation of 1 Thess. 5:22: "Abstain (stand aloof) from that which is obviously evil (i.e. wicked to the perception)." Since you see that it is wicked and you know that it is wicked, have nothing to do with it. Following this simple precept would alter the lives of many professed followers of Christ.

It is quite clear that "works of righteousness" will differ under changing circumstances. Our Lord said: "**For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required**" (Luke 12:48). God has never required or demanded of men that they live up to light that they do not have. Again the Lord said of those in Israel who rejected Him: "**If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. If I had not done among them the work which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father**" (John 15:22,24). From this we see that the personal ministry of Jesus Christ made a change in what God expected as works of righteousness of those who experienced it.

In view of this we can say that if to your knowledge of God He has added the knowledge of the Logos Who became flesh, then your basic work of righteousness is to believe on Him Whom God has sent. All other works will be rejected if this foundational work is not there. Our Lord declared this in answering the question of many who were confused because of all the "works" that were set forth before them. They asked: "**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 6:29).

So, in answer to the man who wrote me and spoke of a certain girl saying: "While she rejects Jesus Christ she believes in God and does good works; therefore, like

Cornelius of Acts 10, I believe she is saved," I say, "Ridiculous, there is no hope for anyone who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ." To believe in Him is our chief work of righteousness. Therefore the question will always be: "Have you done this work?" No matter what you may have done along other lines, it is all for naught if you have not done this work.

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