

## IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD “WORKS” ?

Jno.6:28,29; 2Tim.3:16,17

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### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Our topic expressed in the form of a question is this: Is Obedience To God “WORKS”?
2. In spite of plain Bible teaching many professed Bible believers misunderstand this subject. They often hold the doctrine that if anyone teaches that any act of obedience beyond the act of faith is necessary to salvation from past sins then that means one is teaching salvation by works of man rather than by faith.
3. A typical example is a lady in Pine Bluff with whom we had set up a home Bible study who said: “Before we start this study, I want you to understand that I do not believe in salvation by works!”
  - a. My answer: “Neither do we!”
  - b. Her surprised response: “But I thought...!” And she proceeded to explain that she had been told that we of the church of Christ believed in, taught and practiced salvation by works.” (That is, meritorious works.)
  - c. My response: “Not so! We do not believe that and have never taught such an idea!” Then we tried to explain to her the difference between teaching and practicing salvation by works, and in the conditionality of salvation by faith, and/or salvation by “the obedience of faith.”
  - d. I say, we tried to explain it to her, to no avail. She was never convinced. She continued to cling to the idea of “salvation by faith alone before and without further acts of obedience and that we were in fact teaching salvation by works!
4. Another Pine Bluff lady called immediately after the radio program ended wherein I had discussed Mk.16:15,16 and the necessity of water baptism in order to be saved from past sins. She said, “Preacher, I want to know what you are going to do with Jno.3:16.” (Tell of our resultant conversation which ended by her saying, “Sometimes I wonder about that repentance too!”)
5. Why are so many professed Bible believers so opposed to the idea of “works” with reference to salvation? Why do they have so much trouble understanding and accepting the truth on the subject of “works” in reference to salvation?

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. SOME REASONS WHY SOME PROFESSED BIBLE BELIEVERS HAVE PROBLEMS UNDERSTANDING THIS SUBJECT.

1. By reason of their failure to consider all the N.T. says on the subject of how to be saved. For example:
  - a. By erroneously concluding that salvation is by “faith only,” or “at the point of faith before and without further acts of obedience,” because they only consider passages that speak of salvation “by faith” but mention no other conditions of salvation; such as: Jno.3:16; 5:24; Rom.5:1. (How they often reason from this!)
  - b. By erroneously reaching such a conclusion because they ignore or refuse to recognize other plain passages that teach we are saved by faith, not by faith only, but by faith plus other acts of obedience; such as: Mk.16:15,16; Ac.2:21,36-41; Rom.6:16-18; 2Th.1:6-10; Jas.2:14-26.
  - c. By their failure to study passages such as Eph.2:8 and Rom.4:4,5 in context, both immediate and remote context.
    - (1) Eph.2:8. Cf. Eph.1:13; Ac.18:24-19:5; Eph.5:23-27.
    - (2) Rom.4:4,5. Cf. Rom.4:1-8; Psa.32:1-5; Jas.2:14-24.
  - d. By their failure to recognize a vital principle of biblical interpretation; which is: To be saved one can never do less than any one passage requires, but one must do more than any one passage requires if and when other passages require more.
  - e. By their failure to recognize that the term “works” is used in different senses in different passages in different contexts; such as:
    - (1) In Jno.6:28,29 where one’s faith in Jesus is referred to as “the work of God.” Cf. 1Th.1:3; 2Th.1:11.
    - (2) “...if this...work be of men, it will come to naught,” Ac.5:38.
    - (3) “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith,” Rom.3:27.
    - (4) “Knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” Gal.2:16. Cf. Gal.3:10-14; Jas.2:20-24.

**B. QUESTIONS TO FOCUS THE ISSUE ANSWERING THE QUESTION:  
“IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD ‘WORKS’?”**

1. When one by faith obeys the commands of the Lord is he working?
2. Are the actions of obedience of the person acting by faith considered “works”? If so, are they or can they in any sense be considered “works” of disobedience? Works of mere man?
3. When “works” are commanded or praised in the N.T., as they often are, what are they? “Works” of obedience to God? “Works” of righteousness? “Works” which are essential?
4. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what are the “good works” of Mt.5:16?
5. If obeying the Lord’s will is not “works,” then what is it to “work righteousness” in order to be accepted of him in Ac.10:34,35? Cf. Ac.9:5,6; 10:1-6; 11:13,14.
6. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what is involved in working “good” in Rom.2:6-10?
7. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what is involved in “the work of the Lord” in 1Cor.16:10?
8. If obeying God’s will to your own salvation is not “works,” then what is involved in “working out your own salvation with fear and trembling” of Phil.2:12?
9. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what is the “good works” of Col.1:10?
10. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what is involved in “your work of faith” in 1Th.1:3; 2Th.1:11?
11. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what is the “good work” of 2Tim.2:21?
12. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what are the “good works” of 2Tim.3:16,17?
13. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what are the “works” of Tit.2:14?
14. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what are the “works” of Heb.10:24? Or of Heb.6:10?
15. If obeying God will is not “works,” then what is the “good work” of Heb.13:21?
16. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what is the “work” of Jas.1:25?
17. If obeying God’s will is not “works,” then what is involved in doing “good” in 3Jno.11?

18. If obeying God's will is not "works," then what is the "work" of Rev.22:12?

### III. CONCLUSION

1. Yes, without a doubt, obedience to God's will in the N.T. age is "works," but not the "works of the law of Moses," nor the meritorious works of men by which we earn our salvation, nor any kind of man's works that nullify salvation by grace through faith.
2. It is "the obedience of faith" of Rom.1:5; 16:25,26, the same kind of faith and works by which Abraham, "who is the father of us all," was justified. See Jas.2:20-24; Rom.4:1-3,13-22.
3. Remember Jno.6:28,29, which along with Rom.1:5; 16:25,26 and Rom.6:16-18, teach that it is "the work of God" when man believes; that is, when he by "the obedience of faith" obeys from the heart that form of doctrine and is "then made free from sin."
4. Why then should anyone question the fact that when God through Jesus Christ requires of us faith, repentance, confession and baptism for the remission of sins, and we obey this in submission to God's will, we are thus working the works of God without which no man can be saved?
5. How can one doubt that this is salvation by grace through faith? Or being justified by the grace of God through the faith of Christ?
6. Conclude with Gal.2:16; 1:6-9; 3:22-29; 5:6; Mk.16:15,16; 1Cor.15:1,2; Tit.3:4-7; 2Th.1:6-10.