

# Repentance from Dead Works

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- Heb. 6:1, “not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death...”
  - o The margin of my bible says “or from useless rituals”
  - o YLT - “reformation from dead works” others say “useless works, dead formalism”

## **James 1:26-27**

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Religion- The word carries negative connotations. What is the relationship between religion and theology? We understand that theology is the study of God. In contrast, religion has to do with the practice of faith; that is, the way in which we worship God and express our faith.

Every Bible believing church has a set of core values and tenants of their faith. This is referred to as a dogma, or the expression of cardinal points of doctrine. Dogma summarizes the fundamental points of the faith. In this aspect, it is used as a positive term.

What is the relationship between doctrine and dogma? Doctrine is the revelation of God regarding a truth which is found in the Bible. Dogma is the declaration of man about this truth, expressed in a creed. For instance in this Church:

*We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, inerrant and inspired in its original writings; the complete and final revelation of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21*

*We believe in one God, personal and knowable, who manifests Himself in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Deuteronomy 6:4; John 6:27; Acts 5:3-4*

Our goal as Christians is to maintain a good balance between doctrine and religion thus avoiding the extremes. Too much emphasis on theology (knowledge of God), we can become dry and lifeless- with a lot of head knowledge. Yet too much religion (the practice) at the expense of theology we are in danger of becoming religious fanatics.

- The Holy Spirit through James showed true religion- looking after the helpless- **Jas. 1:27**
- Jesus exposed religious hypocrisy; God really detests it- **Mt. 6:1-18; 15:7; 23; Lk. 12:1**

## Yoke of Slavery

### Matthew 15:7-9

“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’”

- So when Hebrews 6:1 talks about “Useless Rituals”- the traditions of men come to mind
- Paying any attention to “Man Made Rules” is a useless waste of time
- One of my greatest pet peeves is to find out that I had expended a lot of work in vain

**Psalms 127:1-2**, “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves.”

- Ps 138:2 NKJV, “*For you have magnified Your word above all Your name.*”
- Ps 103:20, “*...you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.*”
- 1 Cor. 7:19, “*Keeping God's commands is what counts.*”
- The Bereans were of more noble character, they checked the Word first- **Acts 17:11**
- Having God’s plan for our life and obeying it keeps us from doing anything in vain
- Pray and walk out God’s will- **Jer. 29:11; 2 Cor. 10:12-18; Col. 1:9; Heb. 13:21; 1 Jn. 5:14**

**1 Cor. 15:58**, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

- Sinful humanity is inherently self-righteous and full of pride- Cain and Abel- **Gen. 4:1-7**
  - o Cain brought the works of his hands- Isaiah 64:6 states- “*self-righteous filthy rags*”
- Beware of falling into legalism- it’s subtle and seductive
  - o **Matthew 23:24**, “*You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.*”
- **Please Read: Galatians 3:1-14; Colossians 2:16-23**
  - o Paul having been a Pharisee knew all about legalism- **Gal. 2:15-16, 21**
- The believers in Galatia were being corrected for slipping back into legalism and religion
- Many are sincere in trying to earn and deserve God’s favor; a serious mistake- **Pr. 14:12**
- No amount of zeal/works will please God, only faith- **Heb. 11:6**
- **Please Read: Romans 9:30-10:1-13**
- All the religions of the world follow a similar premise- good works outweigh bad works
  - o Even secular thinking follows it- I’m a good person and I try not to hurt anybody
  - o The religion of environmentalism is a façade- appeasing a guilty conscience

## Purpose of the Law

God is a Holy God and His righteousness demands absolute perfection. God practices what He preaches. Jesus as the Son of Man was tempted just as we are yet never sinned-**Heb.2:18; 4:15**

### **1 Peter 1:14-16**

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

- The rest of humanity was born into sin due to Adam’s fall- **Ro. 3:23; chapter 7**
- Sinful Humanity is incapable of meeting God’s standard of perfection- **Heb. 10:1-4**
- It is impossible for human beings to save themselves by good works
- Sinful human nature can only be changed by God; a new creation and being born again
- **Please Read: Titus 3:4-7**

### **Hebrews 7:11, 8:7-8,**

“If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come — one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said...”

The purpose of the law was to frustrate humanity, reveal their inability to live the perfect life that God requires. Thus reveal the need for a Savior and lead us to Jesus- **Gal. 3:18-25**

- The Law was a school master, to lead people to Jesus
- The Law was created not for the righteous, but for the ungodly- **1 Tim. 1:8-11**
- No doubt there is a certain appeal for people to want to follow a law of works
  - A sense of pride of what I accomplished- look at me and how righteous I am
  - “Well you know God helps those who help themselves”
    - This quote maybe fine for natural things, but not for salvation
  - We can’t take any credit for anything we receive- **Jn. 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:6-7**

### **Hebrews 7:18-19; 10:14**

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

## Two Kinds of Works

Someone might ask, “Well doesn’t God care about good works?” Yes, when it’s done in the right order. When attempted before one is born again it’s an exercise in futility.

**Matthew 19:25-26**, “When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, ‘Who then can be saved?’ Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’” Can’t change themselves *Mt. 7:13-14 ‘Narrow Gate’*

- A sinner sins because they have a sinful spiritual nature- **Mt. 12:33-35; Col. 2:11-15**
- That’s why we’re not to judge unbelievers, it’s their nature to be like the devil- **Jn. 8:44**
- Every human being on earth belongs to one of two families – **1 Jn. 3:4-10**
- The Work of God for unbelievers is repentance and faith in Jesus

**John 6:28-29**, “Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

**Acts 20:21**, “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”

**Acts 17:30**, “In the past God overlooked such ignorance (idolatry), but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”

- This is what repentance looks like; ‘God have mercy on me a sinner!’- **Lk. 18:9-14**
- Can’t buy our way into heaven; sin carries a spiritual crime ‘Death’- must be born again

## Romans 3:22-25

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

- **Please Read: Romans 4:1-8**
- When we work an earthly job, we expect to earn a wage for our efforts- obligation
- In Abraham’s case he simply believed God’s promise and thus received it by faith
- When folks become stubborn, reject the truth and do it their way- **Jude 11**
- Heb. 3:19, “So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.”

## Christian Good Works

We don’t become Christians by good works, but only by God’s grace and our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ- **Acts 4:12**. Saved unto good works not by them- **Eph. 2:8-10**. Same way we got saved, is the same way we are to live for Jesus- by grace through faith!

## Hebrews 10:38

"But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."

- As believers we continue to believe: 2 Cor. 5:7, *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."*
- Had a JW quote James 2:17, *"Faith without deeds is dead"*- but who is James addressing
- The Jehovah Witness was implying that good works is what God requires- not for sinners
- How can a bad tree (sinful nature of a sinner) possibly produce good fruit- **Mt. 12:33-35**
- Christian good works/fruit comes from a recreated born again spirit nature
- Why then do Christians still deal with sin in life- process of sanctification- **Ro. 8:9-14**
- Spiritual growth of becoming like Jesus is a process- from glory to glory- **2 Cor. 3:17-18**

## Colossians 1:10

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

- For the Christian it not about works, but rather bearing fruit- **John 15**
- When I think of works, I think of the vain efforts of straining, striving & stressing
- Fruit just grows naturally, automatically, with little effort- the rest of God

**Matthew 11:28-30**, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

## By Grace

- So what is Grace? First we must understand it originates from a person
- **Please Read: John 1:1-17** *Jesus, the Word of God is the Grace of God*
- The Word of God, Jesus Christ is the Grace of God
- The Grace of God proceeds from the Word of God

**Acts 20:32**, "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

**John 6:63**, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

**1 Peter 1:23**, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."

- The Grace of God is the Power of God- the dynamic duo
  - o Acts 4:7-8, 33; Ephesians 2:8-9
- 1 Th. 2:13, *"The word of God, which is at work in you who believe."*

**Eph. 3:7**, “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.”

- Grace is the power of God at work in us who believe – **Isa. 53:1**
- Grace is the ability of God to accomplish on our behalf what we can't do for ourselves

### **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Romans 1:16**, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

### **Acts 6:5, 8**

They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

- In James 4:6 we see that God gives grace to the humble, those who trust/believe
- In Jesus' Name we can receive all the grace and power we need from the Father

**Hebrews 4:16**, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

- The Gospel message is all about receiving the gift of God's grace- not works- **Ro. 11:6**
- Titus 2:11, “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*”
- **Please Read: Romans 5:6-21**

### **Acts 14:3**

So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.

- Rev 22:21, “*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.*” Last verse in Bible

So what are the works that God desires from us, what is the path, the right way back to God? Simply believe on Jesus. So as Christians how are we to live for God and do what pleases Him? Continue to serve God in the same manner we first received Him, by His Grace through Faith in His Word. As believers in Jesus Christ we function in His kingdom by God's grace through our faith in God's Word! Deriving power for living by the Spirit released through faith in the Bible- Heb.4:1-2. Not by fabricating and manufacturing a moral system based on our own discretion, or even trying to obey the Bible; attempting to do so in our own strength- which is foolishness!