

God says worship me in spirit and in TRUTH

Jesus instructed those who labor and are heavy laden to come unto Him and He will give them rest (Matt. 11:28). The labor and heaviness that is addressed here we take primarily to refer to those toils that are aimed at trying to secure a home in heaven and the burden that this involves for those who thus labor. It includes those who are ignorant of God's righteousness and are "going about to establish their own righteousness," and "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:1-3). This situation perfectly describes a great many people. They labor very hard to try to have enough good deeds accumulated on Judgment Day that it will assure them of being accounted worthy of a place in heaven. The apostle Paul taught us that such a labor, is a yoke on the necks of those who engage in it that neither our fathers nor we are able to bear" (See Acts 15:10). It is a religion of bondage, and Paul prayed for his brethren that they might be saved from their misguided zeal and from their ignorance of how eternal salvation was actually accomplished for the elect (Rom. 10:1-4). He tells them in Galatians 2:21 that "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." In other words, if we could establish a sufficient righteousness to qualify us for heaven by keeping the law then there would have been no point in the death of Christ for we already had the moral law and we could have simply obtained eternal salvation by keeping that law. What the law-worshippers did not realize was that the only way anyone could be saved by the keeping of the moral law would be for them to keep it to perfection all the days of their lives and never violate it in any particular, which no one can do.

It required both the life and the death of Christ for Him to work out a justifying righteousness for His people, which He imputes to them without works on their part (See Rom. 4:6). When we do the things that Christ has taught us to do, He does indeed account our obedience to us for righteousness in a timely sense, but it is not a justifying righteousness in an eternal sense.

Compliance with those things is simply our duty (Luke 17:10) and it has nothing whatsoever to do with procuring a home in heaven. To those who are expecting to reach heaven on the basis of keeping the Ten Commandments, or the moral law, the apostle gives the following dreadful indictment: "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith (Gal. 3:10-11). No man always continues perfectly in all things that the law requires; therefore if eternal salvation were not totally by the grace of God, the whole race of mankind would be eternally doomed and damned.

Thank God for His mercy to us poor sinners in fulfilling the law to a jot and a tittle, and then imputing that perfect righteousness to us or accounting it as ours. That is the only way God could be just and at the same time be the Justifier of His elect. That is also the only way we could ever have had a righteousness that would stand us in good stead before God. The freewill type religionists miss so very much by failing to grasp such truths of grace as the above.

---Elder Ralph Harris