

## **“Works”**

### **The Law of Moses and The Law of Christ**

*The discussion presented below, uses only Biblical references and teachings without any Latter-day Saint scripture included for the benefit of the missionaries and non-member. It was first written by the author as an aid while teaching an investigating pastor of an evangelical church. Thus, the scriptures used to discuss “works” are from the Bible only as modern scripture is not accepted outside the LDS faith.*

*Had modern LDS scripture been included, this brief article would have taken on the size of a small book. For the energy and time that would take, one must first ask the terrible question: “Who cares?” This work may not be so enlightening or entertaining to the Latter-day Saint familiar with the necessity of Character Change however, there may be a few scriptures and ideas that one may not be familiar with that might justify some time.*

*The scripture passages presented in this discussion are taken from the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) for no other reason than convenience and the popularity of the KJV. The NIV and other translations could be referenced and read just as well as the KJV. To facilitate the use of these other versions and translations, all passages quoted have the scriptural reference following them to be viewed in their context if one might desire a more modern vernacular. Space will not permit the 20/20 rule of scriptural understanding. The rule: read the 20 verses before and the 20 verses following the presented passage. It is suggested that one proceed on their own to view the scripture passages below in light of the 20/20 rule in their own time and study. Comments made by the author that are not part of the quoted text will be in [Brackets]. Italics, underline, and bold is added to the text for emphasis and will not be noted hereafter.*

## “WORKS”

### The Law of Moses and The Law of Christ

Bruce H. Porter

#### A summary of the Non-LDS view of Works

There are an infinite number of books, articles, and sermons on ‘Grace and Works’ that can be found in every Christian library and bookstore. From predestination to free will, the Calvinistic point of view to the Armenian doctrines of salvation, and the combination of the two. The books and commentaries are plentiful on the topics of Grace and Works. Teachers, leaders and pastors have been trying to reconcile the teachings of works, grace, and judgment found in scripture since the invention of the printing press. The acceptance of “Sola Scriptoria” and the popularity of ‘consecutive Bible study’ in the Christian world have forced the teachers of scripture to take a second look at the doctrines surrounding that of ‘works’ found in the words of Jesus Christ and the later Apostles. Arguments in print, person, and pulpit have ensued over the Christian’s part in their own salvation.

Almost all teachers of religion agree that there is a ‘Christian Character’ that should follow those that believe, but at the same time, many conclude that a good character is not a requirement for salvation if one only believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is assumed by many modern Christian theologians that the charitable, kind, and loving individual will be saved in the same heaven as the wicked, evil, and hateful, “if” they have both accepted Jesus as their Savior. To justify this inequity of lifestyles and character, pastors and teachers have presented the view and opinion that God will change the believer’s character without any ‘free will’ of the individual involved. However, the more these teachers study scripture the more they begin to question salvation without a Christian Character. Its eye opening when the scriptures are allowed to speak for themselves.

Everyone has the power to change their character if they desire. This has been seen in the lives of many new Christians as changes are made for the better in their lives. There is no doubt that those who seek to be better and asking God for help to do so, may be blessed in that change, but the desire, and free will or agency is first required. Good is not beyond the reach of any man or woman. Everyone has the power to ‘act’ or react to each situation and do not have to be ‘acted upon’ or forced, to be or do evil. Unless mentally handicapped by nature or submission to drugs or substance abuse, or other restrictions or issues that might limit their ability of thought and action, everyone has the free will to change if they so desire. There is a definite power of God unto salvation that can help the believer, if they seek the help offered from God. Overcoming habits and actions need the focus of prayer, the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit, and the personal action and choice of man (using the term ‘man’ generically). God can and will help; but that help is never ‘forced’ upon the individual by God, any more than becoming a Christian is a forced choice. Every individual has choice, and that being the case, the individual must play a part in the spiritual drama of salvation.

The parable of the Wedding Feast is an excellent example of those who are called, but refuse by choice not to participate. This parable begins by stating that it is “like” the “kingdom of heaven” and those who will be admitted or rejected. Those “bidden” (Israel) to come, chose not to participate and even murdered the

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servants, therefore, those first bidden were then were rejected. The servants are sent again but this time to the highways (the world, Gentiles) to gather others to the wedding feast (of the gospel). Those who came both good and bad, (Jewish and Gentile converts) were admitted, (they accepted the invitation) however, there were individuals who had not prepared *themselves* for the feast, and were rejected as unworthy to participate in the Kingdom of God. The final statement of this parable: “many are called, but few are chosen,” begs to question: Why are they not chosen? The answer of the parable; even though they had accepted the invitation, (accepted Christ and his gospel) they had not *prepared themselves* for the kingdom of God.

- 1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,
- 2 The *kingdom of heaven is like* unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,
- 3 And sent forth *his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*
- 4 Again, he sent forth *other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*
- 5 But they made light of it, and *went their ways*, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:
- 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.
- 7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.
- 8 Then *saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.*
- 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and *as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.*
- 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and *gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.*
- 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there *a man which had not on a wedding garment:*
- 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, *how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?* And he was speechless.
- 13 Then said the king to the servants, *Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
- 14 *For many are called, but few are chosen.* (Matthew 22:1-14)

What is the preparation that makes one ‘chosen’ among those that are ‘called’ to the wedding feast? This parable precedes the explanation by Christ on the two commandments upon which all the law and the prophets hang; that of loving God and loving your fellow man (Matthew 22:34-40). The fact that this parable and the greatest two commandments are found in the same context is not by coincidence. The scriptural setting provides a most interesting connection between the preparation for the marriage feast and the personal contribution of a character that loves God and mankind. Christ is teaching in this chapter that the “law” or commandments are aids in that character development along with the teachings of the prophets. Nonetheless, the commandments are not necessarily earthly restrictions, but an indispensable spiritual support in developing the character that loves God and our fellowman. Thus, the commandments become a natural preparation for the wedding feast. The Prophet Isaiah speaks of the contribution of character by using the term “heart” and “fear of me” representing an individual’s character and thought or mind which is intimately connected to one’s salvation. In his discussion of the spiritual depravity of the last days as a result of the faulty teachings of trusted interpreters of doctrine, he states: “Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have *removed their heart* far from me, and their *fear toward me* is taught by the precept of men” (Isaiah 29:13). Christ, teaching Peter, echoes the Prophet Isaiah and explains the threat of trusting in teachers rather than the scriptures making a greater link to one’s character in using the term “heart” than did Isaiah.

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1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,  
2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.  
3 But he answered and said unto them, *Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*  
4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.  
5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;  
6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. *Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*  
7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,  
8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their *heart is far from me.*  
9 But *in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*  
10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:  
11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.  
12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?  
13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.  
14 Let them alone: *they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*  
15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.  
16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?  
17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?  
18 But *those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*  
19 For *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:*  
20 *These are the things which defile a man:* but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. (Matthew 15:1-20)

Christ explains that it is the “heart” the character, who they are, what they think, what they say and do, that defiles and defines a person. Not just what they believe, but their nature, and character. This idea of a person’s contribution’s of character will be discussed in more detail later in this work.

Even though the scripture counsels not to ‘trust in the arm of flesh’, Biblical understanding of scripture and doctrine is often left to the interpretation of someone the reader may respect or believe. Teachers and spiritual leaders should aid in the study of, but not replace the scriptural standard. When we substitute personal scriptural study for the opinions of others, it is usually because of time issues and a scriptural slothfulness. Paul states that many are ‘tossed to and fro and carried about on every wind of doctrine’ (Eph. 4:14) taught again by the ‘sleight of men’. It has been said that the missing beatitude is ‘blessed are the ignorant for they think they know everything,’ and when there is no scriptural standard then everyone becomes an expert on religion and the individual’s preferred belief and opinion becomes their standard.

The scriptures themselves are the best commentary on the scriptures. The foggy filters that may come by education, training and religious preference or belief, often limit Biblical understanding and skew scriptural interpretations. One should first let the scriptures speak for themselves. “Sola Scriptoria” is the cry of many

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a pastor, yet many feel a need to explain scripture based on *their* understanding or education in a particular belief system, rather than letting the scripture speak for itself, and stand on its own.

It is recognized that the explanations presented in this work may be viewed as nothing more than ‘one more’ commentary and point of view about scripture, so please bear with the discussion and thoughtfully review the scriptures offered. The suggestion remains for one to analyze the scriptures presented, let them speak for themselves, read and listen to the words closely for a better understanding without the ‘smoke filled room’ of private or pastoral interpretation, for “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20).

When scripture *seems* to contradict itself, one should *first* seek to find why there is *not a contradiction* in scripture, rather than creating an explanation that will satisfy a chosen theory or belief, at the expense of scripture (this is the reason there are so many Christian religions). If God gave mankind the scriptures, He gave enough in scripture to understand scripture, which man must be capable to understand on their own without priest or pastor. It is usually one’s chosen position, opinion or interpretation that needs to be explained, by using the clout and standard of scriptural interpretation for positional ratification. If scripture cannot be understood by scripture, then an individual must be educated and intellectually prepared before reading and comprehending the cannon. If this were the case, an organized religion and education would be a pre-requisite necessity, for the sake of a real relationship with God, and salvation would only be available to those academically prepared. If this were true, belief and faith in God would require the teacher, priest and pastor to be prepared to teach theology to the unqualified and uneducated masses to receive salvation. This belief strips salvation and agency from the individual, putting the power and control of one’s salvation into the hands of others.

There is a real difference between being trained for the ministry and service of Christianity and being trained to be a minister of a particular theological interpretation and point of view. Too often individuals rely on the ministers of theology rather than scripture. Nowhere in scripture did Christ, Prophet, or Apostle declare that there are secrets within the Gospel of Salvation that would require the educated and trained instructor of scripture to facilitate a faith in Christ. There is an authority to minister and administer the gospel to those who pursue a relationship with Christ, and for record keeping. There are no secrets that subtly lie between the lines of scripture that are visible only to those who have been trained to use the scriptural X-ray spectacles. God delights in plainness, and He has provided mankind with scriptures in a fashion and way that is perfect for the understanding of how to come unto Christ and salvation. Scripture needs no commentary, nor does it need to be rewritten so one might better understand them. Scripture requires no blind guides as trained interpreters in Jewish history, Hebrew, Greek or theology to read between the lines for the illiterate. The scriptures demand no commentaries or books on how to make them easier to understand. The omniscient God has failed in His ability to communicate if the arm of flesh is required for scripture to be understood. God is the author of *living scripture* who wrote for all mankind, in all their weaknesses to understand, for all time-periods and all dispensations. The finger of God has already written *The Scriptures for Dummies*. Salvation is free for those who will seek it with all their hearts. The Gospel is free, available and unrestricted, for there is ‘neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, male nor female’ educated or uneducated (Colossians 3:11; Gal. 3:28) who cannot receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As the Savior said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they, that testify of me” (John 5:39).

### Grace not Works

Paul introduces a doctrinal phrase of: ‘the works of the law’ that is almost universally interpreted in one limited way. The Apostle uses the same words and concepts to present a seemingly contradicting conclusion of the doctrine of ‘works, faith and law’. To the Ephesian members of the church, Paul writes: “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any*

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*man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Paul is stating boldly that *Salvation is a power and gift of God*, and this salvation cannot be brought about by any power or 'act' of man, or sacrifice of beast, but only by the gift and power of Jesus Christ as a member of the Godhead. This 'gift' and 'power' of salvation that can only come from God, is found in the "gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). This "*power of God unto salvation*" is often translated as "*grace*" which means a 'free gift' even if undeserved, for no man has the power to save himself from the wages of sin and death. Therefore, Paul is explaining that all are *saved* by the 'grace of God' and not by any action, or deed of obedience to any law of God or man. The power is *not* in mankind to save themselves from the physical and spiritual fall of Adam: it cannot be done without the power of God. The power of salvation lies in the infinite and eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ and one's love of God (could loving God and mankind be considered "works"?).

The definition of '*saved*' is explained in the Gospel of John: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that *the world through him might be saved*" (John 3:16-17). It seems that this passage would imply that being saved is connected to *not perishing and having everlasting life*. However, there seems in scripture to be an underlying contribution mankind must make to become a Christian, *worthy* of salvation. A *contribution* toward salvation is not a *power* of salvation, but a part of agency or free will. Even the Apostle Paul states that there are 'deeds' or 'works' of *character* by which all shall be judged. Biblical exegetics try to explain this judgment as *rewards* rather than a judgment of works, as stated by Paul. This becomes a theological catastrophe when the espoused dogmatic opinions clash with written scripture. The reason there are so many Christian religions today is the ability to interpret selected scripture in defense of a preferred doctrine. The appeal of the apologist is often 'this is what scripture means' rather than letting scripture, or God speak for Himself.

The Apostle Paul continues his discussion to the Church at Rome by declaring almost the same as he did to the Ephesians: "*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work*" (Romans 11:6). Paul, in other epistles, explains the "works" mentioned in Romans as 'works of the law'. Emphasizing this concept that "*the works of the law*" cannot save, Paul teaches in the epistle to the Galatians: "Knowing that a 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*" (Galatians 2:16). It seems that the "works" which cannot save as described in Romans Chapters One and Eleven (see above) are the same "works of the law" that cannot save, as recorded in Galatians.

Reading these few verses, it seems evident; that the "works" of Romans and the "*works of the law*" in Galatians *cannot* save the individual, and that justification and salvation is *inseparably connected to faith*. Yet in other passages of scripture Paul seems to teach that "works" are required, and that some sort of responsibility is necessary to be considered a *true* Christian. The contradiction can only be reconciled by the understanding that there may be two types of "works" spoken of by Paul and the other Apostles.

15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their *mind and conscience* (character) is defiled.

16 *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. (Titus 1:15-16)

In his letter to Titus, Paul continues: "In all things shewing thysself a pattern of good works," which he then describes as "*shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned*" (Titus 2:7-8). The same instruction continues as Paul speaks of salvation and good works that must be part of the

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Christian *character* to maintain the “hope of eternal life:”

11 For the *grace of God that bringeth salvation* hath appeared to all men,  
12 *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*  
13 *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*  
14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works.* (Titus 2:11-14)

4 But after that the kindness and love of God *our Saviour toward man appeared,*  
5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, (baptism) and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*  
6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;  
7 *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*  
8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that *they which have believed in God* might be careful *to maintain good works.* These things are good and profitable unto men. (Titus 3:4-8)

John the Revelator, speaking of those who are *saved*, or in his words, “die in the Lord,” emphatically teaches while making it clear to the reader that salvation cannot be separated from ‘works.’

12 Here is the patience of the *saints*: here are *they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith* of Jesus.  
13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord* from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and *their works do follow them.* (Revelation 14:12-13)

Again, it is not the works that have the power of salvation but the grace and faith in Christ wherein that power of salvation lay. The works of the individual are a contribution of character that manifests one’s faith in Christ. The connection is textually evident and cannot be denied, unless for the sake of dogmatic interpretation. Let the scriptures speak for themselves in their own words and discover *why* these passages are not in contradiction.

### Faith Without Works

James adds the seemingly contradiction to the words of Paul as quoted above in Ephesians, Galatians and Romans; In question form James asks: “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*” (James 2:14). James concludes with a resounding “NO” inseparably connecting faith and works together in answer to his own question: “*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works*” (James 2:17-18). James states that one cannot have faith without works, and without manifested works there is no faith of salvation. In other words saying, “I Believe,” is not enough.

Concluding his discussion on ‘faith and works,’ James ends this chapter in these words:

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, *that faith without works is dead?*  
21 Was not Abraham our father *justified by works,* when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

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22 Seest thou how *faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?* 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how *that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot *justified by works*, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26 For *as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* (James 2:20-26)

The Apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, concludes his vision of the end time by revealing that *all the dead* “small and great” and “*every man*” was judged “according to their works.”

12 And I saw the dead, *small and great*, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were *judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they *were judged every man according to their works.* (Revelation 20:12-13)

Many pastors and expositors explain, (not by scripture) that this judgment mentioned by John in the above passage is reserved only for the non-Christian. This is not what the scripture says! The passage of scripture states “*every man*” was judged according to their works. Paul adds that this judgment seen by John is for “every man” and not just the non-Christian. Paul again explains that the judgment of false teachers considered “ministers of righteousness ...shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

The Apostle Paul seems to contradict himself in verse six below, with his statement about works “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9). There are always scriptural reasons statements are *not* conflicting in the word of God.

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that *the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against *the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

6 Who will *render to every man according to his deeds:*

7 To them who by *patient continuance in well doing* seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9 *Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil,* of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

10 But *glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good,* to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

12 *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;*

13 (For *not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.* (Romans 2:4-13)

## Two Types of “Works”

There are two types of “works” in scripture: one has no power to save, and the other *is* a required



contribution for a Christian salvation. The first is described as the “*works of the law*” and the second could be described as the “*works of character*” or ‘law of Christ.’ The first is a strict and deliberate *obedience to God’s commands*, (i.e. ‘works of the law’ made with particular reference to the works of the law of Moses) in outward performances and ordinances. The other is the “*works*” of *character* necessary to have a *relationship with God*. The two different types of “works” mentioned in scripture are easily seen; however, priests and pastors have created a dilemma for the believer that can only be reconciled by scripture itself rather than by man’s interpretation and rationalization of belief. There must be a congruent understanding *found in scripture*, or a misinterpretation by man, rather than a calculated contradiction by the hand God to confuse the faithful reader.

### Works of the Law

Paul was a Jew and had been an important man in the Sanhedrin, and he was well known in the Jewish communities among the Gentile kingdom of Rome. Because of his Jewish roots and training the energetic Apostle would usually begin his missionary efforts and proselyting work in the local synagogues among the Jewish population. In the first century most of the early Christian converts and church members were converted from the Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world by the missionary efforts of Paul. Because of this Jewish demographic, most of Paul’s epistles are directed to the Jewish converts and the traditions and influence they had in the early Church. The traditions and obedience to ‘law of Moses’ was extremely difficult for the Jewish converts to give up and became a major doctrinal talking point throughout the epistles. Speaking to these Jewish converts in Galatia, the Apostle addresses the difficulties of the traditions Jewish converts placed upon the Gentile Christians. Each reference to the *law* in the passage below is a direct reference the ‘works of the law of Moses’ i.e., the performances and ordinances the Jewish converts once thought necessary for salvation. Orthodox Jews today are still trying to live under the “works of the law” of Moses, according to their understanding of obedience for salvation. Things have not changed much. Paul questions the converted Jewish Christians about the Gentile converts and the ‘law of Moses’ that was fulfilled in Christ:

14 . . . If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, *why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

16 Knowing that a 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.*

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19 For *I through the law am dead to the law*, that I might live unto God.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* (Galatians 2:14-21)

Paul continues this discussion about the Law of Moses, or in his words the ‘*works of the law*’. In the following chapter of Galatians, he provides even greater doctrinal insights for the Jewish converts living in Galatia who considered themselves Christians. Paul begins to question those who have accepted the Gospel of Christ by asking “who” has changed your mind (vs. 1). Those described in verse 8 as the ‘heathen’ are non-Jews or Gentiles. The “works of the law” in verse 10, is found in the “book of the law” which is the Law of Moses, which came 430 years after Abraham (vs. 17).

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- 1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?
- 2 This only would I learn of you, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*
- 3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?
- 4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.
- 5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*
- 6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
- 7 Know ye therefore that *they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*
- 8 And the scripture, *foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,* preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall *all nations* be blessed.
- 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.
- 10 For 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.
- 11 But that *no man is justified by the law* in the sight of God, it is evident: for, *The just shall live by faith.*
- 12 And *the law is not of faith:* but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.
- 13 *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,* being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
- 14 *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*
- 15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.
- 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to *thy seed, which is Christ.*
- 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, *the law,* which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (Galatians 3:1-17)

While in the wilderness with Moses the children of Israel were given a strict law of obedience that they were to follow in order to prepare them to accept the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ. Speaking of the 'Law of Moses,' Paul explains that Israel received the Law of Moses because the children of Israel were 'under sin' and therefore needed the 'law of works' to learn obedience:

- 18 For *if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise:* but God gave it to Abraham by promise.
- 19 Wherefore then serveth the law? *It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;* and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.
- 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.
- 21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for *if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*
- 22 But the scripture hath concluded *all under sin,* that *the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*
- 23 But *before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* (Galatians 3:18-23)

This passage is explaining that the 'law' alone could not establish the faith needed for salvation. The 'promise of faith' given to Abraham and his seed is the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. The "law" alone could not provide the needed 'promise' of salvation without the change of character that comes

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through *faith unto repentance*. Verse 19 states that the ‘law’ was given because of the transgressions of Israel until Christ should come. Paul is explaining that the ‘law of works’ that cannot save is the ‘law of Moses’.

The Apostle Paul further explains that the “law” (of Moses) and the “works” of the law (obedience) was a ‘schoolmaster’ to bring the children of Abraham to Christ:

24 Wherefore the *law was our schoolmaster* to bring us unto Christ, that we might be *justified by faith*.

25 But after that faith is come, we are *no longer under a schoolmaster*.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:24-26)

The “works of the law” (which has no power to save) are the acts of obedience to the Law of Moses, which was fulfilled in Christ, and are not the same as the ‘works of character’. Obedience to law does not necessarily mean that a change of character has taken place. The wicked can be obedient to law, and if done grudgingly, obedience to law could become a sin (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The word “works” is in the Greek “*ergon*” which when translated means “works, acts” and “deeds” in the New Testament. Paul, writing to the saints in Rome, teaches about the ‘works of the law’ or obedience to the Law of Moses, using the phrase “deeds of the law.”

19 Now we know that what things soever *the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law*: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the *deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (Romans 3:19-21)

Those who are accountable to law are those under the law (vs. 19); and obedience to law does not justify the individual, but makes them accountable and capable of sin because of their knowledge (vs. 20) not lack of knowledge. Paul doctrinally instructs, “*for where no law is, there is no transgression*” (Romans 4:15 See also Romans 5:13). Contrary to popular thought, Romans 4:15 would imply that sin is connected to knowing the commandments and an acceptance of Gospel law and teachings. In other words, those who are able to sin are those who know better. This places a direct connection to the acts, deeds, and works of a Christian character of which all could be judged. To condemn generations that might die without knowledge of Christ and His Gospel is not a scriptural standard, but an opinion and interpretive ideology.

22 Even *the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe*: for there is no difference: (Romans 3:22)

The righteousness of God an individual might receive, or the righteousness of ‘works’ is a result of the ‘faith of Jesus Christ’ of those that believe. This righteousness comes about by the evidence of faith or character change that is described in the scriptures. Every man needs the Atonement, or the power of salvation that only comes through faith in the blood of Christ.

23 For *all have sinned*, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

Because all have sinned, at least those who know, according to Paul, there needs be a salvation from sin and death. This is a salvation from the effects of the fall of Adam, which is our separation from God (by transgression) and immortality (because of death). The sacrifices of man or beast cannot accomplish it. Only God has the power and ability to provide this salvation through His Son. Believers must look “unto

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Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Only by that saving power of God, called “grace” and through “faith in his blood” may any receive a ‘remission of sins’ (vs. 25, below).

24 Being *justified freely by his grace*

*[‘grace’ = God’s Love, His power, His Atonement and Resurrection, the power of God to save mankind from sin and death.]*

*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and *the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore *we conclude that a man is justified by faith [the change of character] without the deeds of the law.* (Romans 3:24-28)

The ‘works of the law’ or obedience to law alone cannot save. Christ comes to *fulfill the Law of Moses*, and at the same time, He provides a ‘better way’ so that the purpose of obedience to the law may be *fulfilled* within each individual by his or her choices and change of character. Christ was asked by the Pharisee lawyer which of all the ‘613’ commandments found in the Law of Moses was the most important commandment to keep. Jesus responded:

35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

36 Master, *which is the great commandment in the law?*

37 Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

38 *This is the first and great commandment.*

39 *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

40 *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 22:35-40)

Upon two commandments hang “*all the law and the prophets*”. Each is issued in the commandment form of “thou shalt”. The greatest and most important: love God and second: love your fellow man. Loving God and mankind are not intellectual activities only, but require action, works and deeds to manifest that love. To ‘remember the poor’ doesn’t mean you thought about one yesterday. If all commandments and the teachings of the prophets are founded upon these two, then by faithful obedience to these two all other commandments are either fulfilled or redundant. If all the commandments hang upon these two mandates, then consequently all judgment must hang upon the same two. Christ is stating that obedience to any or all commandments and therefore ‘law’, exists to create a character and nature which loves God and man.

In scripture, this “love” is something described as the “*fruits of repentance*” or “*works of repentance*”. ‘Fruit’ is something that is produced from the process of change and action by nurturing, pruning, and caring. Scripture teaches that the tree that produces no fruit or bad fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire:

8 Bring forth therefore *fruits meet for repentance:*

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore *every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* (Matthew 3:8, 10)

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- 16 *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?  
17 Even so *every good tree bringeth forth good fruit*; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.  
18 *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit*, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.  
19 *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*  
20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (Matthew 7:15-20)

In the Gospel of John, the Apostle records the words of Christ as He declares Himself to be the 'true vine' and then speaks specifically of Christian believers as the "branches" that are "in me". Those "in" Christ must bring forth good fruit or be cast into the fire.

- 1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.  
2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.  
3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.  
4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.  
5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.  
6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. (John 15:1-6)

### What is Repentance?

The word "*repent*" or "*repentance*" in Greek and Hebrew are archery terms, as is the word for "*sin*". "*To sin*" means to "*miss the mark*" as in trying to hit a target, and "*repent*" means to "*take aim again*" at the target. Trying to be better than before. Repentance ends with perfection, not just belief and acceptance. Repentance or change is no longer needed when one no longer needs to change.

The Biblical Lexicons and Bible Study Tools define the term Repent and repentance as:

The most common translation of "repent" is "turn" or "return". Two requisites of repentance included are "*to turn from evil, and to turn to the good.*" ... Three times Ezekiel included God's call to the people of Israel: "Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!" "Repent! Turn away from all your offenses", "Turn! Turn from your evil ways". Such a call was characteristic of the prophets.

In the New Testament, the key term for repentance is metanoia - It has two usual senses: a "*change of mind*" and "*regret/remorse.*" In both books of Mark and Matthew Jesus began his public proclamation with the call "Repent." In addition, Paul is said to have preached to both Jews and Gentiles/Greeks to "*turn to God in repentance* and have faith in our Lord Jesus"

True repentance leads a person to say, "I have sinned" and *prove it with a 180-degree*

*change of their direction.*

Repentance requires true brokenness.

*Repentance is NOT asking the Lord for forgiveness with the intent to sin again.*

Repentance is an honest, regretful acknowledgement of sin *with commitment to change.*

*Repentance leads us to cultivate godliness while eradicating habits that lead into sin.*

([www.biblestudytools.com/search/?s=References&q=repentance&rc=LEX&rc2=LEX+GRK](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?s=References&q=repentance&rc=LEX&rc2=LEX+GRK))

Simply put, Repentance is the process of changing character. The call of Peter to “repent and be baptized” is a direct dictum about the “fruits of repentance” in the appeal to ‘change yourselves and be baptized’.

### **Fruits and Works of Repentance**

John the Baptist, teaching and baptizing in the wilderness, instructs those hopeful to be baptized about the ‘fruits of repentance’ which all must be willing to produce as part of their new belief. Having accepted his teachings of repentance, those desirous of baptism question John, by asking what more should they do. To each, John states that they must “do” even more than the law requires, as their love of others should be a result of desire rather than duty. This response is a call of the good works of character that exceeds far beyond commandment or law.

8 Bring forth therefore *fruits worthy of repentance*, and begin not to say within yourselves, *We have Abraham to our father*: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The Baptist is explaining to the multitude that salvation does not come because of lineage, or a belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As the passage continues, John answers their question of ‘what more should we do’ by explaining that there is more than just acceptance and belief that is required. There are ‘works’ that must accompany their faith.

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: *every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down*, and cast into the fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, *What shall we do then?*

[What are the fruits]

11 He answereth and saith unto them, *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.*

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, *Master, what shall we do?*

13 And he said unto them, *Exact no more than that which is appointed you.*

14 And the *soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?* And he said unto them, *Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.* (Luke 3:8-14)

Paul, speaking of the Gospel and his missionary efforts, first among the Jewish converts and then the Gentile populations, tells king Agrippa about his vision. Paul, obedient to the instructions he received, rehearses his Christian history:

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But shewed *first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.*

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. (Acts 26:19-21)

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Paul is telling Agrippa and Festus, that after he was instructed by God, he taught the Jewish converts that they were to “do works” that would show their change of heart and character. The mental thought of the Jewish people Paul is referring to, was that obedience to Mosaic Law was more important than the ‘fruits’ of the law, or character change, and for this reason they wanted to kill him.

To the Philippians, Paul verified and recognized the fruits of conversion as he prays that their “love may abound yet more” and that they be “filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Philippians 1:9-11). James adds that the  *blessings and obligations* of the converted Christian come from God, while adding that the natural or earthly man is an enemy to the righteousness of God. In this short passage James is trying to explain that there are two types of human character developed by choice: that which comes from above or ‘righteous wisdom’ and the second that is ‘earthly, sensual, and devilish’.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

17 But *the wisdom that is from above* is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, *full of mercy and good fruits*, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And *the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.* (James 3:15-18)

Paul, having made a distinction between the “works of the law” of Moses and the “works of repentance,” declares that the ‘Christian character that is developed by choice and agency, will play a part in the “righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5). This passage cannot be interpreted as a reference only to the non-Christian or unsaved individual, because of the context and connection of the judgment of God to all ‘according to his deeds’. God is no respecter of persons (vs. 11). None are exempt from this judgment, because man’s character or ‘works of repentance’ will play a contributing part. The “doers of the law shall be justified” *not* the hearers, because the law is ‘written in their hearts and in their thoughts’ (vs. 15) i.e., their chosen character.

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

7 To them who by patient continuance *in well doing* seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man *that worketh good*, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

11 *For there is no respect of persons with God.*

12 For as *many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law*: and as many as have *sinned in the law shall be judged by the law*;

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the *doers of the law shall be justified.*

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*[The two greatest commandments, i.e. the works of changing one's character and nature]*

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law *written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts* the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets [their heart] of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. (Romans 2:1-16)

A person who has accepted Christ will often condemn the unbeliever for the wicked choices and evil acts of character, while at the same time believe that the same immoral character choices for the believer will not be brought into play in their judgment.

It cannot be denied that scripture instructs that there are two kinds of “works” spoken of by Paul and the other apostles: the “works” of the law of Moses and also the “works meet for repentance” i.e., change of character. It is easily understood what Paul means when he speaks of those who Christians who “profess that they know God,” as the Pharisees declared their salvation by a lineage to Abraham, yet “*in works*” the professed Christian “deny him”. To those pure of character all things are pure.

15 *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

16 *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* (Titus 1:15-16)

Paul again warns those who consider themselves ‘saved’ as a Christian believer and believe that they are better than the Jew who are the natural branch of Israel.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches [Israel] were broken off, that I [Gentile Christian] might be grafted in.

20 Well; *because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:*

21 *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, *if thou continue* in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

(Romans 11:19-22)

### Freedom and Liberty from the Law

The result of accepting the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to become ‘free’ and liberated from the ‘works of the law’ and to ‘love God and our fellow man,’ not by obedience to law but by nature, not by duty but because of desire. This is the contribution (fruits meet for repentance) of the individual to the saving power of the Atonement, grace and mercy that is offered to all who might believe in Christ. This ‘freedom’ and ‘liberation’ from the law is to “*fulfill the law*” which can only be brought to pass by creating the character and nature that will, without compulsion or commandment, love God and love your fellow man.

13 For, brethren, *ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

14 For *all the law is fulfilled* in one word, even in this; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* (Galatians 5:13, 14)

*Liberty from the law and the fulfillment of the law* is seen in the character and nature of the individual that



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loves his fellow man. Being liberated from the Law of Moses and made free to live the law of love.

Paul, in his epistle to the Roman saints, rehearsed the ‘fulfilling the law’ by love, teaching that all commandments are fulfilled in this character trait of love.

8 Owe no man any thing, but to *love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and *if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore *love is the fulfilling of the law.* (Romans 13:8-10)

The fulfillment of all commandments is accomplished in obedience to two: by the individual in loving God and loving their fellow man. These are the ‘fruits of repentance’ and the ‘works of repentance’ that have been discussed. It is for this reason that James declares that the ‘faith of the Christian *is dead without works,*’ meaning that there is no Christian faith or salvation present without the works and fruits of repentance; the character that loves God and man.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, seeks to make sure that they understand the necessity of ‘works of repentance’ in his discussion on love or charity. This chapter in Corinthians is familiar to all and should be reviewed as it declares that this ‘love’ is a required to enter and remain in the presence of God and ‘know as I am known’ having the same love that God has.

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, *and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and *though I have all faith,* so that I could remove mountains, *and have not charity, I am nothing.*

3 And *though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

4 *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

5 *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

6 *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

7 *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

8 *Charity never faileth:* but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then *face to face:* now I know in part; *but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

Paul states above, that all the blessings and gifts of the spirit mean nothing without the character of charity. The Apostle concludes, as does John, that when ‘face to face’ with God, having this character of Charity, shall one ‘know as they are known’. By accepting Christ, they will be known by their nature and character

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that they have created by action, works and deeds, and not by the law of Moses. They will be recognized as saved by their love of God and their fellow man. In First John Chapter Three, the Apostle teaches that the love that we have received from God and have developed by choice, one may be called the ‘sons of God.’ Like Paul, John states that we will be like God.

- 1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, *that we should be called the sons of God*: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.
- 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him*; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:1, 2)

In these two verses, John teaches that the love that the individual has received by God and developed by choice, coupled with the knowledge of God that one has, they can be called the ‘sons of God.’ This designation may only come by that knowledge and love so that, when we see God, we will recognize God, because we will be like God. as did Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12 above. Should it be supposed one may dwell with God without being like or having a similar character and nature, when knowing that no unclean thing can be in His presence? God may forgive sins through the atonement, but will character be changed by force, or miracle without free will choice?

John continues teaching about the ‘law of love’ (vs. 11), the transgression of this law and one’s likeness to God:

- 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even *as he is pure*.
- 4 *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*.
- 5 And ye know that he was manifested to *take away our sins*; and *in him is no sin*.
- 6 *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.
- 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: *he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*.
- 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.
- 9 *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*.
- 10 *In this the children of God are manifest*, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, *neither he that loveth not his brother*.
- 11 *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another*.
  
- 14 We know that *we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*.
- 15 *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.
- 16 *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*.
- 17 *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* (1 John 3:3-11, 14-17) [See also 2 Corinthians 9:5-15]

John continues to explain about this law of love in this chapter, and our requirement to live in this love. The commandment and law of love is found in verses 23 below, which is to ‘believe in Christ’ “AND love one another”. Both Paul and John explain the connection of character to the Christian faith and salvation.

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18 My little children, *let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed* [the Greek for “works”] *and in truth.*

19 And *hereby we know* that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. (1 John 3:14-24)

John continues in the next chapter teaching further about the two commandments upon which all the law and the prophets hang. It should be understood that this is the “works” that makes faith alive as spoken by James. The character that loves God and his fellow man “knoweth God” and will be known of him. In verse Seventeen below it is seen that it is because of the *Christian character* that one’s confidence will wax strong in the presence of God.

7 Beloved, *let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

9 In this was manifested the *love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

10 Herein is love, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

11 Beloved, *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

12 No man hath seen God at any time. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, *that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

21 *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*  
(1 John 4:7-12, 16-21)

Verses Sixteen through Twenty-one explain the character that must be developed to truly be considered a Christian, and faithful believer in Jesus Christ. Man can become like Him if he develops and creates within himself (by loving others) the love that makes God, God. John concludes that the person who does not love his brother does not love God and one might add, is not saved.

The Apostle Paul concludes in Chapter Five of Galatians as he speaks about this love of God and man, that there are visible ‘works’ that should be done by the believer and seen by the non-Christian. To begin again in Galatians:

13 For, brethren, *ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the*

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flesh, but *by love serve one another*.

14 For *all the law is fulfilled* in one word, even in this; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

16 This I say then, *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But *if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law*.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that *they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*.

22 But the *fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith*,  
[because they have fulfilled the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2)]

23 *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*. (Galatians 5:13-25)

Paul instructs that; by things ‘done or not done’ affects one’s ability to “inherit the kingdom of God” (vs. 21 above) with the Christian counsel to “walk” which is to ‘work and act’ and in the Greek: “to observe the fundamental” law of God.

James sees and teaches the same observation about the separation of the wicked from the righteous by the *work and fruit required* by accepting Christ and his gospel. *This too, is directed to the Christian believer and not the unbeliever*.

20 For the *wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and *receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*.

22 But *be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only*, deceiving your own selves.

[James is warning believers not to be deceived thinking that one needs only to hear and accept Christ and his Gospel; the “believer” must be “doers” also]

23 For *if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer*, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway *forgetteth what manner of man he was*.

[It is the “doer” that changes character, by repentance; it is the character that matters and the action, the works, the fruits meet for repentance]

25 But *whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*.

[hence, all will be judged according to their works of character]

26 If any man among you *seem to be religious*, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

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*27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:20-27)*

This “pure religion” of love is a faith of action, and works, which are required to keep oneself “unspotted from the world”. The *Law of Christ* is part of the believer’s responsibility once accepting Christ as their Savior.

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the *law of Christ*.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let every man *prove his own work*, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap*, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, *let us do good unto all men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:1-4, 7-10)

Many believe that once one accepts Christ, repents and confesses that there is no further need to repent. Yet, works and fruits meet for repentance is something that does not end. The command of Christ in Matthew 3:48 is to ‘be perfect even as the Father is perfect.’ This is a life-long endeavor and cannot be accomplished by miracle or magic wand. If the change does not take place by choice and action, the change has not taken place in the nature of man. The change of character takes time, effort and help from God through action, faith and prayer. It takes a cognizant and continual effort, because of the weaknesses of the flesh and lack of knowledge or understanding. It must be recognized that the term or word “repent or repentance” means to *change one’s mind and action*, to ‘stop doing one thing and start doing something else’ (the meaning of the word ‘repent’) thus, repentance is the process of changing character and nature, by choice. Faith in Christ and His atonement provides the reason and the means to make the changes necessary in one’s life for salvation. ‘Faith without works (i.e. repentance: the process of changing character) is dead.’ An individual may come unto and accept Christ on their deathbed, even though one may want to change, character cannot be changed without time and energy. The Christian should be trying to change for the better every day in their Christian walk with Christ.

### The Teachings of Christ

All are saved by Grace from the Fall of Adam and cannot be saved by the ‘works of the law of Moses’ (the works or fruits of repentance play an integral part despite opinion and tradition). The concept of grace without the fruits of repentance is an interpretation of man mingled with scripture. The teachings of Christ throughout the Gospels are *centered in the change of character that is required for salvation*. The Savior nowhere states in his teachings that it is by ‘grace alone’ that an individual can be saved. Beside the gospel of ‘faith, repentance, baptism and the Gift of the Spirit, Christ teaches nothing except the necessary change of character that is required for salvation. The Sermon on the Mount is a restoration text of the Gospel given to Abraham and lost by the Children of Israel because of their rejection of God at Sinai.

Knowing the deadness of the law of Moses, Paul, in Romans, explains two concerns: 1) his desire for “Israel” (the Jew) to be saved, and 2) the Jewish relationship to the Law of Moses.

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God *for Israel is, that they might be saved*.

2 For I bear them record that *they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*.

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*[this is the knowledge of the higher law of Christ]*

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness,

*[by the "works of the law" which cannot save them]*

have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,

*[This was the Pharisaic view; that righteousness came by the works, and obedience to the Law of Moses]*

That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. (Romans 10:1-5)

Paul further explains that the Mosaic Law was the "schoolmaster" to bring Israel to the higher 'law of Christ.'

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (Galatians 3:23-25)

The "Law of Christ" restored by Christ (sometimes called the 'law of the gospel') is described in Galatians, as love. Even though quoted above it is again referenced here to better remember the words that are so important:

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:2, 4, 7-10)

### The Sermon on the Mount

After his baptism and the wilderness sojourn to "commune with God" Christ begins his ministry by restoring a law higher than the Law of Moses which the Jewish nation had been living. The Savior restored the Law of Christ; as explained in part, in Galatians, when He gave His first sermon in Galilee. It should be noticed that the description of the righteous is one of character. The Savior changes the works of the 'schoolmaster' to the higher law of individual change. This sermon takes the commandments of the law of Moses and moves them from the 'works of obedience' to the 'works of character.' The restoration or change from the old law to the higher law is easily seen in the Sermon, as Christ explains that He has come to fulfill the law given to Moses and the Children of Israel. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ... one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17, 18). In fulfilling the Law of Moses, Christ introduces the higher law of character. This is seen, when the Savior instructs His listeners in this chapter by speaking about the Law

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of Moses, saying: “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,* (Verses, 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). Following each reference to the ‘works of the law’, which cannot save, Christ introduces the law of love and character change, by stating: “*But I say unto you*” (Verses, 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44).

To reproduce the whole sermon is space prohibitive and time consuming, but one must let the text speak for itself, rather than the commentary of the author, pastor, or priest. The scriptures will have the author notes in [brackets] between the verses, to ignore, or read. The important concept to realize is that the new law is one of change, one of an inward devotion of love toward God and man, rather than the outward performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses as described in the epistles that have been discussed above.

As the “Beatitudes” are reviewed below, notice two things, the first is the required ‘character trait’ and second, the blessing that accompanies a righteous character. The numbered verses below are all found in Chapter Five of Matthew, unless otherwise noted.

- 1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
- 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<b>The Character</b>	<b>The Blessing</b>
3 Blessed are <i>the poor in spirit:</i>	for <i>theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</i>
4 Blessed are <i>they that mourn:</i>	for <i>they shall be comforted.</i>
5 Blessed are <i>the meek:</i>	for <i>they shall inherit the earth.</i>
6 Blessed are <i>they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:</i>	for <i>they shall be filled.</i>
7 Blessed are <i>the merciful:</i>	for <i>they shall obtain mercy.</i>
8 Blessed are <i>the pure in heart:</i>	for <i>they shall see God.</i>
9 Blessed are <i>the peacemakers:</i>	for <i>they shall be called the children of God.</i>
10 Blessed are <i>they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake:</i>	for <i>theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</i>
11 Blessed are ye, <i>when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.</i>	12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: <i>for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.</i>

Each Beatitude begins with the required trait and ends with the promised blessing. The *requirements for the blessings* seem to be conflicting with the traditional interpretation that a full salvation is available for nothing other than a belief that Jesus Christ as the Savior. These are the words of Christ Himself. This whole chapter is a restoration of the higher law of Christ that the Children of Israel rejected at Sinai. The Law of Moses was given to Israel as a schoolmaster to help bring them to Christ and the Christian Character as explained by Jesus Himself.

Verses 13-16, below, explain the responsibility that will rest on those who are willing to live this *higher law* of Christianity, with a desire to receive the blessings of the Beatitudes as outlined by Christ above. The Christian should become as the ‘salt of the earth’. Jesus explains that the salty Christian, that loses their “savor,” will be cast out of the kingdom of God. Again, the love of God and mankind must be looked at as part of the fruits of repentance or ‘works’ that James writes, makes faith alive.

- 13 *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

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14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see *your good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

The Schoolmaster or Law of Moses is fulfilled in Christ and will be finished when the final Lamb of God is sacrificed for all of mankind. The Law of Moses was not meant to bring Israel unto Christ only, but prepare them by the inner change character to be called the children of God. Jehovah came not to destroy, but fulfill the law that was to teach Israel how to come unto their God.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: *I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Verses 19 and 20 are speaking about the instructions and commandments of this sermon and include the instructions about the change of character and the responsibilities; i.e. the “works, or fruits” that accompany the acceptance of Christ. One’s obedience to the commandments given in this sermon should be taken seriously as the Savior warns the teachers and ministers that ‘whosoever shall teach men *not to do* these things’ for salvation shall be least in the kingdom.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, *and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:* but whosoever shall *do and teach them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That *except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

In verses 21 to 47 below, Christ does away with the old law and introducing the new law of loving one’s fellow man. The Savior changes the works of the old law from a visible action of performances and ordinances, to an inward attitude accomplished by acts of love. Notice that the new or higher law, like the Beatitudes, are traits that cannot be seen, and are character traits that are found in the heart and nature of the true Christian.

21 *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time*, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

22 **But I say unto you**, That *whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:* and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there *rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;*

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and *go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother*, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 *Agree with thine adversary* quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27 *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time*, Thou shalt *not commit adultery:*



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28 **But I say unto you,** That whosoever *looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

31 ***It hath been said,*** Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 **But I say unto you,** That whosoever shall *put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication,* causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

33 ***Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time,*** Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 **But I say unto you,** Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

38 ***Ye have heard that it hath been said,*** An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 **But I say unto you,** That ye *resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

43 ***Ye have heard that it hath been said,*** Thou shalt *love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

44 **But I say unto you,** *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

The blessings of obedience to the works of love and compassion is to *become* “the children of your Father in heaven” (Vs. 45 below). The righteous and the wicked, the “just and the unjust,” must live together on this earth interacting in each other’s life. The law of Christ is one of ‘love’ that is to be shown by the Christian even to those who refuse to love in return. This Christian Love or Charity is the *fulfillment* of the law and the prophets.

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the

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same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Living and doing as Christ has outlined in this chapter, is the beginning of becoming the ‘children of God’ as explained by Christ. The first sermon is a restoration of a higher law that provides a power to “become the sons of God” for those who receive Him (John 1:12). This ‘power to become’ is choosing to accept the Atonement and sacrifice of Christ and His teachings, thus developing the faith, hope and the charity that Paul asserts that man is ‘nothing without’.

The final command in Matthew Chapter Five, is “to be perfect” even as God is perfect. This is not a blasphemous or impossible statement, but a command. Would God give the Christian believer a command or even a suggestion that is impossible to accomplish without providing a way to accomplish it? Christ phrases this command in such a way that makes it a responsibility of choice: “be ye.” This means that man has the ability to fulfill that command through his free will and choice.

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:1-48)

What is it that mankind can become perfect at? Irenaeus, an early Christian writer, made the statement that ‘the angels envy mankind because of their ability to repent and forgive’. The perfection of our Father in Heaven that the Christian should seek to acquire might be that Charity or love of God and mankind. God is Love. The required works of the true Christian, who has been born again, is to love (vs. 7).

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

7 Beloved, *let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God*, and knoweth God.

8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

12 No man hath seen God at any time. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

21 And this commandment have we from him, *That he who loveth God love his brother also.* (1 John 4:6-17; 19-21)

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So ends the introductory chapter (Matthew Chapter Five) of the Sermon on the Mount as Christ explains the foundation of the new law that will replace the Law of Moses, which the Pharisaic population of ancient Israel and the modern orthodox still struggle to keep. The Law of Moses cannot save. However, Christ and His law of love and character change provide a salvation from sin if so desired. Because of Grace and power of God salvation is free to all, however; the fruits and works of repentance are not cheaply bought.

Chapters Six and Seven of Matthew continue the Sermon on the Mount, which is the first teachings of Christ to the masses. Both of these chapters should be read as they continue to speak, discuss, and command the believer to bring forth the 'fruits and works' that are required as the Christian's contribution to grace, which is the free gift of God, even the power of salvation for as 'many as believe.' Grace can restore that which was lost with the fall of Adam: being in the presence of God and living free from the death of the body and of the spirit.

The power to clean the unclean and restore them into the presence of God, and the resurrection of the physical body, requires a propitiation for sin by the blood of the Son of God. Only the lawgiver can satisfy the demands of justice, for those who abide in Him, through faith in that Atonement, and bring forth 'fruits meet for repentance'. This salvation offered by Christ is *from* sin, not salvation *in* sin. The power to return to the presence of God in a resurrected immortal body of glory, is a power that lies *only* in God. This is Grace. For the salvation of man there must be *power of 'grace'* along with another power given to man, which requires choice, effort and change. God will force no man to heaven or to hell; it is always a choice. "Jesus said ...I am the resurrection, and the life: *he that believeth in me*, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

### The Power to Become

John opens his Gospel with an explanatory description about Christ, the Word, the Son of God, and his work and glory:

- 9 That [Christ] was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
- 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- 12 But *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*
- 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:9-13)

These few verses explain a very powerful concept – *the power to become!* Verse Twelve states that "as many as received him" to them who made a choice to receive Him, instead of those who "received him not" (John 1:11). To those who 'received' Him, to those who made a choice to follow Him and to those "that believe on his name," to them, He gave "*power to become*". Christ did not force them or save them simply because they "received and believed," but by their receiving and believing, provided "*power to become*" a Son of God, or the "*power to become*" a true Christian. That "*power to become*" is the power that lays inherent within each individual. The '*power to become*' is a power to choose one's nature and character. The '*power to become*' is an ability to act upon a situation by choice and not be acted upon. It is a power to choose to love God by loving your fellow man. The '*power to become*' is the knowledge to choose, the ability to choose and the freedom to make a choice and then act upon that choice without compulsion or command. *Righteousness cannot exist unless good is chosen in the presence of an evil opportunity.* The '*power to become a son of God*' is a power, or free will to choose to develop the charity necessary for salvation; which charity should exist within the Christian believer. The '*power to become the sons and daughters of God*' is a fundamental part of the grace of God offered that is offered freely to the believer. Choice free agency or free will cannot be negated in the life of the believer. If you love me you will keep

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my commandments and if you must love one another to be a disciple of Christ is the final plea of the Great Jehovah.

Just as Christ began with the higher law of character change, the Lord concludes the Sermon on the Mount with the same thoughts of the works or fruits of repentance that are coupled with 'grace' for the salvation of the individual believer. John, in the Book of Revelation, reveals that the "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10), thus teaching that all who have the 'testimony of Jesus' are prophets in their individual right. All prophets testify of the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. And how does one recognize the true and real Christians who have a sure testimony of Christ? Christ answers this question as He expands on the words of John the Baptist about the "fruits" necessary for salvation as He brings the Sermon on the Mount to a close, (Notice that Christ is always using the verb 'to do' indicating action or works of some sort).

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, *do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

*[The believer is told by Christ to "do" good to fulfill the law and the prophets. Speaking of the believers, not the non-believer, Christ informs the believers that there will be many that may not make it because the "gate" is narrow which leads unto life. But "wide" is the way and there may be many believers that will enter into their destruction]*

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

*[Verse 15 warns that there will be some who claim the testimony of Jesus, but in reality: "...profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient..." (Titus 1:16). Keep in mind as Christ continues, He is still speaking to the believers, those who know. It is to the 'believers' he addresses the discourse on the 'fruit.']*

16 *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore *by their fruits ye shall know them.*

*["Fruits, works, and deeds" meet for repentance are required for the believer to be able to claim the 'grace' that is provided by the Love of God. The description below, about those who claim to know God and claim the title 'Christian,' have a work to do in order to be recognized by Christ as a true believer. The Savior is teaching that there is no security of salvation by 'grace' unless there is "action" on the part of those desirous to be saved.]*

21 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

22 *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

23 *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

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*[And why would Jesus say; “I never knew you” to those who have prophesied, cast out devils and other wonderful works? The implication is found in verse 21: they did not do “the will of my Father.” There was not the charity, love and character change in their acts to be seen by men. Christ continues in the next verse (24) likening those who have done the works of the law of Christ and brought forth fruit meet for repentance, and those who have not. Each “heareth” and understand His words, but only the righteous act upon and ‘doeth’ his commands. Christ is making sure there can be no misunderstanding about what is required for salvation.]*

24 Therefore *whosoever heareth* these sayings of mine, *and doeth them*, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And *every one that heareth these sayings* of mine, *and doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7:12-27)

### The Parables

The parables Jesus taught in the New Testament were always directed to the believer or the Christian today. The non-believer doesn't read or care what is in the New Testament; the scriptures have meaning only to those who have accepted the reality of God and his Son Jesus Christ. The parables, even though they are just that, parables, have a tremendous amount of doctrine and insight for the believer. To conclude this topic of works or fruits of repentance, one more chapter in Matthew should be reviewed: Chapter Twenty-five. There are two parables and one doctrinal symbol and explanation of the parables found in this chapter. The parables begin: “the kingdom of heaven” is ‘like or as’ implying that each parable is about those who are worthy ‘to be or not to be’ in the kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps it should be explained why this chapter of Matthew is placed in this context and why it is these parables and the interpretations are included in scripture. When one reads the scriptures and especially the Gospels, the whole talk or discussion should be discovered and then read as a single sermon. One should find the beginning and the end of the discussion within the Gospels to begin to understand it. For example, John Chapters Thirteen, through Chapter Seventeen is one discourse and should be read as one sermon. Matthew Chapters Twenty-three through Chapter Twenty-five is also one discussion and should be read as one in order to better understand the meaning of the teaching. Matthew Chapter Twenty-three is about the wickedness of the Jewish nation and especially their leaders and antithetically ends with the conclusion of Chapter Twenty-five. Christ begins speaking about the wickedness of the Jewish leaders, which cause the people to err. Again, the works of ‘doing’ seem to be stressed by the Savior.

2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

3 All therefore *whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*

4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

5 But *all their works they do for to be seen of men:* they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, (Matthew 23:2-5)

This chapter begins by Christ telling his disciples and the people to observe what their leaders tell them to do, but don't do after “their works, don't act like them: for they say and do not,” explaining that they just

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'profess' to believe and act to be seen of men. The rest of this chapter discusses the wickedness of these leaders and how they will lead the people so far astray that destruction will eventually come upon them. This chapter ends in these words:

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, *All these things shall come upon this generation.*

37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

38 *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.* (Matthew 23:34-38)

Christ in His message to the Jewish people about their so-called spiritual leaders, prophecies of the destruction and desolation of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. No doubt the disciples wanted to know more about this destruction and how to recognize the signs of the time it would take place. After the first part of the discourse is finished, Chapter Twenty-four begins: Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives and the disciples continues to ask Him about the destruction of the Jewish nation of which He spoke. The signs and the events of the last days fill Chapter Twenty-four and are familiar to all. As this chapter (24) comes to a close, no doubt the Lord is questioned about the events of the last days and "who" will be saved and why? Christ explains that before these things happen the signs will be recognized by the righteous, who will be 'spared' after the described destructions. He concludes with a discussion of the days of Noah:

36 *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

37 *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

38 *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,*

39 *And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

*[It will be like the days of Noah, business as usual up to the end. No one will expect it when it comes.]*

40 *Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*

*[What will cause one to be saved and the other not?]*

42 *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

43 *But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.*

44 *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

*[There are only four things we know for sure about the Second Coming: 1. It will happen. 2. It hasn't happened yet. 3. No one knows when it will happen. 4. It is closer today than it was yesterday. One must always be prepared]*

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The conclusion of Matthew Twenty-four is actually the introduction to the following chapter comprising the parables. The questions that remain in chapter 24 are addressed in chapter 25: Why is one taken and the other left? What will separate the righteous from the wicked? How do we prepare? Who will be prepared? Why will some be saved and others not? Who will be the ‘faithful and wise servant’? What should the righteous be ‘so doing’? Who will be the ruler over all his goods? Etc., etc. These questions set the stage for the parables that will answer the questions about those who might or might not be saved in the ‘kingdom of heaven’. The patterns and elements seen in each of these parables in Chapter Twenty-five will be outlined in the tables below in connection to the questions presented or implied in Chapter Twenty-four.

**The Kingdom of Heaven is Likened**

*Matthew 24*

3 And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, *when shall these things be?* and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<i>The 10 Virgins</i>	<i>The Servants</i>	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>
1 Then shall <i>the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.</i> And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.	14 For <i>the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.</i> And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability;	32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

**The Absence of the Groom and Master**

*Matthew 24*

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<i>The 10 Virgins</i>	<i>The Servants</i>	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>
5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.	14 For <i>the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.</i> And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his	32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

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	several ability;	
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**Wise and the Faithful**

***Matthew 24***

42 *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore *be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<b><i>The 10 Virgins</i></b>	<b><i>The Servants</i></b>	<b><i>Sheep and Goats</i></b>
9 But the <i>wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps</i>	16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.	33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand,

**Foolish and the Unfaithful**

***Matthew 24***

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<b><i>The 10 Virgins</i></b>	<b><i>The Servants</i></b>	<b><i>Sheep and Goats</i></b>
3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:	18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.	33 But the goats on the left.



**The Lord's Return**

*Matthew 24*

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.  
 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.  
 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<i>The 10 Virgins</i>	<i>The Servants</i>	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>
6 And at midnight there was a cry made, <i>Behold, the bridegroom cometh</i> ; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.	19 After a long time <i>the lord of those servants cometh</i> , and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came saying, I have gained beside them five talents more. 22 He also that had received two talents said, I have gained two other talents beside them	31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory

**The Plea**

*Matthew 24*

[There will be time no longer for rationalization]

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.  
 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<i>The 10 Virgins</i>	<i>The Servants</i>	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>
8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.	24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.	38, 39 "when saw we thee"

**The Blessing for the Wise and the Faithful**

*Matthew 24*

**Works: The Law of Moses and The Law of Christ in The Bible**

- 45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?  
 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.  
 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<i>The 10 Virgins</i>	<i>The Servants</i>	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>
10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and <i>they that were ready went in with him to the marriage:</i> and the door was shut.	21, 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, <i>I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.</i>	34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, <i>Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world</i>

**The Final Judgment**  
*Matthew 24*

- 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;  
 49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;  
 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,  
 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<i>The 10 Virgins</i>	<i>The Servants</i>	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>
11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, <i>I know you not.</i>	26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant... 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.	41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, <i>ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:</i> 46 And <i>these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.</i>

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**The Command of Works**

*Matthew 24*

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

<b>Matthew 25</b>		
<i>The 10 Virgins</i>	<i>The Servants</i>	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>
13 <i>Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.</i>	27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.	40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

This chapter of parables, The Ten Virgins, The Servants, and the Sheep and the Goats, explains and answers the questions created in Chapter Twenty-four: who will be saved and Why? Chapter Twenty-five concludes with the answer to this all-important question. Jesus Christ explains what the required “Oil” was that could not be bought at the last minute that separated the foolish from the wise virgins. His answer also explains what the meaning of the increase of talents was, necessary to separate the faithful from the unfaithful. The question of “*WHO shall be saved*” for each parable, is found in the answer that separates the sheep from the goats at the judgment. The separation of the wise from the foolish, the faithful from the unfaithful, the sheep from the goats, are the ‘works’ of character. It is a character that cannot be purchased after hours or changed by last minute belief, or deathbed acceptance and repentance. A character must be prepared throughout the time we have on earth and improved upon (repentance) for the better. It is ones character that places the sheep on the right hand of God and goats on the left.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall *he sit upon the throne of his glory:*

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and *he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:*

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* (Matthew 25:31-34)

That which separates the sheep from the goats is discussed below. The separation or judgment is founded in the acts, deeds, and works of love and charity. The works of separation are those by which *all* mankind will be “judged according to their works,” as Paul and John declare (Romans 2:6; Revelation 20:12). God will render unto all their due as they will reap what they sow. To believe alone is not secure enough as Christ teaches here about the works of separation.

**The Sheep**

35 For I was an hungred, and *ye gave me* meat: I was thirsty, and *ye gave me* drink: I was a stranger, and *ye took me* in:

36 Naked, and *ye clothed me:* I was sick, and *ye visited me:* I was in prison, and *ye came unto*

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*me.* (Matthew 25:35, 36)

[Notice that works of verse 35 are in the home, and verses 36 are out of the home. In verse 37-39 the 'sheep' question, "when saw we thee?" The answer in verse 40 teaches that these deeds are part of their character and nature. Their love of mankind and of God was so natural that it was not recognized]

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, *when saw we thee* an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 *When saw we thee* a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* (Matthew 25:37-38)

### The Goats

41 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*

42 For I was an hungred, and *ye gave me no meat:* I was thirsty, and *ye gave me no drink:*

43 I was a stranger, and *ye took me not in:* naked, and *ye clothed me not:* sick, and in prison, and *ye visited me not.*

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, *when saw we thee* an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, *and did not minister unto thee?*

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, *Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

46 *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* (Matthew 25:41-46)

The teachings of Christ, found in the Gospels, are void of the thought that there are no works required for salvation. All His teachings are to the contrary. Every teaching of the Savior is directed to the individual, in both concept and doctrine, for a *change of character* in the believer. Jesus Christ declares in His first sermon that the Law of Moses is fulfilled in Him, and at the same time introduces the saving character attributes required for salvation in the Beatitudes and the 'new law'. Christ's message is one of obedience to the 'law of Christ' or the law of loving God and mankind, upon which hang "*all the law and prophets.*" The Savior demands our obedience to His law: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). "Jesus . . . said unto him, If a man love me, *he will keep my words:* and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

It cannot be mistaken that Christ teaches that one must come unto Him and believe in Him and His Atonement for salvation. It should be recognized that the Savior teaches character change as a necessary contribution as seen in Matthew 25. Tradition, opinion, interpretation, and some religious tenets will argue that nothing is required other than a confession of Christ as one's Savior. The hurdle to overcome is to "Let the scriptures speak for themselves" without the confusing arm of flesh.

To believe in, and love Christ is the beginning, but one must "keep" His words. It is to the teachings of Jesus that one should look for an understanding of the words of the apostles found in the epistles rather than the teachings of man and religious tenets. This belief in Christ and the believer's works of love, coupled with the power of God's saving grace, will lead to salvation. There are also ordinances required beside the

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fruits of repentance, which are often over looked or understated in the teachings of many religious leaders. If God requires something, there is a reason for it. The believer must act upon his belief, in fruits and in ordinance as Christ commanded: “He that *believeth and is baptized shall be saved*; but he that *believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16). Before his ascension Christ give a final command to those who had received their authority from his hands (See Mark 3:14; John 15:16, 17), “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).

*All* outward ordinances that one might participate in, mean nothing and are of no value, without the necessary inward character change to make the ordinances effective and meaningful in the life of the Christian. Establishing a relationship with God (by loving others) is more important than the religious organization one might accept. The love of God and mankind, which true Christians are trying to create in their character, should become an initiating power of participation in any organized religion that one might join. Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, or Sacrament, or any other visible ordinance, that may or may not be required by a particular religious tenet, means nothing and cannot be realized if there is no change of the individual heart. As it has been often said: ‘ordinances are the outward manifestation and commitment of an inward change.’ Connected with this belief of salvation by the power of God’s grace is the character change necessary to ‘see as we are seen’ that ‘when we shall see Him, we shall see Him as He is and we shall be like Him.’ Daily, we must be working on the ultimate goal to become ‘perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect’ by the grace of God, and our choices and changes we make in our hearts, our minds and our characters. Perfection may not come in this life, but the “*power to become*” perfect begins here. Our faith in Jesus Christ, with hope of a better world, coupled with the ‘grace’ of God, creates the power of God unto salvation. Salvation is securing mankind from the effects of the fall of Adam, that of physical death, spiritual death, sin and the loss of the presence of God. This man cannot do alone. Only by the “Grace” of God is mankind able to be saved, no matter what the mortal may do.

The *last commandment* given by Christ before His crucifixion and death is found in the Gospel of John, defining the Christian disciple by the necessary works:

A new *commandment* I give unto you,  
That ye love one another;  
as I have loved you,  
that ye also love one another.  
By this shall all men know  
that ye are my disciples,  
if ye have love one to another.  
(John 13:34-35)