

(Basics) 20. Still More on Dead Works

by Zac Poonen

True spiritual life is characterized by an overflowing service that comes from a life filled with the life of Jesus, rather than mere religiosity.

Duration: 13:07

Scripture: Luke 10:38

Topics: "Christian Service", "Dead Works"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of dead works in Christian service. He uses the example of Martha's service for Jesus in Bethany to illustrate the idea of works that originate from human reason. The speaker emphasizes the importance of doing what the master tells us to do, rather than what we feel like doing. He then goes on to list various characteristics of dead works, such as lack of joy, love, zeal, and faith, as well as doing works for personal gain or to ease one's conscience. The speaker concludes by highlighting the importance of manifesting the life of Jesus in our actions and being a light in the world.

Transcript

Once again, we're going to look a little more deeper at what it means to do dead works that are neither classified under good or evil and that makes us religious instead of making us spiritual. We want to look at two more characteristics of dead works in our study today. But just to review what we have already done in our previous studies, You know, we've been trying to understand what is the difference between a religious Christian and a spiritual Christian.

And we've been trying to see how this makes all the difference in the world because religious Christians will finally become Pharisees and the other people who crucified Christ. And spiritual Christians will become like Jesus. So it's not just a small difference.

And the Pharisees were not people who were living constantly in adultery and theft and murder, etc. They were not debauchorous, evil, worldly people. In fact, they were considered very spiritual by undiscerning Jews of their time.

And it's quite likely that even the disciples of Jesus, the Apostle Peter and the Apostles James and John, when they began to follow the Lord, before they met the Lord, If you had gone up to Peter or James or John, say, two or three years before they met the Lord and asked them, Well, Peter, who do you think is a

spiritual man that you know in your town? I think Peter would have perhaps mentioned some long-bearded old Pharisee who was the elder in the synagogue. And I think James and John would have also said the same. Because those are the people whom they respected as leaders because they saw them fasting, they saw them praying, they saw them carrying these little boxes with scripture upon their foreheads.

And they were so frequently in the synagogue fighting for the truth and standing for the true doctrine. And reading the scriptures, studying the scriptures, keeping the law, fervent to obey the law. And they would have thought these are spiritual men.

But when Jesus came along and they joined up with Jesus and they heard Jesus denouncing these Pharisees as vipers and deceivers who deserve to go to hell, they must have been shocked. And only then would their eyes have been opened to see that what they thought was spirituality was actually religiosity. That the people whom they considered to be spiritual were just plain religious.

I believe unless the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, we can make the same mistake. We can be quite sincere like Peter, James and John were and yet be mistaken. When a person does the Lord's work, Christian work, Christian activity without joy, it's a dead work.

Number two, when he does it without love. Number three, when he does it without zeal. Four, when he does it without faith.

Five, when he does it for his personal gain and honor. Six, when he does those works merely to ease his conscience. Seven, when he does it out of fear of divine judgment.

And eight, when he does it for the sake of obtaining a reward. All of these could be classified as dead works. Now ninth, let us look at a verse which many Christians are not so familiar with.

It's in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 10. There the Apostle Paul says, The life of Jesus is the light of the world. If I were to ask you a question, Who is the light of the world? What would your answer be? My guess is that 99% of Christians would give the wrong answer.

They would say, Jesus is the light of the world. And that answer would be wrong. I show that to you from scripture.

Jesus said in John's gospel chapter 9 and verse 5. Listen carefully. While I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. So when did Jesus say he was the light of the world? As long as he was in the world.

When he prayed to the father in John chapter 17. He said to his father, And now I'm no longer in the world. I'm leaving this world.

And I'm coming to you. So now that Jesus is no longer in the world, but in heaven. Who is the light of the world today? He said as long as he's in the world, he's the light of the world.

But he's gone. There he told his disciples in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 14. You are the light of the world.

So what's the correct scriptural answer to this question? Who is the light of the world today? The answer is we. The disciples of Jesus Christ. Now that sounds like an awesome claim.

But that's exactly what Jesus said. And sometimes we've got to change our way of thinking. And make it more in line with scripture.

What does it mean that we are the light of the world? The Bible says in John chapter 1 verse 4. In Jesus Christ was life and the life was the light of men. The world is full of darkness. It's ruled by the prince of darkness, Satan.

And in the midst of this darkness, God wants a light to shine for him. Do you think the people in the world can see the life of Jesus? In Jesus himself? No. He's in heaven.

They cannot see him. Where can they see it then? They have to see it in you and me. As disciples of Jesus Christ.

If they don't see it in us. They'll never see it anywhere. It's in us.

In the way they see us react in different situations. And behave in the way they see us handling money. And talking to people and behaving.

There people see whether the life of Jesus is being manifested or not. And here it says. The life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh.

And in other words, here is a life coming forth from us. From which come forth certain works. You know the difference between taking a tumbler, a glass of water.

And pouring out the water. And where the glass is being filled by a jug. And it overflowing with water.

There is a difference. A glass pouring out water. And a glass overflowing with water.

What is the difference in its application to our life? Is your service for the Lord something you're pouring out? Or is it the overflow that comes out of your life. Because you're filled with the life of Jesus. There's a lot of difference.

Jesus said. If you thirst and believe in him. Out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

Now what's the difference between a river flowing. And a hand pump. Through which water is pumped out.

There's a world of difference. Many Christians their service for the Lord could be likened to a hand pump. Yes some water does come out.

Some type of service is there. You pump and pump and pump and pump. And some water comes out.

But. In the case of Jesus. His service for his father was not like that.

In the case of a spiritual Christian. His service for his father and for the Lord is not like that. It is an overflow.

It's not something poured out or pumped out. It's an overflow because his life is filled with the life of Jesus. So how can we come to this life? Only if we bear the dying of Jesus.

Take up the cross daily. If I don't take up the cross daily. The life is not going to flow out from within.

Let me give you a practical example. If we merely control our tongues. From speaking angrily.

Or our faces from scowling. But we're still boiling with anger and irritation against somebody inside. What are we doing? We're just practicing self-control.

And any heathen could do that. You don't need the Holy Spirit. You don't need Jesus Christ to do a work within you to do that.

You just need to have a lot of self-discipline. Now that's not what Jesus offers us. It's good.

But it's not the best. That's all that the law can produce. But the Holy Spirit has come to bring a depth within us.

So that from us will flow. From within. From our innermost being.

Will flow the goodness of Jesus. There will be no boiling and irritation inside. Now one last characteristic of dead works.

Number ten. Is works that originate from our own human reason. We saw number nine.

Works that are done without bearing the cross. Without dying to ourselves. And number ten.

Works that originate from our own human reason. And perhaps the best example of this. Would be Martha's service for the Lord in Bethany.

Described in Luke chapter ten. In Luke ten verses thirty-eight to forty-two. We read that Jesus came to Bethany.

And Martha served. Now isn't that a very good thing to do? You know the Lord and his disciples are hungry. I need to go to the kitchen and produce some food for them.

She did that work because she felt that was a good work to do. But let me read you a verse in 1 Corinthians four and verse two. In the living Bible it reads like this.

And it's very sensible. The most important thing about a servant. Is that he does just what his master tells him to.

Not what he feels like doing. If you've got a servant at home. Or you've got a servant in the office.

What do you want him to do? Just whatever he feels like. Even if it's not evil. But good.

Or do you want him to do exactly what you tell him to do? See there are very few people who understand this. This is the difference between soulish human service. And spiritual service in the will of God.

God's word divides between the soulish and the spiritual. We read in Hebrews four and verse ten and twelve. Soulsh works are dead works.

They are works that originate from my own human reason. There is an amazing verse written about Jesus in John chapter five and verse thirty. That he never did anything on his own initiative.

That means he waited to listen. To what the father wanted him to do. Not what he felt like doing.

Because Abraham wanted to help God he produced an Ishmael. Which caused so much confusion. If he had listened to God.

He wouldn't have done that. Ishmaels are the dead works. Many Christians are doing today.

Sincere. Wanting to help God. But without seeking the will of God.

Now what shall we do? Shall we sit back and do nothing? On the contrary. Let us seek God. If we love him.

It doesn't matter if we make mistakes. We can come forth to doing spiritual works. For the glory of God.

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