**“Unprofitable Servants” The Bible Echo 7, 3.**

E. J. Waggoner

A very important lesson is conveyed by our Lord’s illustration in Luke 17:7-10. It is not among Catholics alone that it is considered possible to perform works of supererogation. There are very many who, by their actions at least, hold that they can place God under obligations to them. Love of approbation, and the overvaluing of one’s own deeds, are so universal that there are very few who do not at times have some traces of that disposition. With some the idea obtains that God keeps a debit and credit account, charging each individual with his evil deeds, and giving him credit for all his good deeds, and that if the good overbalance the evil, then God owes him a reward. With this idea, more or less clearly defined, most worldlings flatter themselves that their case will be all right at the last. {BEST February 1, 1892, par. 1}

Many professors often imagine that God is under some obligation to them, and they manifest it in various ways. If they have given somewhat liberally to the cause of God, and have not been prospered as they think they should be, they withhold their gifts. They do not propose to work for the Lord unless they can receive at once large returns on the investment. Others find it difficult when times are hard to make as good a living for their families as they desire, and so they say, “We cannot afford to keep the Sabbath.” As much as to say, “If God does not furnish me with everything I want, he need not expect my services.” Still others look for their reward in appreciation of their work by their brethren. If their efforts are not estimated at their true value, they become discouraged, and refuse to work because they are not appreciated. {BEST February 1, 1892, par. 2}

Now against all feeling of this kind, our Lord utters a rebuke. Summing up the case, he says: “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.” The truth is that the obligation is upon the side of man. The fact that God created us and preserves us alive, places man under obligation to give his whole service to God. Jeremiah says, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.” Every moment of man’s life places him under greater obligation to God than he can ever hope to fulfill. And as this mercy is extended to all, it is not alone the professed Christian who owes service to God. Sinners are under as much obligation to God as though they had made a profession to serve him. But if we repent, and obey the commandments of God in every particular, how does the case stand then? We are still unprofitable servants. God is none the richer for our service. There is a vast amount of sin that we have committed in the past, and as we can do no more than our duty from day to day, we are still largely in debt. Were it not that Christ has been set forth “for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,” the best of men would fail to obtain heaven. {BEST February 1, 1892, par. 3}

And so after all that has been done, eternal life must be “the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” A proper appreciation of this would serve to keep us humble, and prevent many mistakes made on account of our self-sufficiency. Let us be careful lest we become lifted up because of the faith that we have, and so lose the grace of God which is promised to the humble. The more real faith we have in Christ the more will we acknowledge our entire dependence upon him, and our own utter weakness. Let us heed these words of the apostle: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Romans 12:3. {BEST February 1, 1892, par. 4}

**“Christ the End of the Law” The Bible Echo 7, 4.**

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In Romans 10:4 we read as follows: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Before showing what this text means, it may be well to briefly show what it does not mean. It does not mean that Christ has put an end to the law; because (1) Christ himself said concerning the law, “I am not come to destroy.” Matthew 5:17. (2) The prophet said that instead of destroying it, the Lord would “magnify the law, and make it honorable.” Isaiah 42:21. (3) The law was in Christ’s own heart. “Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.” Psalm 40:7, 8. And (4) since the law is the righteousness of God, the foundation of his government, it could not by any possibility be abolished. See Luke 16:17. {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 1}

The reader must know that the word “end” does not necessarily mean “termination.” It is often used in the sense of design, object, or purpose. In 1 Timothy 1:5 the same writer says: “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” The word here rendered “charity” is often rendered “love,” and is so rendered in this place in the New Version. In John 5:3 we read: “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;” and Paul himself says that “love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:10. In both these texts the same word (*agapa*) is used that occurs in 1 Timothy 1:5. Therefore we say that this text means, Now the design of the commandment (or law) is that it should be kept. Everybody will recognize this as a self-evident fact. {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 2}

But this is not the ultimate design of the law. In the verse following the one under consideration Paul quotes Moses as saying of the law that “the man that doeth those things shall live by them.” Christ said to the young man, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Matthew 19:17. Now since the design of the law was that it should be kept, or, in other words, that it should produce righteous characters, and the promise is that those who are obedient shall live, we may say that the ultimate design of the law was to give life. And in harmony with this thought are the words of Paul, that the law “was ordained to life.” Romans 7:19. {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 3}

But “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” and “the wages of sin is death.” Thus it is impossible for the law to accomplish its design in making perfect characters and consequently giving life. When a man has once broken the law, no subsequent obedience can ever make his character perfect. And therefore the law which was ordained unto life, is found to be unto death. Romans 7:10. {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 4}

If we were to stop right here, with the law unable to accomplish its purpose, we should leave all the world under condemnation and sentence of death. Now we shall see that Christ enables man to secure both righteousness and life. We read that we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:24. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1. More than this, he enables us to keep the law. “For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21. In Christ, therefore, it is possible for us to be made perfect-the righteousness of God,-and that is just what we would have been by constant and unvarying obedience to the law. {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 5}

Again we read: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.... For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:1-4. {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 6}

What could not the law do? It could not free a single guilty soul from condemnation. Why not?-Because it was “weak through the flesh.” There is no element of weakness in the law; the weakness is in the flesh. It is not the fault of a good tool that it cannot make a sound pillar out of a rotten stick. The law could not cleanse a man’s past record, and make him sinless; and poor, fallen man had no strength resting in his flesh to enable him to keep the law. And so God imputes to believers the righteousness of Christ, who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that “the righteousness of the law” might be fulfilled in their lives. And thus Christ is the end of the law. {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 7}

To conclude, then, we have found that the design of the law was that it should give life because of obedience. All men have sinned and been sentenced to death. But Christ took upon himself man’s nature, and will impart of his own righteousness to those who accept his sacrifice, and finally, when they stand, through him, as doers of the law, he will fulfill to them its ultimate object, by crowning them with eternal life. And so we repeat, what we cannot too fully appreciate, that Christ is made unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” {BEST February 15, 1892, par. 8}