

The terms which describe these purposeful, persevering, good works are ἐργάτης (laborers in the vineyard, Matt 20:1; in God's spiritual harvest. Matt 9:37,38; Luke 10:2), ὑπηρέτης ("servant-laborers" in the word, Luke 1:2; Paul, a minister-servant laborer of the Lord, Acts 26:16), λειτουργέω ("religious ministering,"¹⁶ "ministering to the Lord," Acts 13:2, "worshipping the Lord," NIV), λειτουργία (ritual services for the Lord, Luke 1: 23). and λατρεία, λατρεύω (service and worship of God, cf. John 16:2; Matt 4: 10). Such service is to be given to God only (Luke 4:8), a service that is to be personal (Anna, Luke 2:37; Paul, Acts 24:14; 26:7; 27:23) and rendered without fear (Luke 1:74). All such works performed by believers are to be "done through God" (John 3:21).

Motivation in Work

Work in the Gospels and Acts is pictured as motivated either from a God-centered or a man-centered life. Jesus' works, of course, are God-centered. He says: "The very work that the Father has given me to finish and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me" (John 5:36); "the miracles (the works, τὰ ἔργα) I do in my Father's name speak for me" (John 10:25); and "I have brought you (Father) glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4).

New Testament believers' works also are described as God-centered. Anna, the prophetess, is depicted as worshipping (serving, λατρεύω) at the temple night and day with fasting and prayers (Luke 2:37). Zachariah fulfilled at the temple his religious service to God (λειτουργία, Luke 1:23). Paul states that he worships (λατρεύω) the God of his fathers (Acts 24: 14), that he belongs to and gives service to (the same word) the angel of the Lord who had appeared to him (Acts 27:23).

For Paul it is the Lord who had appointed him to be his servant (ὑπηρέτης, Acts 26:16), and he even comments that the twelve tribes of Israel earnestly serve (λατρεύω) God night and day (Acts 26:7) as in ignorance they oppose Jesus of Nazareth. The Christians at Syrian Antioch are said to be honoring God with their service (λειτουργέω, Acts 13:2), and those who walked with Jesus are said to be eyewitnesses and ministers (ὑπηρέται) of the Word (Luke 1:2).

In addition, Christians are enjoined to do God-honoring works. Through the coming of Jesus, God's people are enabled to serve the Lord (λατρεύω, Luke 1:74), and they are commanded to fulfill (pay, ἀποδίδομι¹⁷) to the Lord the oaths that they have made (Matt 5:33). As a matter of fact, the Christian's whole cycle of activity is to be God-centered: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt 6:33); "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). In climax, Christians are challenged to "prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:20).

In contrast, those who do not know God do their works in a context of self-centeredness, man-centeredness. This is all the result of the Fall of Adam (Gen 3; cf. John 8:44). The works of the unsaved man are