

his disciples (Acts 5:39). All these works of God are declared to be good (John 10:32).

The Deeds of the Saints

The works of the disciples of the Lord in the Gospels and Acts are generally pictured as good and honoring to the Lord. First, the disciples are seen earnestly grappling (ἀγωνίζομαι) with their sinful condition (Luke 13:24) and calling on God for salvation (Luke 18:13). The inquiring disciples are to repent of their sin and turn to God and "prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:20). As redeemed of God, their deeds wrought through God (John 3:21) are to be good (Matt 5:16) and righteous (Acts 10:35) and are to be performed humbly (Acts 20:19) and without fear (Luke 1:74). As laborers for God in his harvest field (Matt 9:37,38), they should be powerful in speech and action (Acts 7:22), and the effect of that work for the Lord should be widespread (Acts 26:26). These saints who do works for God are both male (Zachariah, Luke 1:8) and female (Dorcas, Acts 9:36).

The deeds of the saints described fall into two categories: spiritual and physical-material. In the spiritual realm the disciples are to worship and serve God only (λατρεύω, Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8), and that religious service is to be engaged in constantly (present form of λατρεύω, Acts 24:14; 27:23), both by individuals as Paul (Acts 24:14; 27:23) and Zachariah (Luke 1:23), as well as by the whole church (Acts 13:2). This religious service (λατρεύω) is frequently accompanied by fastings and prayers and performed night and day on occasion (Acts 2:37). That service includes performing (λατρεύω) the promises or vows one has made to the Lord (Matt 5:33). This kind of service (λατρεύω) is perennial, the same kind of worship relationship as enjoyed by the saints of other ages: Paul worshiped the God of his fathers (Acts 24:14).

However, these works of service to God can be and are defective when those who are supposed to know God really do not know him and thus fail to do his work. In John 8:39 Jesus recognizes the correlation: They who are Abraham's spiritual children will do the works (τὰ ἔργα) that Abraham did (in truly serving God), which many of Jesus' antagonists did not do. Paul, on his part, recognizes that the twelve tribes of Israel in his day were earnestly serving God (ἐν ἐκτενείᾳ ... λατρεύω Acts 26:7) but, of course, not with true faith.

The physical-material deeds of the saints include daily work to provide food, clothing, and shelter: Paul testifies to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:34) that "these hands of mine have supplied (ὕπηρετέω) my own needs and the needs of my companions." In turn, a little later Paul's friends took care of his needs (ὕπηρετέω Acts 24:23) when the Apostle was imprisoned in Caesarea Maritima. Many of the women who followed Jesus provided for (διακονέω) the needs of Jesus "out of their own means" (Luke 8:2, 3; Matt 27:55). In the early church there was a material sharing to meet the needs of all (Acts 2:45; 4:32-37), specifically caring for the needs of the widows in the church community (Acts 6: 1-4). Particular