

## Salvation by Works, Rom 4:4; Principles: Works Imply God Owes Us Salvation as a Wage; Reality: the Great White Throne Judgment, Rev 20:11-12

4. The concept of salvation is mentioned next by the singular subject **μισθός, *misthos***, translated “reward” in the NASB but Paul is using an employer-employee context for his illustration and therefore it is best translated “wage” or “compensation.” The compensation that the Judaizers assert they have earned is salvation by means of works.
5. Paul however is setting them up to take them down. The Judaizers are with him up to this point but Paul next inserts the negative conjunction: **οὐ, *ou***, translated “not.” It is followed by the main verb, the present passive indicative of **λογίζομαι, *logizomai*** “to credit to one’s account.”

present: Customary: denotes that which habitually occurs, or may be reasonably expected to occur. With the negative *ou* it means that in this case the imputation of divine righteousness does *not* occur.

You certainly recall from verse 3 that this same verb was used to describe how Abraham’s faith resulted in his account being credited with imputed righteousness. That is not going to be the case here.

passive: The work of the legalist does not receive the action of salvation by grace as they assert. Their works – *ergazomai* – are not credited to their account as the grace imputation of righteousness but rather as debt.

indicative: Declarative: a statement of fact.

7. The thing not imputed is noted by the noun **χάρις, *charis***: grace.
8. What is credited to their accounts is indicated by the noun **ὀφείλημα, *opheilēma***: to debt. Here is the corrected translation of the verse:

**Romans 4:4** - Now to him who works for salvation, his compensation is not credited to grace but to debt.

9. Principles:
  - 1) The relationship between an unbeliever and God is not one of labor and management. A lost person is not asked to work for God after which God pays him the wage of salvation for his efforts.
  - 2) In the mind of the person who insists that salvation is accomplished by human effort, God is someone who owes them something: they invest blood, sweat, and tears and God owes them a salary called salvation.

- 3) The form of works and the number of them required to earn the wage of salvation is dependent upon which heretical theology is being followed. For example, the Judaizers insisted that for a Gentile to be saved he must become circumcised and observe Jewish law, in other words, become a Jew so you can become a Christian.
- 4) It is not only a rejection of God's love and His grace to assume human effort produces salvation, it is also the height of arrogance to devise a system whereby God owes *us* something.
- 5) But God owes us nothing, yet in grace His love is extended to the entire human race in the Person of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Man owes God reciprocal love for salvation, expressed by nonmeritorious belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- 6) Since the unbeliever is unrighteous and therefore condemned by perfect God, and since perfect God demands perfection from man, then man is at a hopeless impasse, helpless to do anything about it.
- 7) All God requires of helpless man is a free-will response to His love by means of nonmeritorious faith alone in Christ alone.
- 8) Therefore, since all God demands and all man owes is nonmeritorious faith, the addition of human effort to the means of salvation results in debt. Our "so-called righteous acts are like a menstrual rag in His sight" (Isaiah 64:6a).
- 9) Therefore, when the unbeliever performs works in an effort to earn salvation as a wage from God, he is actually doing the opposite: his account is not credited to grace – the imputation of divine righteousness – but to debt – the more human good he performs, the greater his indictment at the Great White Throne Judgment:

**Revelation 20:11** - Then I saw a great white throne [ the Supreme Court of Heaven ], and He who was sitting on it [ Jesus Christ as Chief Justice (John 5:22) ], from whose presence the earth and heaven have vanished [ destruction of the universe: Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; 2 Peter 3:7,10-12 ]; consequently no place was found for them [ since Hades is located somewhere in the universe ].

**v. 12** - Then I saw the dead [ from Torments, Tartarus, & the Abyss ], the great [ those famous for acts of human good and evil ] and the small [ the run-of-the-mill ], standing before the throne, and the books [of works ] were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life [ containing the names of all believers ]; and the dead were judged from the things that had been written in the books, according to their works [ all sins were judged on the cross: doctrine of unlimited atonement ].

- 10) This means that the more the unbeliever works for salvation the farther he descends into debt and the farther from salvation he becomes.
- 11) God owes us nothing, we owe God everything. But we are not qualified to pay him anything yet He is willing to give us everything.
- 12) The plan of God is founded on a policy of grace. He provides salvation through grace. It is His desire that we respond to His grace through nonmeritorious faith.
- 13) To respond to the grace gift of God in the Person and work of Christ with an attitude of earning salvation through human effort is blasphemous. Christ did the work that we are not qualified to do, therefore when a person works for salvation he simply goes farther into debt.
- 14) To try and be saved by working is like trying to get out of debt by borrowing. We have debt we cannot pay but which Christ canceled on the cross.