

6 SELF WORKS VERSUS SPIRITUAL WORKS

Galatians 6:4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Philippians 2:13 ...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Colossians 1:29 To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Trying hard or doing one's best is not enough because self-works do not count for God or His glory. When we are self-driven, there is an active consciousness of the effort we put in. The fact that we are so acutely sensitive to the time, sacrifice, and dedication we have invested shows how strong the striving of self is. The accompanying expectation for results and rewards is keenly felt, even though it may be carefully disguised. Our reaction to the outcome reflects the real spirit of our working. Reactions always reveal, whether it is in the form of self-congratulation or self-defeat.

God does not just want my best, but my all. He is not looking for my ability but my availability. This is because not even my best is good enough to accomplish His purpose. The fallacy of trying my best lies just here – it is still centred on me. It is the 'I' who is trying for 'my' best. Everything is measured in relation to self, not God. It is powered by self-effort and pitched to my standards. People naturally do their best for themselves. Beware of those who seemingly try the hardest with the most ambition. What is telling is how you regard your own effort and work. If you feel you are working very hard, you probably are not working right.

The one who works with God is oblivious of himself or his efforts. It is not his work but God's. There is a wonderful sense of freedom and detachment from the work. The focus is on the One he works for rather than the work he is doing. This in turn releases him to be able to truly and fully enjoy his work more than he can on his own. He goes steadily on through thick and thin, rain or shine. He is aware of, but not anxious or affected, by the outcome of his work. He does not have to prove anything to anyone, has no reputation of his own to uphold, and no expectation of others to live up to. The true workman of God does not feverishly flog himself to do his best. He simply and quietly works with, and for God. In so doing, he is able to excel any 'personal best' he may set for himself. He is not dependent on men's commendation or affected by their criticism. He neither craves men's acceptance, nor fears their rejection. He is satisfied because God is.

By definition, self-works are necessarily self-limiting. There is only so much one can do. Think of how much is left undone if we continue to function and operate just by common sense. This is a much-needed paradigm shift in work ethic if what we do is going to count for God and yield genuine fulfilment. There will be a proliferation of "greater works" (*John 14:12*) when more of God's works are being done in God's ways instead of our own.