

Title: **“GOD NOW ACCEPTETH THY WORKS!”**

Text: Ecclesiastes 9:7

Subject: *How can God accept our works?*

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Tape # Z-52b

Readings: *Bobbie Estes and Ron Wood*

Introduction:

Last Sunday morning Bro. Rupert Rivenbark closed our conference with a tremendous message in which he demonstrated the fact that **God’s elect are accepted, saved and shall be judged worthy of heaven in the last day because of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ.** Yet, in that message, Bro. Rivenbark showed us from the Scriptures that we shall all be **judged according to our works.** We shall be judged worthy of hell or worthy of heaven according to our works. That is exactly what our Savior says in John 5:29.

(John 5:25-29) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (26) For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; (27) And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Without question, salvation is by grace alone. We are saved by God’s free, sovereign, eternal, unalterable, unconditional grace in Christ, without our works. Yet, **the Scriptures declare, plainly and repeatedly, that all men shall be judged and either accepted or rejected according to their works.** It is written, “*Shall not he render to every man according to his works?*” (Proverbs 24:12).

(Jeremiah 25:14) “For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and **I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.**”

(Matthew 16:27) “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then **he shall reward every man according to his works.**”

(Revelation 2:23) “And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that **I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.**”

(Revelation 20:12-13) “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works.** (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and **they were judged every man according to their works.**”

We shall be judged according to our works. Is that what we have just read in the Book of God? Indeed it is. Now, let me ask you a question. — Who in this house is ready to meet God in judgment with his works?
The very thought of being judged according to our works is terrifying, is it not? It truly is, until we read what God says to his people about their works. After the services here last Sunday, Bro. Rivenbark and I were talking about his message. I told him what a blessing it was to me, and how very important it was. Bro. Rupert responded, “But I forgot to give them my first and most important text, Ecclesiastes 9:7. You’ll have to show them that sometime.” Late that night, just before going to bed, I read Ecclesiastes 9; and I’ve been studying it all week.

Turn with me to Ecclesiastes 9:7. I am going to try to preach to you on this remarkable, soul-cheering subject: — **“GOD NOW ACCEPTETH THY WORKS!”**

(Ecclesiastes 9:7) “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.”

These words are not addressed to everyone. They are specifically addressed to the righteous and the wise. **They are addressed to those whose works are in God’s hand,** to those who, being the objects of God’s

mercy, love and grace, have been made righteous and wise in Christ (Ecclesiastes 9:1; Matthew 10:16).

(Ecclesiastes 9:1) “For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all *that is* before them.”

To those people whose works are in the hand of God the Spirit of God says, in Ecclesiastes 8:15, — “*Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.*” It seems to me that I recall seeing those words somewhere else. In Luke 12:19 our Lord Jesus tells us about a rich man who said to his soul, “*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*” God called that man a fool. But here in Ecclesiastes, the Lord God speaks by Solomon and says, to the righteous and the wise who are in his hand, — “*A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.*”

Proposition: If God accepts my works, I have every reason to eat, drink and be merry. If God accepts my works, I have “*no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry,*” because my works shall abide with me all the days of my life; and they shall follow me to glory.

Our text is Ecclesiastes 9:7; but before we can understand the text aright we have to see it in its context. So let’s read the context, beginning in chapter 8, at verse 15 — Ecclesiastes 8:15-9:10.

(8:15) “Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.” — **Whatever the number of the days of our lives under the sun, they are appointed by and given by God. This is true both of the elect and the reprobate.**

(16) “When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also *there is that* neither

day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)” — **Now, here is something no man can ever discover, no matter how diligently he searches it out. Now watch this. This defines everything in the context.**

(17) “Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek *it* out, yet he shall not find *it*; yea farther; though a wise *man* think to know *it*, yet shall he not be able to find *it*.” — **Did you get that? The thing in which God calls for us to eat, drink, and be merry is his work, his work that cannot be discovered by human wisdom — Redemption!**

(Ecclesiastes 9:1) “For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred *by* all *that is* before them.” — **Neither love nor hatred can be known and measured, except by God’s work. Here is both love and hatred: — “Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated.” Yet, in this world...**

(2) “All *things come* alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath. (3) This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun, that *there is* one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead. (4) For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. (5) For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. (6) Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun.” **Now, let’s look at our text...**

(7) “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.”

Remember, Solomon is talking about God’s work of redemption, God’s grace, God’s salvation, that which is hidden from men in this world. — “*He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end*” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

“GO THY WAY”

How often we are brought low and made downcast by distressing providences, outward temptations and inward sins! How often, looking at outward things, we begin to think like brute beasts (Psalm 73)! Blush, my soul, with shame before thy God!

Here we are urged to set our hearts on our God and his grace and march through this world with triumphant joy. The word translated “*go thy way*” has many shades of meaning. It might be translated “**pursue** your way,” or “**march in** your way,” or “**vanish in** your way.”

The admonition **carries with it a sense of joy and victory.** That is how God’s people ought to live in this world. That is how we ought to walk through the earth: joyful, triumphant and confident in faith.

- **Christ is our Way.** — If Christ is my Way, I have no reason to live with fear. — Christ is our way of **acquaintance** with the Father. — Christ is our way of **access** to the Father. — Christ is our way of **acceptance** with the Father. — Christ is our way of **atonement** with the Father. — Christ is the **old way**, the **narrow way** and the **only way** to God. — God’s people are people of the Way.
- Though our way is the way of the cross, “the way of the cross leads home.” So let us walk with joy. — “*The way of the righteous is made plain*” (Proverbs 15:19). — “*For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish*” (Psalm 1:6).
- Our way is the way appointed by our blessed God and Savior.

He is with us in the way, holds us in the way, and carries us all the way. **Our way is the Highway of Holiness by which the ransomed of the Lord return to Zion,** “*with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads*” (Isaiah 35:8-10).

(Isaiah 35:8-10) “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall

not err *therein*. (9) No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there*: (10) And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

“EAT THY BREAD”

Next the wise man urges us, by the Spirit of inspiration to eat our bread with joy. — “*Eat thy bread with joy.*” That admonition may, of course, refer to **the bread of daily providence**. — “*I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labor the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun*” (Ecclesiastes 8:15). **Believing men and women ought to be the happiest, most cheerful people in the world.** Everything we possess is blessed to us by Christ; and our God has promised that we shall be blessed in basket and in store, blessed in lying down and blessed in rising up, blessed in going out and blessed in coming home, blessed in time and blessed to all eternity!

(Deuteronomy 28:1-8) “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: (2) And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. (3) Blessed *shalt* thou *be* in the city, and blessed *shalt* thou *be* in the field. (4) Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. (5) Blessed *shall be* thy basket and thy store. (6) Blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou comest in, and blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou goest out. (7) The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. (8) The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

(Deuteronomy 28:12) “The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.”

But we have other bread to eat; and we are ever to eat that bread with joy. **Christ is our Bread.** He is Manna for our souls. He is the source of all our blessedness. It is by eating his flesh and drinking his blood that this blessedness is ours. **Christ is...**

- Suitable Bread
- Satisfying Bread
- Sweet Bread

Let us go our way and eat our bread with joy, for Christ is our Way and he is our Bread.

“**DRINK THY WINE**”

Look at our text again. “*And drink thy wine with a merry heart.*” — How kind, how gracious, how good our God must be, if he commands his children to be merry! Like bread, wine is here set before us as a part of our daily diet.

- Bread represents that which is necessary. Wine represents that which is pleasurable. Both are to be used freely and enjoyed by us.
- And as bread represents the body of Christ, wine represents his sin-atoning, redeeming blood. — Let us ever drink this wine with a merry heart!

Solomon is urging us to enjoy the bounty of God’s providence and his saving grace in this world.

- Christ is our Way; so let us go our Way.
- Christ is our Bread; so let us eat our Bread with joy.
- Christ’s love is better than wine; so let us drink our wine with a merry heart.

“**ACCEPTETH THY WORKS**”

“*For God now accepteth thy works!*” — As we make our pilgrimage through this world of woe, we ought to eat our bread with joy and drink our wine with a merry heart, because God accepts our works. **God accepted us**

in his dear Son before the worlds were made; and here the Spirit of God assures us that the Lord our God accepts our works. Imagine that.
— “*God now accepteth thy works!*”

Mark that word “*now.*” — “*God now accepteth thy works.*” This is much more than an assurance that God will accept our works in eternity, or that God accepts some of our works. Rather, it is **an assurance from God himself that he presently accepts and perpetually accepts our works, just as he accepts us in his dear Son.**

(Philippians 4:18) “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”

(Hebrews 13:15-16) “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. (16) But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

What works does God accept? Which of our works are now accepted of God?

- Without question, the Lord God accepts the obedience of Christ as our Representative and Surety as our works. — That is the righteousness of God that is imputed to us in free justification.
- Certainly, the Lord God accepts our acts of worship, devotion and service by the merits of Christ’s blood and righteousness, by his gracious intercession for us in heaven: (Prayers — Songs of Praise — Gifts — Witnessing — Service to his People, etc.).

But there is nothing in our text about those things. Our text is clearly talking about the ordinary, common affairs of everyday life. It is talking about things so ordinary, common, routine and mundane as eating a piece of bread and drinking a glass of wine. **Is Solomon declaring that God accepts our lives? Is the Spirit of God here telling us that God accepts every aspect of the believer’s life in this world? Indeed, he is!**

- In free justification God imputes the righteous obedience of Christ to us.
- And in that same free justification, by the blood of his darling Son, the Lord God assures us of the non-imputation of sin to us, because Christ has put away our sins.

- And though our lives are shot plum through with sin, God refuses to charge us with sin and accepts our lives, all that we do in life, as perfect works of righteousness.

Let me put that in shoe leather. God almighty declares the plowing of the wicked and the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to him. Indeed, the very life of the wicked is an abomination to him (Proverbs 21:4, 27; 15:8-9). But God approves of the way of the righteous and declares that the mouth of the righteous is a well of life (Psalm 1:6; Proverbs 10:11). In other words, everything about the reprobate and everything done by the reprobate God counts an affront to him, an abomination before him and will use it to torment him in hell. And everything about his elect, everything done by them, God accepts in and by Christ.

- Giving **a cup of water** in the name of Christ is as accepted by God as laying down your life as a martyr for Christ.
- **Digging ditches** to provide for your family for the honor of God is accepted by God as much as preaching the gospel.
- **Building a house or keeping one**, raising children or educating them, being a good father or mother or a good friend or brother for the glory of God is as accepted by God being a missionary in New Guinea.
- **God accepts your daily employment**, as one who serves him as a carpenter, a teacher, a craftsman, a salesman, an engineer, or a garbage collector, as he does my daily employment as a pastor and preacher, studying his Word. — No clergy and laity in the kingdom of God, no big “I’s” and little “yous.”

The Lord did not save my soul. He saved me, all of me. He did not save your soul. He saved you, all of you. He accepts us as his own. He accepts our lives; and he accepts our works, for Christ’s sake! That is clearly what Solomon is telling us (vv. 7-10).

(Ecclesiastes 9:7-10) “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. (8) Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. (9) Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that *is* thy portion in *this* life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. (10) Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor

device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

Look at that word “accepteth” for a minute. What a grand word it is! It is one of those words that carries many shades of meaning. It really cannot be accurately translated by just one English word. When Solomon wrote, “*God now accepteth thy works,*” he was saying...

- God is **pleased with** your works.
- God **approves of** your works.
- God is **satisfied with** your works.
- God **delights in** your works.
- God is **favorable toward** your works.
- God **receives, with pardon,** your works. — That comes closest to the mark. The God of heaven receives our works through the sin-pardoning efficacy of Christ’s precious blood. — He washes them clean and accepts them!

It is upon the basis of this divine approval that the Apostle Paul urges us to devote our lives to our Savior (Romans 12:1).

(Romans 12:1) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.”

We are acceptable to God by Christ’s living, perpetually efficacious sacrifice; and by that same sacrifice, our works are now accepted of God as works of love and faith. — He accepts my life as a life utterly devoted to him alone, and perfect in Christ!

Illustration: *Faith’s Dandelions*

God accepts our works because he accepts us! Because God my Father accepts me in Christ, I should “*rejoice in the Lord always!*” May God the Holy Spirit teach me and give me grace to joy in **what I have**; joy in **what I expect**; joy in even **what I want**, for those very wants will bring me to my Savior.

- **Do I have fears?** Yes, just as you do; but even our fears should not destroy our joy. Our fears keep us clinging to our Savior, depending upon him for everything.

- **When we suffer**, our light afflictions are sweetly blessed to our souls’ good when they are made renewed occasions for the Lord Jesus to come to us and soothe our hearts with love. In his time he will deliver us from all our troubles.

If we suffer loss, let us still eat our bread with joy and drink our wine with a merry heart, for **lose what we may we cannot lose Christ. We cannot lose his love, his favor, his grace, his Spirit, the efficacy of his blood, and the merits of his righteousness.** Oh precious security, precious salvation in the Lord our Righteousness! — “*Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.*” (Isaiah 3:10).

As God now accepts our works (1 Peter 2:5), because the works of our Surety are our works and we have been washed in his precious blood, **in the Day of Judgment** God will accept our works (John 5:29; Revelation 20:12); and our works shall follow us to glory (Revelation 14:13). In free justification the righteous works of Christ as our Surety have been imputed to us. And because the death of Christ demands for us the non-imputation of sin, God now accepts our works, — all because we are “*accepted in the Beloved!*”

(Revelation 20:12) “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

(Jeremiah 50:20) “In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and *there shall be none*; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

Our best works of righteousness are nothing but sin, without Christ. But in Christ our God smiles upon us, accepts us, and accepts our works as the works of him whose name is called “*THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16).

(Ecclesiastes 9:7) “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.”

Amen.