

Are Your 'Good' Works as Good as You Think?

Do you remember the ancient fairy tale about Rumpelstiltskin? A king locked the miller's daughter in a tower, requiring her to spin straw into gold or lose her life. But each night, a strange little man entered her room and, for a price, spun the straw into gold for her. His final price was her first-born child after the king married her. Her only way of escape was to guess his name: Rumpelstiltskin.

My Bible study this week reminded me of this fairy tale. The passage that triggered the connection is 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. The NIV translates it this way:

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Christians are called to live in a way that honors the Lord. Of course, the good things we do are not what bring us into right standing before God. Only faith in Christ does that. Still, we have the opportunity to build our life on the foundation of the salvation He gives.

So when are those good works *not* good? Which works will "survive" and which will be "burned"? As I studied this passage, I came face to face with the realization that this issue is more than good works versus bad works. It's also

about motive.

My motives can tarnish the best actions, causing them to have no eternal value. A wrong motive may seek attention or accolades from others—yielding a temporary reward in this life, but nothing more. So, in effect, my wrong motives can take a good thing (gold) and spin it into something with no lasting value (straw).

On the other hand, God can take the simplest, most ordinary actions (straw) and spin them into extraordinary results (gold). It happens when I act for the sake of the gospel and God's glory rather than my own interests.

What a wake-up call for me. May I be as concerned about my motives as I am about my actions!

How about you? {eoa}

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