

## Christ's Work And Our Work

*"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"* (John 20:17). This passage has been misunderstood for a long time because of its translation in the King James Version. It has long been thought that Jesus was telling Mary not to touch Him because He was in the resurrected state. However, more recent textual studies have concluded that Jesus wanted to express to Mary the fact that she should not cling to Him because He was going to ascend to the Father.

Jesus' custom was to answer the thoughts rather than the words of His disciples (Luke 9:47). In John 20:17, it appears that Christ's words are directed to Mary's thoughts. She had sprung forward to embrace Him under the impression that all He had spoken of before His death was now done; that He had been to the Father, and that He had come again to receive His own to Himself (John 14:28; 16:28). Christ's answer to this was "No." He implicitly states that He still has His work to do and she has work to do; they must separate again; He to do His work, she to do hers.

There is a remarkable difference between Mary's case and Thomas' case. She believed too much; he too little. She was all faith, although somewhat hasty in her conclusions; he was all unbelief, refusing to believe even that His Master stood before him. Mary's eager faith was corrected by, *"Do not cling to Me,"* and Thomas' unbelief was removed by, *"Reach hither thy finger."* Each one was treated with marvelous wisdom, gentleness, and love.

Mary's mistake which was corrected by the Lord was a natural one. Mary's mistake was one of simple over-eagerness. After Jesus instructed Mary not to cling to Him, He told her to go and tell the disciples what she had seen. This verse sets forth the possibilities and teaching of Christ's work in heaven and ours on earth.

The first work of Christ that will be considered is forgiveness of sins. He became the sacrifice for our sins. Isaiah 53:4-5 says, *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."* God indicated back in the Garden of Eden that there must be a sacrifice of a life when sin is committed: *"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed*

*them*" (Genesis 3:21). By the grace of God we have the perfect sacrifice for our sins because of Christ's work on the earth.

A second work which will be considered is the work of intercession. Hebrews 7:25 says, *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."* Jesus blazed a trail into heaven for man (Hebrews 6:20). He went into the presence of God where humans could not go to make intercession for man. He is now our *"advocate"* with the Father (1 John 2:1). The wonderful aspect about Christ's work of intercession is that He has went to a place where man can follow after death.

The Lord commanded Mary to "go." She had other responsibilities than to cling to the Lord. She had work, and so do we. First, we have work for ourselves. This work is expressed throughout the New Testament in various forms of exhortation. Jesus and the apostles exhort Christians to continue in their work by these expressions: *"follow Me," "take up your cross," "deny self," "work while it is day," "let your light shine," "grow in grace," "pray without ceasing,"* etc. We have a duty to ourselves to continue in this work. Revelation 2:10 says, *"Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

A second work that we have is our work for the church. We are members of one body, helping each other, bearing each other's burdens, comforting each other, strengthening each other's hands, binding up each other's wounds, supplying each other's wants, etc. The New Testament makes it plain that we need each other. No one can live in a vacuum and no one can survive all alone. We must work with one another to withstand the pressures and temptations from outside.

A third work is the work for the world. We are called out of the world and exhorted to not be a part of it (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). A ship is safe in the water as long as it does not take the water in its hull. Christians are the same way. Christians can survive in the world as long as they do not let the world in their lives and attitudes. We are called to pray for the world and to work to save others (Jude 23). We need to focus on those who are dying in their sins by teaching, reproof, warning, and inviting. The Lord has left us with much work to do and little time in which to do it. We need to get to work (John 9:4)!

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