

Men Are Not Justified by Works: St. Mark the Ascetic



St. Mark the Ascetic, 5th century, Commemorated on March 5. Born in Athens, disciple of St. John Chrysostom, monk in the Nitrian desert of Egypt, known for his wisdom and the gift of miracles which was granted to him from above. He knew the Scriptures by heart. His writings were highly esteemed and widely sought. Of them it was said, "Sell all and buy Mark." He lived as an ascetic for 90 years, dying at the age of 120.

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St. Mark the Ascetic, 5th Century

18. Some, not fulfilling the commandments, think that they believe rightly. Others, fulfilling them, wait for the Kingdom as a reward which is owed to them. Both are mistaken.

22. When you hear Scripture saying that "He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27), do not think that works are worthy of Gehenna or of the Kingdom, but that Christ rewards each one according to his

works of faith or lack of faith in Him, not as being an exchanger of things, but as being God our Creator and Redeemer.

23. Those of us who have been deemed worthy of the washing of regeneration offer good works not for recompense, but the the preservation of the purity that has been given us.

24. Every good work which we perform through our own nature makes us refrain from the opposite, but without grace is incapable of adding to our sanctification.

25. The self-restrained man abstains from gluttony; he who has renounced property abstains from greed; he who is still abstains from talkativeness; he who is pure abstains from love of pleasure; he who is chaste abstains from fornication; he who is self-sufficient abstains from love of money; he who is meek abstains from agitation; he who is humble abstains from vainglory; he who is obedient abstains from contentiousness; he who is reprieving abstains from hypocrisy. Similarly, he who prays abstains from hopelessness; the poor, from greatness of wealth; the person who confesses, from denial; the martyr from idolatry. Do you see how every virtue that is performed, even unto death, is nothing else than abstinence from sin? Now abstinence from sin is a work of nature, not an exchange for the Kingdom.

26. Man scarcely preserves what is proper to his nature; but Christ grants sonship through the Cross.

From St. Mark the Ascetic, “226 Texts Concerning Those Who Think That Men Are Justified By Works”, **The Philokalia, Writings of the Holy Mystic Fathers in which is Explained how the Mind is Purified, Illuminated, and Perfected through Practical and Contemplative Ethical Philosophy**, Vol 1, compiled by St Macarios of Corinth and edited by St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Belmont MA, 2008, pp. 280-2.