

Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds. By Kent L. Yinger. Society for New Testament Monograph Series 105. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, xiv + 318 pp., n. p.

The Pauline teaching that believers will be judged according to works has naturally provoked significant discussion in the history of scholarship. Kent Yinger, in a dissertation written under Andrew Lincoln, takes a fresh look at the matter. Yinger organizes the study in four major sections. He commences with a survey of scholarship, introducing readers to the history of modern interpretation on the question. Then the motif of judgment according to deeds is examined in Jewish literature, which includes the OT Scriptures, the OT Pseudepigrapha, and the Qumran literature. The next major section investigates the Pauline literature, and texts from Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, and Colossians are studied to determine the Pauline teaching. Yinger wraps up his work with conclusions, and there are three appendices as well.

Yinger demonstrates that the motif of judgment according to deeds was widespread in Jewish literature, not only in the OT but also in the Pseudepigrapha and Qumran literature. The Pauline appropriation of the theme, therefore, cannot be limited to a single text but demonstrates instead Paul's familiarity with the biblical tradition as a whole. The author also shows that judgment according to deeds is employed in various contexts, whether to praise God, comfort the righteous, or warn those who were sinning. He adopts the covenantal nomism view of Sanders, arguing that good works were not an earning of salvation but a response to God's grace. He also qualifies Sanders by saying that obedience does not maintain covenant status but evidences or manifests one's relationship with God. Nonetheless, Sanders is fundamentally correct in saying one "gets in" by God's grace and "stays in" by obeying covenantal stipulations. God's judgment of people according to their deeds is sensible, according to Yinger, when we realize that it is a

holistic judgment. God does not demand perfection, but good works reveal the integrity, consistency, and authenticity of persons. One does not, therefore, become righteous at the judgment, but one's righteousness is vindicated and confirmed at the judgment.

Paul, in Yinger's view, stands in continuity with Jewish antecedents. Judgment according to works was a fundamental element of his gospel and cannot be dismissed as hypothetical. No element of legalism exists in the Pauline gospel, for people enter a relationship with God by grace and confirm their relationship with him by works. Paul, therefore, adopts the covenantal nomism of his Jewish ancestors and contemporaries. He differs, of course, in trumpeting the Christ event rather than the Torah as the means by which one enters God's people. Yinger also thinks Paul emphasizes the role of the Spirit more than Judaism, although we should not draw the conclusion that legalism was taught in Judaism. Nor does Yinger think that Paul's view of good works should be described only in terms of evidence of salvation, for it is also clear that good works are a condition for receiving eternal life (Gal. 6:8-9).

Apparently, says Yinger, Paul himself felt no tension between judgment according to works and justification by faith, for he taught the two side by side and often. Paul simply expected that those who had received God's grace would live righteously. Yinger acknowledges an existential tension, even if a theological tension is absent, conceding that some of those who believe in Christ may apostatize.

Yinger's work is helpful in many respects, showing that the theme of judgment according to deeds permeates the OT, second temple Jewish literature, and Paul. Judgment according to works is not hypothetical as Yinger rightly acknowledges. It is a constituent part of the Pauline gospel. Despite insightful exegesis in a number of texts, Yinger's work fails in a number of respects. The relationship between faith and works in Paul receives astoundingly little emphasis.

Yinger notes Paul's emphasis on the Spirit, but the role of faith is almost completely ignored. Nor does he explain the tension between justification by faith and judgment according to works simply by saying that Paul saw no tension and presented both themes without apology. People may present two themes together and without apology and still be contradicting themselves. We need some explanation as to how the themes do not contradict.

Yinger's anthropology is also defective, causing one to wonder what need there was for the cross at all. He rejects the notion that God demands perfect obedience, offering a quite unconvincing interpretation of Gal. 3:10-13, and argues that Paul follows the pattern of covenantal nomism seen in Judaism. If perfect obedience is unnecessary, why is the cross necessary? For in Yinger's view God simply looks for a holistic obedience that manifests moral transformation. Yinger also accepts Sanders's view of covenantal nomism, the social view of "works of law," and rejects any legalism in Judaism. All of this amounts to a rather positive view of human beings and fails to see the radical nature of human evil. Yinger rightly sees that good deeds are necessary for salvation, but fails to perceive any newness in Paul's gospel, nor is the role of the cross or faith explained adequately.

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