



"Genius begins great works; labor alone finishes them."
—Joseph Joubert

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Appearing Before God (Part One)

In [Psalm 92:4-5](#), the psalmist proclaims:

For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.

Upon hearing the phrase "the works of [God](#)," we may think of the various actions of God in protecting and providing for His people. God's works in slaying the firstborn of Egypt, delivering Israel from captivity, and finally crushing the Egyptian army in the Red Sea may also come to mind.

Biblically, His first works are seen in Genesis 1, His works of creation. We see Him creating light and separating it from darkness. We see Him terraforming the earth to design continents and oceans and creating the heavenly bodies that provide light. We observe His works in all seven days of the Creation Week.

Perhaps we also are reminded of the natural world that surrounds us, in which we can easily perceive God's hand. We especially see His works in the springtime, as the plants and animals are full of new life. Only His hands

could have made such a beautiful, productive environment for us and all life in which to thrive.

Humanity is the pinnacle of His physical works, and we are privileged to know that God's work with men also includes a spiritual dimension. Undoubtedly, the psalmist had an understanding of this spiritual work when he wrote, "I will *triumph* in the works of Your hands" (emphasis ours throughout).

But there is another work of God that we need to consider. The written Word of God is a truly magnificent work. Just as the physical creation was accomplished each day of Creation Week with things that "God said," so also His spiritual creation is being accomplished with things that He said—and which He has recorded for us. The inspired Word of God is part of His creation just as much as light, plants, animals, and man, and it reveals that the thoughts of God "are very deep," as the psalmist declares.

Within the physical creation, we see overwhelming evidence of divine intelligence. We not only notice beauty, but we can also observe structure, order, and relationships between parts. From the most complex mammal to the simplest bacterium, we perceive everything working together, everything serving a function, and everything demonstrating the genius of the Creator.

Within God's written creation, we likewise see overwhelming evidence of divine intelligence, not only in the content, but also in the structure. [Psalm 12:6](#) describes the words of God to be like silver that has been purified seven times. If God uses a word in a verse, it is because no other would do. Nothing superfluous appears in the words that God has said.

Those in [the world](#) who believe that life happened by random chance also generally think that the Bible is a collection of the random writings of men. But those who recognize God's signature in the physical creation will also tend to see His signature in His written creation, and ultimately in His spiritual creation as well. Seeing God's hand in one area of life lends itself to seeing it in other areas as well.

Words have tremendous power. It is with good reason that playwright Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote, "The pen is mightier than the sword," and

before him, the Greek poet Euripides said, "The tongue is mightier than the blade." But when the words have their origin in God Himself, they have a dynamic force that we cannot fully comprehend. We can see only its effects.

[Jesus](#) says in [John 6:63](#), "The words I speak to you are *spirit*, and they are *life*." Our words do not have this quality; we oftentimes spew a lot of hot air. When God says something, though, it is never petty or insignificant. When He speaks, things happen. Sometimes it takes thousands of years, but if He has spoken it, He has also unleashed the power and the determination that will see His Word fulfilled.

This is described succinctly in [Isaiah 55:10-11](#):

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

These verses show that when God accomplishes something through His Word, quite often it is a process. Sometimes it is instantaneous, such as when Jesus said to the man at the Pool of Bethesda, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk" ([John 5:8](#)). But what we often see is God working through processes and courses that involve many elements and often a great deal of time. A great deal of time elapses between the rain or snow falling from heaven—the beginning of the process—and somebody eating a piece of bread at the end. But if a process begins with God's pure Word going out of His mouth, no matter how long it takes, the power behind that Word certifies it *will* be accomplished.

Verse 11 says that God's Word will not return to Him "void." This word means "empty" or "useless." It can also mean "in vain," "unfulfilled," "unsuccessful," or "with futility." The *Amplified Bible* renders it "without producing any effect." When God speaks, His words are never futile or useless. He never utters a word in vain. He never gives a command that goes unfulfilled. Recalling Genesis 1, consider what has resulted from God speaking just a handful of sentences!

In Part Two, we will pursue the word "void" and see how it applies to us when we appear before Him.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Works of God](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The idea that the "work of God" is equated with "preaching the gospel around the world as a witness" severely limits the awesome scope of God's work. If God ever stopped working, the whole universe would come apart, and we would cease. Most of God's works are behind the scenes and invisible. The Psalms corroborate that God's work is awesome and unfathomable, producing a motivating fear that prompts right action (wisdom). We need to see God working in every aspect of our lives, realizing that all of these works are for our benefit. In contrast to ours, God's works are entirely holy and on the highest level of good, love, and faithfulness, aimed at expediting entry into His family. The gospel must not only be preached, it must also be believed and lived with the help of God's Spirit, leading to spiritual transformation (composed of holy, righteous character) into salvation and eternal life.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Two\): Works](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In his masterwork, the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon frequently touches on the subject of work due to its central place in both human and divine life. John Ritenbaugh explains that God works all the time—in fact, it is the first thing we see God doing in His Book—and we must follow His example to become skilled in living as He does.

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