

GOOD WORKS

This is a subject-and-a-half! There are many evangelicals who would consider this a waste of time in studying. They hear so much of good works from the 'social gospel' people and those who believe that good works are all you need to get you into Heaven. But, *you* would agree with me that good works do not save, but good works are the consequence of a truly born-again believer.

It *is* easy for us to become uncomfortable if we over-emphasise the aspect of 'good works'. We fear in case we speak so much about 'good works' to the detriment of our beloved doctrine that salvation is by faith alone ... and there are those folk who would warn us off thinking about good works by directing us to the thief on the cross who didn't have time to demonstrate good works.

Well, I don't believe the thief on the cross didn't have time for good works ... as a product of his salvation. I believe even on the cross the thief demonstrated good works. I believe that as he hung on that cross beside the Lord Jesus he became a different man and his life for that short period testified that he was saved and converted into a child of God, - that man underwent a change that would have been noticeable to those around him.

I once had the privilege of leading a lady to the Saviour as she lay on her deathbed. She was finding it difficult to breathe, but along with me she gasped out the words of repentance and she asked the Lord Jesus into her life. She entrusted her soul to the Saviour and I believe she was immediately saved. She asked me to bring in her family and she told them she had become a Christian. A couple of hours later she became unconscious and never spoke to anyone else. That woman, - I believe, - for that very short time demonstrated 'good works' consistent with a new-born believer.

In considering good works we need to begin at the beginning ...

1. DEFINITION OF GOOD WORKS

- * Our *Confession of Faith* sets this out simply and Biblically for us. It defines very carefully what the Bible means by 'good works'.

- * There are so many beautiful people in our churches today. There are lovely people in all the faiths and religions. They are involved in some of the most necessary charitable activities that provide much-needed relief for great numbers of people in every part of this world.
- * If good works alone could save a person Heaven would be full of worshippers of all beliefs, - the various facets of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc, etc ... even atheism.
- * There are genuinely good people ... and I believe if you were to count them all up there would be more good people than bad people.
- * However, the good works the Bible speaks about have as their source God Himself. It is the standard of God that gives the **definition of good works**.
- * I remember in our Philosophy lectures we used to debate the meaning of the term 'good works'.
- * Some held that good works, - corresponding to grace, - can be done by the unsaved as well as the saved (I can't remember how they passed off [Is. 64:6 we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags](#)). On the other hand, some of us were convinced that *true* 'good works' in the way that God means the term is only the remit of the saved.
 - * [The Lord Jesus, Mt. 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.](#)
 - * [Paul said, Eph. 2: 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. ... II Tim. 3: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all **good works**.](#)
- * Yes, of course the unsaved do many good things for the betterment of mankind that must be praised ... but the Biblical principle that lies behind the good works the believer does is that their actions strive to glorify God.
- * That means that sometimes it's not noticed by the world, - it is insignificant and unimportant as far as the unsaved are concerned.
- * The world has its own measuring rod that it uses to calculate good works ... but God's highest of the highest standard measures the good works of the believer in terms of the glory it brings to Him.
- * So, the Bible teaches that *true* 'good works', - as far as God is prepared to realise, - can only be carried out by the Christian.

2. DEMONSTRATION OF GOOD WORKS

- * The *Confession of Faith* agrees with this, “Works that are truly good, and which are done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith”.
- * Titus considered Christ, 2:14 [Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.](#) ... 3:8 [that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.](#) ... v.14 [also learn to maintain good works.](#)
- * The evidence of a born-again believer is not simply the doctrines that he holds, or what he does in the church, ... it is how the work of God’s grace is demonstrated in his life.
- * I want to live in a way that is consistent with the word of God and the doctrines I believe.
- * As you know, I am absolutely convinced of the Doctrines of Grace and I believe that my doctrines based upon the Bible must be demonstrated in how I live.
- * They are the bedrock of my life. I believe that if I was to lose my faith I would be the most miserable person on the face of this earth ... because my faith is absolutely fundamental and everything to me.
- * If you say you believe something but act contrary to what you say you believe you are nothing more than a hypocrite and if you continue in hypocrisy it’s doubtful whether or not you were saved. ... [Mt. 7:20 by their fruits ye shall know them.](#) You need to start to ask some serious questions!
- * When you are saved you become a new creature in Christ, - you put off the old things and you take on the new. God created you in Christ ... [Rom. 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.](#)
- * The very first breath you take as a child of God it is a breath of new air and new life in Christ.
- * Before you were saved you were dead spiritually. Now, as a new creature in Christ, your purpose until God calls you home is to demonstrate good works that are in keeping with His glory.
- * That means the reason you don’t swear any more is because God has saved you; you don’t run to the public house anymore; you don’t ‘eye up’ the women the way you used to; you turn the television off if it is offensive to God. These things and others are a consequence of your faith in Christ and as demonstration of good works in Him.

3. DILIGENCE IN GOOD WORKS

- * The *Confession* is very clear on this also. Paul explains where these ‘good works’ come from, [Eph. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.](#)
- * Once again, there is nothing in which we can boast because the ability and the desire for these good works come from outside us ... from God.
- * He gives us that initial desire and by grace He continues the process of refining us as He leads us out into various areas of service.
- * God never saved a sinner yet to be lazy and not render unto Him good works and faithful service. God never saves anyone not to serve Him.
- * A person who says he/she is a Christian but has no evidence is on very ‘soggy ground’ as far as the Bible teaches.
- * And something else too ... the *Confession* makes it very clear, “The ability of believers to do good works does not spring in any way from themselves, but is derived from the Spirit of Christ alone”.
- * When Christ saves, He keeps and He gives the believer the desire to do that which pleases Him and fulfils His purpose.
- * Yes, to some He gives five talents, - in keeping with their ability; to some He gives two talents, - in keeping with their ability; and to some He gives one talent, - in keeping with their ability.
- * You needn’t crave after more talents than God has given you because you will be busy enough fulfilling your commitments to those that you don’t need any more.
- * You might think you might be able to do my job better than me ... and you might ☺ ... but God hasn’t called you to be a Pastor, - He has called you into another area of service that compliments the work of the fellowship and also my work for Him, - we are in this together ... like the Body of Christ we are. This ties neatly up with ...

4. & 5. DEFICIENCY IN GOOD WORKS

- * Horatius Bonar wrote, “All that I was, my sin, my guilt, My death was all my own; All that I am I owe to Thee, My gracious God alone”.
- * All my good works outside of grace are futile. Even since I’ve been saved I can’t boast in anything I’ve done for Christ ... because if He hadn’t saved me I wouldn’t be here today.

- * There is a doctrine that teaches Christ saves you, but it also teaches that unless you keep up your own salvation you will lose it, - the 'saved and lost' doctrine. (*It makes me cringe because I used to believe it.*)
- * Spurgeon preached, "If there is to be in our celestial garment but one stitch of our own making we are all of us lost".
- * This coming Saturday we have a man coming to preach who is one of the biggest names in Christian evangelicalism today. Earlier this year Terry and I were across in Glasgow at the Fraternal listening to another great giant, Ian Murray.
- * After Ian Murray had finished what he was saying, the Fraternal was opened up for questions. I was a wee bit disappointed, - I expected Ian Murray to be more forthright than he was.
- * A young man, - a youth pastor in one of the churches, - was at the Fraternal for the first time. He told Ian Murray that he disagreed with him ... and he argued with this experienced faithful servant of God.
- * It disappointed me that Ian Murray was so gracious to the young man because Ian Murray has an 'ocean of knowledge' compared to that young man's 'drop in the bucket'.
- * But afterwards I had to tell myself off; God showed me through Ian Murray the beautiful and humble heart of a true servant of God.
- * Yes, he could have 'washed the floor' with that young man but he chose to demonstrate the grace of God rather than his own knowledge.
- * Isaac Watts wrote, "Behold, what wondrous grace The Father hath bestowed On sinners of a mortal race, To call them sons of God."
- * We are not perfect, but we are privileged. We don't know all the answers and that is one reason why we need each other; each child of God needs the help of his brothers and sisters. The arm works in accordance with the rest of the body; the leg wouldn't think of kicking himself, - all the parts of the Body of Christ must work together as one.
- * We are together in the Lord's business; He has saved each one of us the same way. Jonathan Edwards wrote, "If there be ground for you to trust in your own righteousness, then all that Christ did to purchase salvation, and all that God did to prepare the way for it, is in vain."
- * My good works, the *Confession* says, "are marred, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they fail utterly to meet the searching requirements of God's standards".

- * And yet we must [Phil. 3:14](#) press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ...

6. DETERMINATION IN GOOD WORKS

- * If you give up it demonstrates that what you had in the first place wasn't really worth holding on to.
- * The Lord Jesus said, [Mt. 10:22](#) he that endureth to the end shall be saved.
- * Paul told Timothy, [II Tim. 2:3](#) Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He set himself up as an example to follow, [v.10](#) I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.
- * James also, the brother of Jesus, wrote, [5:11](#) Behold, we count them happy which endure.
- * When you belong to Christ He has 'the say' over your life. Twice Paul told the Corinthians, [ye are bought with a price \(I Cor. 6:20; 7:23\)](#).
- * Paul described himself so often as a servant/slave of Christ. He saw the slaves in the market being sold to the highest bidder; Christ in mercy and in grace came to where he was on the road to Damascus and the Saviour drew him unto Himself. Paul would have gone anywhere and done anything for his Master,
 - * O I delight in His command, Love to be led by His dear hand; His divine will is sweet to me, Hallowed by bloodstained Calvary.
 - * Where He may lead me I will go, For I have learned to trust Him so, And I remember 'twas for me, That He was slain on Calvary.

7. DISTRIBUTION OF GOOD WORKS

- * Yes, the unsaved can do works that are good but because their hearts are not right with God, - they don't believe in Him as Saviour, - their good works will perish with them.
- * The *Confession* says they remain "sinful works" because they come from hearts that are unregenerate and they cannot "make a man fit for the reception of grace".

Conclusion

- * R.L. Dabney wrote, "The Gospel teaches us that while believers are not rewarded on account of their works, they are rewarded according to their works". It's a sobering thought!
- * I realise that when I stand before the Throne I will be judged not only because I am a Christian, but I will also be judged as a Pastor.

- * Each of us, - individually, personally, - will give an account of our works before the Judgement Throne of God.
- * It's a serious matter. The Bible teaches us the responsibilities we have as servants of Christ.
- * Servants serve ... and they know that is their purpose. They serve without questioning their Master, and they serve to the best of their ability.
- * The writer to the Hebrews wrote, [10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; \(for he is faithful that promised;\)](#) [24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:](#) [25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.](#) May God encourage each of us towards that end!