

.HC 62-64–Your Good Works are Good for Nothing

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You learned that you were saved by grace through faith alone; you were not saved by your good works. But there are some Christians who are mistaken and include good works as a necessary part of their salvation.

Arminians (which include Pentecostals), use phrases like “God has no hands but yours,” or “God has done all he could do and now it is up to you.” They say you must cooperate with God in your salvation.

Roman Catholics teach God must give you faith which will cause you to do works, and only when you do those works will God justify you. But in reality, they are teaching the necessity of good works for your salvation!

The Bible disagrees with Arminians and Roman Catholics! Both of these views rob our Savior of the credit that belongs to him.

So look today at 3 things the Bible actually teaches about good works.

Our headings are:

Your good works don't meet God's standard for salvation

Your good works are only rewarded because they are purified by Jesus

You will always pursue good works if and after you are a true Christian

Our goals are: **That you will do good works to show you have received what Jesus has done for you.**

Your Good Works Don't Meet God's Standards for Salvation

62 Q. WHY CAN'T THE GOOD WE DO MAKE US RIGHT WITH GOD, OR AT LEAST HELP MAKE US RIGHT WITH HIM?

A. Because the righteousness which can pass God's scrutiny **must be entirely perfect** and must in every way **measure up to the divine law.**

Even the very **best we do in this life is imperfect** and stained with sin.

1. If you want to personally earn your salvation, you have to do perfect works, but only Adam and Eve, before they fell into sin, were able to do perfect works.

No one can do perfect works today.

2. Why can no one do good works today?

a. For a work to be good it must be from faith in Christ:

Hebrews 11:6 But **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

You need faith to do good. But only God can give faith to you. God can't give you faith unless you are regenerated. So God must regenerate you first. Weren't you passive in your birth? Weren't you sinful then too? Your genetics reflect your reality:

John 8: 44 "**You are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because **there is no truth in him**...

So if your good works aren't done from faith, they are sinful.

b. For a work to be good it must be done according to the law of Christ:

Romans 3:20 Therefore **by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified** in His sight, for **by the law is the knowledge of sin**.

The law could never save because **no one could keep it perfectly**.

The law only showed you how bad you were and how much you needed someone **to obey for you**...and how you needed someone to **take your punishment for** breaking the law.

c. For a work to be good it must be done for the glory of Christ:

1Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or **whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**.

It is natural to do all you do for the glory of yourself. If you help someone and hope to get the slightest glory, it is not a good work. Even if you made sure you provided everything your parents needed...or if you dig a dozen wells in Africa, or if you pay all your taxes, it is tainted with selfishness, and therefore, it is no good. It is abominable – totally unacceptable to God if it is not done 100% for the glory of God.

3. Not only is man unable to do anything good; man is only able to commit sin!

If you are not a Christian, **everything you do is bad!**

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

So even the best work you do is tainted with sin.

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And **all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags**; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

4. So those who try to use good works to earn his salvation are doing a bad thing! Good works are bad works if you want to use them to earn your salvation or help earn your salvation.

5. This is a motivation for evangelism, isn't it?

You know that the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or any other religious person cannot please God because his work cannot please the Lord. You must speak to him about Christ's work.

Your Good Works are only Rewarded because they are offered through Christ

63 Q. HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT THE GOOD WE DO DOESN'T EARN ANYTHING WHEN GOD PROMISES TO REWARD IT IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT?

A. This reward is not earned; it is a gift of grace.

1. If your good works are only rewarded because they are offered through Christ, does it mean your good works are useless?

If you are a Christian, your good works are not useless. Not at all! They are not perfect, but they have value. You see, God is kind. He accepts your good works **because he sees them through your Lord Jesus.** Because of Christ between you and God, God's view of you changes. When he looks at you, he is not repulsed as when a non-believer tries to do good works to please him. Your good works then become acceptable. That is why the Apostle Paul could say with confidence:

2Timothy 4:7 I have **fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** 8 Finally, there is **laid up for me the crown of righteousness,** which the Lord, the righteous Judge, **will give to me** on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2. To prove the benefit of doing good works, see how obeying any of God's laws brings rewards for you in heaven.

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

What are some specific things that will bring great rewards in heaven and on earth?
Three things, but there are many more!

a. Enduring persecution...

Mathew 5:12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Even though you might have complained when you were persecuted, God would be pleased to reward this imperfect work!

b. Giving up family, friends, or career...for the sake of serving Jesus. This is always a tough, but sometimes friends or family may leave you because you are living for Jesus. He will reward you.

Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, **shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.**

c. Being generous to the poor. The Lord promises to restore to the giver many times over. It is true that you may not be perfect in giving...and may even want some credit in the world, but because you are a Christian and you give through the perfect righteousness of Jesus, the Lord will reward your work.

Proverbs 19:17 He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And **He will pay back** what he has given.

3. What rewards might you get out of this world?

The rewards out of this world are: **crowns of righteousness** and other **unspecified glories**. You will have to wait for heaven to understand those rewards in fullness. For sure, you will have perfect blessedness in which you will be able to praise God eternally.

4. God is the judge of these good works, so you know he will stick to his promise to reward them.

Some Christians may have done outwardly good works and are heralded as being truly good by fellow Christians, but they may not be as rewarded as others **who may have done less outwardly good works** but had **more good thoughts** of God, spoke **more kind words to others**, or **spent much secret time in prayer**. Yes, **even words and thoughts bring much glory to Jesus and great rewards to you.**

5. Are there also rewards for good works in this life?

Yes. Love, peace, truth, friends, comfort, material things may come to those who do well.

Matthew 6:3 "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself **reward you openly.**

You will always pursue Good Works if and after you are a true Christian

64 Q. BUT DOESN'T THIS TEACHING MAKE PEOPLE INDIFFERENT AND WICKED?

A. No. It is **impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits** of gratitude.

1. As long as you are in the Vine, Jesus Christ, you will bear fruit.

More specifically, you will do good works because Jesus is in you. The Vine is good. The Vine transfers his nutrients to you and you can't help but produce good fruits. This is why you worship each Sunday. Here you are nourished.

Luke 6:44 "For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 "**A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good**; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. **He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit**; for without Me you can do nothing.

Every branch in Christ will bear fruit. There is no neutrality in Jesus. No branch remains for decoration!

2. You will do good works in order to show you love God; if you love Jesus, you will keep his commands.

3. How does this translate today? A few examples:

a. You will not presume your children are saved; you will work to make sure they understand the Gospel and trust the Lord for themselves.

b. You will not assume that because you are saved you can be indifferent about worship in church and in the home. Instead, you will work hard to listen to the preaching and struggle to understand what you read so your soul will be nourished and that you can nourish your family.

c. Because you are daily cognizant of the greatness of Christ's work for you, you will show it by praising him. You will not complain when things don't go your way.

Conclusion:

You may look at your good works and be most impressed. You might think they are valuable. Others might think they are valuable. **But God is never fooled.** He said your good works are like filthy cloths. Not too impressive, is it? **Your good works can do nothing,** not even help in a little way, to earn your salvation. **You do good works as a result of your salvation.** Positively, God uses the good works of a Christian, though not perfect but viewing them through Jesus, to reward you in heaven. Every Christian will do good works.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. While good works don't save you, don't ignore doing good works which are like treasures that you store up in heaven. Those treasures you will enjoy when you get there.

2. Jesus made it possible for you to do good works. Your good God recreated you through the shed blood of Jesus to do good. Yes, Adam lost that ability to do good, but Jesus, the 2nd Adam, restored it to you.

3. The best good work you can do is love.

Love your neighbor and tell him of Jesus and hell.

Love your neighbor and confront his sin.

Love God and worship him, sing songs of praise to him, and listen to him.

Finally, if you have thought of yourself as good, I hope God is humbling you today and showing you that your good works are good for nothing and can never even help to save you. Only if you receive by faith the life of righteousness and the sacrificial death of Jesus will you be saved. This is the only thing that truly matters in the grand scheme of life. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?