

## **1 John. 3:18-22 (WCF 16:6-7) “Sincere Works”**

**For the Children:** Being sincere means that when you say something, you really mean it. If you tell your little brother that you like his painting, you mean it. If you tell your parents that you're going to clean up your room, you really mean it. The Lord wants His children to be sincere when we say we are doing things for the Lord, to serve Him. We must do those things out of love for God and for other people. We must do them in the way the Bible commands us. We must do them for God's glory. We must be sincere in doing them for these reasons. If we do things to serve God in this way, then we can be confident that He will accept those works – not because we are behaving so well, but for the sake of the Lord Jesus. **Questions:** What kind of things spoil our good works? How did the Lord Jesus make our works acceptable to God? How do you know if your works are good?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: Sincerity and Works**

- 1) Acting from Love: Acceptable good works must arise from the love of God and neighbour (especially brethren). After all, love fulfills the Law (Rom. 3:8; Gal. 5:14).
- 2) Love in Deed: Love is to be expressed not just in words, but in deeds. See James. 2:14. This is a way of demonstrating the sincerity of our words. See also Matt. 21:28-31.
- 3) Love in Truth: Acceptable deeds must have originated in the work of God's Word (and Spirit), which give us the right motive for doing good; be carried out according to the commands of God's Word; and they must arise from true faith and seek God's glory. All of which implies sincerity as well. The Lord knows if these criteria are not present (1 John. 3:21).
- 4) Not Earned: Our works are not made acceptable by our love, sincerity or obedience. They are too flawed in themselves (WCF 16:6). They are only made acceptable through the work and merits of Christ. That is why the unregenerate can do no acceptable works, even when complying with God's commands outwardly (WCF 16:7).

#### **Second Point: Sincerity and Confidence**

- 1) Believers Have Doubts: Even true believers may sometimes doubt their own salvation, or the acceptability of their works. The devil encourages these doubts. The text encourages us to have confidence before the Lord in acceptable works – note the words, “know,” “assure” and “confidence” in vss. 19 and 21. “before the Lord” (vss. 19, 21) means that what is acceptable is judged according to His standards, rather than simply by our own estimation. He is “greater than our heart and knows all things” (v. 20) He is greater in discernment and also in mercy. Our evaluations of our works are often unduly negative – or unduly positive.
- 2) How to Test Our Works: In order to take encouragement that our works are accepted by the Lord, we need to test them by His criteria. If they show the love of God and neighbour, are done with sincerity, according to His Word, on the foundation of Christ and for God's glory, then we may have confidence (in Christ) before Him.

#### **Third Point: Sincerity and Prayer**

- 1) Bold Access to God: Prayer is one of our works, enabled by the Lord. When this work is done acceptably, we can have confidence – a bold and free access to the throne of grace. The demonstration of acceptable prayer is as for our works in general – with love, sincerity, in truth, in Christ's Name and for God's glory. The Lord answers such prayers.
- 2) Whatever We Ask: Indeed, with such prayers we receive “whatever we ask” (v. 21-22). This “whatever” is qualified by other things the Scripture teaches us about prayer – that it must be from gratitude, in faith, in Christ's Name, according to His Word/will etc. However, we do not always receive the answer we want when, or in the manner we expect. If we pray for things not promised or commanded in the Word, there is no guarantee we will receive what we have asked. But the Lord's response to His people is always governed by His infinite wisdom, love and mercy.

### **Conclusion:**