

“Good Works”
Titus 3:8
(Preached at Trinity, June 18, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. For the last several weeks we have focused upon God's wondrous redemption whereas He has chosen to save us from our sin and adopt us as His own children. Paul stresses over and over throughout his letters that God chose to love and redeem us completely apart from any goodness in us, completely apart from any works of righteousness that we have done.
Titus 3:5 NAU - "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,"
Ephesians 2:8-9 NAU - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."
Romans 3:20 NAU - "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin."
Galatians 2:16 NAU - "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."
2. Does this mean that good works are without any value at all? Paul answers this question in **Verse 8**.
Titus 3:8 NAU - "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."
3. Paul includes this among those things he calls "trustworthy statements."
These are basic statements of truth.
1 Timothy 1:15 NAU - "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*."
1 Timothy 3:1 NAU - "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*."
1 Timothy 4:7-9 NAU - "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. ⁹ It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance."
2 Timothy 2:11 NAU - "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;"
4. Good works are not meritorious, but they are inseparable from the Christian life.

Ephesians 2:8-10 NAU - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

5. Paul stressed this in **Verse 1** - "to be ready for every good deed,"
 - a. Christian conversion is transforming. We are translated from darkness to light.
 - b. Here in **Verse 5** Paul describes it as a washing and renewing.
 - c. By God's transforming grace we should be "ready for every good deed."
6. We are saved apart from works, and yet good works are an inseparable necessity of the Christian life. I preached on this subject almost ten years ago and this morning we'll look at it again—the importance of good works.
The 1689 Confession of faith, Chapter 16 gives us great insight into the subject of good works. I'm going to use it as a guide this morning. You can follow along on page 678 of the Trinity Hymnal.

I. Good works contain no merit for the lost man

LBC Chapter 16:5 – “We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come, and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom by them we can neither profit nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins”

A. The work of salvation is a marvelous display of God's grace

Ephesians 2:8-9 NAU - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

1. This is at the heart of the Christian doctrine of Justification
Galatians 2:16 NAU - "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."
2. There is terrible confusion over this today
Lloyd-Jones – “Large numbers of people have assumed that they are right about the first things, but they never have been right about their justification, and it is just here that the devil causes confusion. He will even encourage us to be righteous as long as he has us confused at this point. That he is doing so at the present time is clear from the fact that the average person in the Church seems to regard men as Christian simply because they do good works, even though they may be entirely wrong about this preliminary truth.”
3. Good works can never deal with the issue of our sin. Even if we could live perfectly from now on it could not remove our guilt. It is all a moot point, however, because we *can't* live perfectly. We are *not* good people. God is not concerned with a few good deeds. He is concerned about holy hearts. We are evil, wicked – our hearts are defiled. This is why we need a new heart.
4. The Law demands perfect obedience, not just a few good works
James 2:10 NAU - "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all."

- B. The truth is, even the good works of a lost person are sinful.
- LBC Chapter 16:7** – “Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the Word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, nor make a man meet to receive grace from God, and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.”
1. The confession says the good works of the lost man has three problems that prevent them from being accepted by God.
 - a. They proceed not from a heart purified by faith”
 - b. “Nor are done in a right manner according to the Word”
 - c. “Nor to a right end, the glory of God”
 2. The first necessity is faith.
 - a. Our good works are only accepted in Christ
Faith brings us to humble ourselves before Christ, trusting in Him, loving Him, and desiring to honor and serve Him. Without faith good works are nothing more than a desire to make God *our* Servant by making Him indebted to repay us for our good works.
 - b. Without faith it is impossible to please God
God looks upon the heart. Many hateful and mean-spirited people pride themselves in maintaining their list of good works.
Sam Waldron writes: “How often Christian workers have justified prolonged absence from their families and failure to perform the most basic family or parental duties by the good work of being a missionary or evangelist.”
 3. The second necessity is that good works be “done in a right manner according to the Word”
 - a. God defines what is good and pleasing to Him in His Word
LBC Chapter 16:1 “Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy Word, and not such as without the warrant thereof are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intentions.”
 - b. The Bible provides the Christian with the instruction that equips him for good works.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
 - c. The lost person vainly believes that his efforts in keeping the Law actually satisfy the Law. He devises in his own heart what he considers to be right.
 4. The third necessity is that our good works be done “to a right end, the glory of God”
 - a. The Christian does good works with a motive of displaying the glory of God. He delights in honoring God.
 - b. The lost person doesn’t desire to glorify God. If he did he would submit himself entirely to God.

- II. This doesn't mean good works are without value.
- A. God has used the good works of the unregenerate for many good purposes
1. We read in the confession again:
LBC Chapter 16:7 – “Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others . . .
 2. The poor have been fed, orphans provided for, cities have been built, governments have been formed – by lost people! These are tokens of God's grace and mercy in a fallen world.
 3. But these works are of no value in making the sinner right before God.
- B. Good works have wonderful value when done by the believer.
In fact, saving faith is never void of good works.
LBC Chapter 16:2 – “ These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that having their fruit unto holiness they may have the end eternal life.
- Good works manifest our thankfulness to God.
 - Good works strengthen our assurance by making our faith more visible to ourselves.
 - Good works edify the brethren. Your good works encourage and strengthen your fellow believers.
 - Good works adorn your Gospel profession as others observe the reality of God's grace in you. Adorning it means dressing it up making it attractive to others.
1 Peter 2:12 NAU - "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation."
 - Good works stop the mouths of the adversaries. They may slander us but they cannot deny the power of God working in us.
- C. Saving faith is never void of good works
1. God has saved us that we might be holy. He has saved us so that we might live and walk by good works.
Ephesians 2:10 NAU - "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."
 2. Our good works are the work of the Holy Spirit in us
LBC Chapter 16:3 – “Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ; and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is necessary an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure;

3. Although our good works are the work of the Holy Spirit in us we must not be negligent in our duty to perform them.
LBC Chapter 16:3 – “yet they are not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the Spirit, but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.
 Paul admonishes us to labor in doing good.
Titus 3:8 NAU - "I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. "
4. But even when we've done the best that we can do we've only done what God has required and still fall far short of what duty demands.

Conclusion:

1. Genuine Christianity will always be openly exhibited
 Christianity is not what you say you are – it is what you publicly display before the world
Matthew 5:14-16 NAU - "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
3. As we respond to every situation in life we should ask ourselves, “What difference does my Christian profession make? Would I be acting any differently if I were not a Christian?” This is particularly true when we act out in anger, impatience, or selfishness. Sadly, we may have to honestly admit at times, I’m behaving exactly as a lost person would behave.
4. How does the transforming power of Christianity demonstrate itself in your life? Do you bear the marks of Christian conversion?
 There should be a profound difference between your life and the lives of your lost neighbors.
5. God has saved us so that our lives would be a consistent pattern of good works.
Ephesians 2:10 NAU - "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."
6. Jesus gave Himself that He might purify us a holy people zealous for good works.
Titus 2:14 ESV - "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."
7. By grace God has enabled us to live holy lives
 - a. Salvation is a transformation – we have been spiritually awakened
 - b. We have been delivered from the world, our own flesh, and Satan.
 - c. As believers God is working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are to labor and strive, yet it is all by His grace—every desire, every act of service, every gift we bring – it is all by God’s grace.