

Five Biblical Truths about Good Works

1. Content: Good works are only those that are _____ in the Bible.
 - a. Scriptural affirmation
 - i. **Mic 6:8:** He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?
 - ii. **Heb 13:20-21:** Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
 - iii. **2 Tim 3:16-17:** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
 - b. Theological argumentation: Good works are only those that are prescribed in the Bible because God is the final arbiter of what is good. And he has revealed in his Word what is good.
 - c. Practical implications
 - i. If good works are only those commanded in the Bible, then good works not commanded in the Bible, are not truly good works. “But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men” (Matt 15:9). Therefore, we need to avoid “man made rules” and legalistic checklists.
 - ii. Good works, according the Scriptures, chiefly, are expressions of kindness and generosity, especially as it relates to practical and financial help. Some examples of good works: John 10:31-33; Acts 9:36; 10:38; 2 Cor 9:8-9; 1 Tim 5:10; 6:17-18.
2. Source: Good works are _____ from God.
 - a. Scriptural affirmation
 - i. **John 15:4-5:** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- ii. **Eph 2:10**¹: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which [good works] God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
- iii. **Phil 2:13**²: for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

b. Practical implications

- i. The good works you do, you cannot take any credit for because good works are sourced in God.
- ii. Even though good works are sourced in God, it does not mean believers are not commanded to perform good works. In the matter of good works, believers are not passive.
 1. **Matt 5:16**: 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.
 2. **Phil 2:12**: So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.
 3. **Titus 3:8**: 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. Importance: Good works are the _____ and _____ of saving faith.

a. Scriptural affirmation

- i. **Jam 2:18, 22**: But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” . . . You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.

¹ For more on Eph 2:10, see: Dan Burrus, “Saved for Works,” sermon available at the GCBC sermonaudio.com webpage.

² For more on Phil 2:12-13, see: Jeff Rich, “Get to Work for God is at Work,” three part sermon series available at gracelakeville.org.

- ii. **Gal 5:6:** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

b. Practical implications

- i. Without good works, saving faith is _____. You are justified through faith alone but not through faith that is alone.
- ii. Without good works, you will not make it to heaven, because good works are evidence of saving faith. Good works (for the Christian) lead the way to eternal life.³
 - 1. **Rom 6:22:** But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification [i.e., good works], and the outcome, eternal life.
 - 2. **Eph 2:10:** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

4. Limitation: Good works are not the _____ of justification before God.

a. Scriptural affirmation

- i. **Rom 3:20:** because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.
- ii. **Eph 2:8-9**⁴: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- iii. **Titus 3:5**⁵: 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.

b. Theological argument

- i. The great distance between our good works and glory of God.

³ For more on good works as they relate to judgment and eternal life, see: Dan Burrus, "Systematic Theology, Lesson 40: Eschatology, Part 6," lecture available at gracelakeville.org.

⁴ For more on Eph 2:8-9, see: Dan Burrus, "Saved by Grace," sermon available on [GCBC sermonaudio.com](http://GCBCsermonaudio.com) webpage.

⁵ For more on Titus 3:5, see: Jeff Rich, "Remembering Grace," sermon available on [GCBC sermonaudio.com](http://GCBCsermonaudio.com) webpage.

1. **Job 9:2b-3:** How can a man be in the right before God? If one wished to dispute with Him, He could not answer Him once in a thousand *times*.
 2. **Isa 6:3:** And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”
 3. **Rom 3:23:** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- ii. Even our good works are tainted with sin and weakness.
1. **Ecc 7:20:** Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.
 2. **Isa 64:6:** For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
- c. Practical implications
- i. No matter the _____ and _____ of good works that you may do in this life, it will not make you right before God.
 - ii. When we have done all the good works we can, we have only done our duty and nothing more (Luke 17:10).
5. Acceptance: Good works are acceptable in _____ _____ for believers.
- a. Scriptural affirmation
 - i. **Eph 1:6:** to the praise of the glory of His grace, which [blessings of salvation including good works] He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
 - ii. **1 Pet 2:5:** you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
 - b. Theological argument: Good works are acceptable in God’s sight for believers because believers are accepted in Christ. And God accepts Christ.
 - c. Practical implications

- i. Non-believers may do good works as commanded by God. And these good works may be useful to themselves and others (c.f., Titus 3:8b). Yet non-believers good works are not accepted in God' sight. Why?
1. The good works do not come from a right _____—regenerate heart.
 - a. **Gen 4:5:** but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.
 - b. **Heb 11:6:** And 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 seek Him.
 2. The good works are not done in a right _____ according to the Scriptures.
 - a. **1 Cor 13:1-3**⁶: If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.
 3. The good works are not done with the right _____—the glory of God.
 - a. **Matt 6:2:** So when you give to the poor [a good work], do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full (also, v. 5).
- ii. Good works are still tainted with weakness and sin. Yet, good works are accepted by God because you are accepted in Christ. This should deflate all pride and boasting. When you share the gospel, help the poor, contribute to the offering, love your neighbor through acts of kindness . . . whatever good works you do, you have no grounds for boasting or

⁶ For more on 1 Cor 13:1-3, see Dan Burrus, "A More Excellent Way, Part 1," sermon available at GCBC sermonaudio.com webpage.

pride. Scriptures “whole end,” says Calvin, “is to restrain our pride, to humble us, cast us down, and utterly crush us.”⁷

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 3.18.4.