

## “Of Good Works” part 1 WCF 16.1.1, God Alone Defines Good Works

2021.09.19 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

click [bit.ly/3ksYvL6](https://bit.ly/3ksYvL6) to hear this lesson as taught (or scan QR code→)



### WCF 16.1 (TPH p928)

I. Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy Word,<sup>(a)</sup> and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention.<sup>(b)</sup>

<sup>(a)</sup> Micah 6:8; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 13:21.

<sup>(b)</sup> Matt. 15:9; Isa. 29:13; I Pet. 1:18; Rom. 10:2; John 16:2; I Sam. 15:21, 22, 23.

Mic 6:1 Hear now what the LORD says:

“Arise, plead your case before the mountains,  
And let the hills hear your voice.

2 Hear, O you mountains, the LORD’s complaint,  
And you strong foundations of the earth;  
For the LORD has a complaint against His people,  
And He will contend with Israel.

3 “O My people, what have I done to you?  
And how have I wearied you?  
Testify against Me.

4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
I redeemed you from the house of bondage;  
And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

5 O My people, remember now  
What Balak king of Moab counseled,  
And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him,  
From Acacia Grove to Gilgal,

That you may know the righteousness of the LORD.”

6 With what shall I come before the LORD,  
And bow myself before the High God?

Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,  
With calves a year old?

7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
Ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression,  
The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?

8 He has shown you, O man, what *is* good;  
And what does the LORD require of you

But to do justly,

To love mercy,

And to walk humbly with your God?

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

---

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)**

---

It'll continue to be our our privilege and joy, to to work through the Westminster confession of faith, which is such a gift from God by his grace and the church.

And in particular men to have such a good and concise summary of the teaching of the whole Bible mentioned, a bunch of times how they didn't want to footnotes since the whole Bible collectively teaches all of these things. But that we need to understand these footnotes and their contexts and gives me the ability to hit large number of the key passages.

And what I mean by that isn't that there are some passages that are more important than others, but that in God's order and how he gave us a scripture as we compare scripture with scripture, there are there are passages that kind of help provide the structure and so when you come to a verse and you want to understand what it's teaching and you want to understand how to apply it, it's good to have the structure of the whole of scripture in place.

So you know where to put things it's like now I would not be a good example of this but it's like someone who would be a good example of this would have a pegboard and you know one of those yeah things with the little drawers in it in their workshop and every place in the pegboard has the thing that goes there and all the little drawer slightly things, you have a place to put it and the whole fits together and then everything you need to use or everything you find.

You know, we never know when we're gonna need a bolt. Exactly. That shape. It has its place to go. Well very, very similarly with doctrine and and application, the Bible has everything we need in it for faith and practice and it's very helpful to know how it all fits together and to be able to retrieve weekly, or to file away easily.

What is what you need for particular situation or to understand particular text. So this this week we come to start the 16th chapter Westminster confession 16 which is on good works. Very important was very important in the reformation because people were trusting in good works and miss defining.

Good works just as we'll find out have done since the fall and that was one of the great sweats with the with the Roman church.

And then also very important right now because we live in a fairly what I would call and to know me in kind of anti-gods law and tie holiness and effort, and, and serving and obeying, the Lord in the way that scripture commands. And so there's very important corrective in this chapter for things that we will run into, not only in our own hearts, but also likely in conversation with other believers.

So very helpful chapter, as we start to begin the first paragraph. Let's come before the Lord together in prayer. We praise you. God for you are good and none of us are good. Your works are good and perfect. And so, we thank you that you gave your son to be a man to take on our nature.

So that when he is made, like us in every other way, it would still be without sin for, he is good and we come to you through Christ asking for the help of your spirit who makes us to know you and your son for this as eternal life to know you.

Oh, our triune God. And we ask that your spirit would help us to understand your word. Well, and we ask that this understanding would take root in our hearts and form our attitudes and our desires, and our behaviors that we would bear fruit to your glory. And that among this fruit would be not only the praise of the lips and thanksgiving and in the offering up of our soul to you in spiritual sacrifice but also good works sharing and obedience unto you.

The love of our neighbor, the love of our brother. Most of all the love of you. Oh God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. So give us the help of your spirit and blessed to us. Now, the scriptures, which you have caused to be written every word of which has been breathed out of your mouth so that we would be equipped for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. All right. You can see there's you know so many footnoted scriptures just in this little paragraph that I didn't have more much room for more than just the scriptures and context, but the paragraph is small. And if it's answering the question, what are good works.

And you can actually answer even more briefly only whatever God says, only whatever God says are good works. Not only is whatever God says, is a good work. That's a good work. That should be obvious, but only whatever God says, is a good work. Is a good work. And several of the passages that we look at together are going to be helping us with that only aspect.

So the the paragraph answer and the confession is good works are only such as God health commanded in his holy word. So you can see there. Good works are only what God says. So good works are only such as God have commanded in his holy word and will look at Micah six and Romans 12 and Hebrews 13 there.

Good works are only such as God have commanded in his holy word and not such as without the warrant there of. In other words God's word can establish and require good. Works that men say, so if I tell you to do something and it's something that the Bible says, then, just because I said it too, doesn't make it, not a good work, right?

If God's word warrants, something is a good work, then, whatever God's word says is a good work. So, and not such as without the warrant there of his holy word, without the warrant of his holy word are devised by man. And then, obviously, these pastors and theologians have heard many people say, oh, but I'm so sincere or but, he's so sincere or, but he means it so well.

And he says our devised by men out of a blind deal, right? Zeal by itself is either blind or seeing if it's zeal to do what God's word says. Then it has light to the law and to the testimony, if it is not according to these, then it has no dawn.

It doesn't even have the beginning of light Isaiah says, and so zeal, by itself does not make a work, good zeal to do something that God says that's good. Otherwise the zeal is blind and not such as without the warrant of holy scripture or his holy word are devised by men out of blind, zeal or upon any pretense of good intention.

So I'm meant, well doesn't work with God. Shouldn't work with God and yet we can rejoice. But that Jesus always meant well and that he was full of zeal for whatever God says. And so that's what's counted for us and who is the Holy Spirit? Making Christians to be like he's making us to be like Jesus.

So if Jesus always meant well, what is the spirit working on in us? He's working on our intentions. And if Jesus was zealous for good works, then one of the things a Holy Spirit is doing in us as he makes us like, Jesus is, he's making us zealous for good works.

I know I've told you before, so I won't go through the whole story, but we had a dear lady and our former congregation in Iowa whose children thought that she was unconverted, because she was so zealous for good works, and had to be. She was really worried and she had to be reassured.

That this is actually something that can be a symptom of being made more like Jesus, because he was too. And that was a great relief for her. So altogether without the interruptions. Now good works are only such as God has commanded in his holy word and not such as without the warrant thereof or devised by men at a blind zeal or upon any pretense of good intention.

The first part, which is probably all will get through today. Is good works our only such as God has commanded in his holy word and the first place they note is Micah 6:8. And I'm so glad that we get to do, Micah 6:8 in its context and talking about good works being only such as God have commanded because I don't know if you have seen them.

But I have seen that t-shirts that just say do justice, Micah 68 and what a foolish thing to put on a t-shirt in our, current cultural climate, when social justice, is such a buzz to in, not only in our culture. But even in many branches of the church and do justice means think like a liberal vote for the tyrants.

Destroy morality do justice, but that obviously is not what Micah 6:8 is saying. In fact, if they would have just quoted the whole verse they would have undermined the what they're trying to accomplish with those t-shirts. He has shown you. Oh man, what is good? So you can change the t-shirt right?

Do whatever. God says Micah 6:8 probably not of the same intention as those t-shirts. He has shown you. Oh man, what is good and what does Yahweh require you? But to do justly to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. And so he says you're a man so it's understandable.

You have no clue what to do and you shouldn't trust whatever you come up with to do. But your way is God and he is good, and he has authority and so what he comes up with to do is what is good to do. Now this is very important because of the beginning of Micah chapter 6, God actually initiates a trial, he is pressing charges against Israel and he's he's presenting what he has done and he's presenting what Israel has done and then he's answering the question.

Well, what did you want us to do? And that's the point at which he answers. He shown you. Oh man, what he wants you to do. So very helpful to actually read and think about that verse and the context, isn't it very differently than you will often hear this verse quoted?

So let's read the the whole passage of the whole portion of the passage that you have there on your sheets, do encourage you to bring your Bibles and read out of your Bibles, is an important for many reasons. One, you should get a custom to flipping pages in your physical Bible.

If in God's providence, we come to a time. When that's the usually, the kind of Bible that you have access to, you should be good at using it. Another one is just when you read something in your Bible, part of the way that God uses to help you remember it, and ask an old person who's accustomed to having used a physical Bible for a long time or young person who hopefully has been.

You remember, like what side of the page it's on and which column and about how far down and things like that. And then if you've read through a book and you remember that about a bunch of the passages, you actually kind of have in your, in your mind, a physical mental map of the teaching of God, through a book.

God gave us a book. Yes. David. Yeah. Well, if you use the yellow highlighter and I think the person I can most famously remember saying this is a pastor Bachum voting, but I've heard many other minister say it and it's probably not original to us. Can't be too old because of the recency of the creation of the yellow highlighter.

If you use a yellow highlighter in your having problems, you'd probably need to go back and read all of the non highlighted parts in your Bible. Anyway, I, that's not all together, true. Actually, it depends on the spirit in which you highlight, right. There's, there's those who highlight those things that the Lord brings out that you never thought of that before or that you just realized is the lynch pin that holds this passage together and is going to help you understand the whole thing.

And then there's going through and highlighting, oh well, this one just means so much to me because, you know, Gladys said, you know, whatever or, you know, this is the first that I'm gonna use to to answer or so. And so, every time he tries to talk to me about, you know, so there's, you know, I don't expect everyone to be as wicked as I am.

But I know that my original sin and your original sin, rhyme, they come from the same first father. So if I'm projecting on to you forgive me and and pray that that fleshliness would continue to be mortified by God. Anyway, all that to say the the other reason that I encourage you to bring your Bibles and use them is the context has layers to it.

And in order to include the whole context, you have to kind of include, you know, several chapters of a book or a whole book, and it's just it's just helpful to be able to have more of the more of the immediate context available. All right. So Micah six versus one through eight here.

Now, what you always says arise plead your case before the mountains and let the hills hear your voice, the idea being man comes and goes in a moment. But God's case against you is over such a length of time that the only witnesses that have been here long enough to see the the amount of the righteousness that he is pleading on his behalf.

And the amount of the wickedness of which he's accusing you of in your behalf, the mountains in the hills, they've been standing long enough to, to act as witness or to, or even a jury. Although there are no juries in trials where God is judge. So use understand that that word is not meant to imply that here.

Now, what you always says a ride arise, plead your case before the mountains, let the hills hear your voice here you mountains. You always complained and you strong foundations of the earth for your hallway. Has a complaint against his people and he will contend with Israel. Oh my people.

What have I done to you? And how have I weary you testify against me for? I brought you up from the land of Egypt. I redeemed you from the house of bondage I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Marion. Oh my people remember now what they look, King of Moab council and what belam the son of Bayor answered him?

You remember that the Moabite King wanted belay him to curse, Israel and believe him could only say whatever God told him to say. And what did he end up doing over and over again, to the horror of the kingdom of did he curses real? No. We blessed him now.

There wasn't, because Israel was good as just God because God is faithful and God elected and loved and did according to what he promised. Okay. So he says you know, exhibit a the exodus exhibit be Moses Aaron and and Miriam. And that reminds you, especially of the Red Sea, but other parts of the wilderness time and then this is closer now to coming into the land.

But exhibits, see balick king of Moab and blame son of a Bay or and what boy am the son of a or answered him from acacia Grove to guiltile. Okay. So he's he's describing a long period. Now, Gilgal, you remember was where they went and after the, the generation that was under judgment had fallen in the wilderness, the generation that was going to enter the land had a problem.

They hadn't been circumcised yet and so they had a great renewal of commitment to God and worshiped worship of God, and they circumcised all of those who had been born in the wilderness and Gilgal remember it means role. And I don't know if it helps you, it helps me.

You know, have kids when you memorizing vocabulary, just know that people who have memorized vocabulary, and lots of different languages do very much like you do. Sometimes the word sounds like something to them and the way I remember that guild girl means role, is that it sounds to me like a guy in a barrel, rolling down a hill going guilty, goal until he hits the bottom and now you can all hopefully remember that guilgal is the Hebrew word for role.

But the reason that the place is called is because God ruled away the reproach of Israel's sin when he had that great assembly and they had that circumcision that pointed forward that point of forward to Christ and encourage you whenever it becomes available to you to read the devotional and exodus this week and Moses talking about having uncircumcised lips and the genealogy and how those things spit together.

And how circumcision points forward to Christ. It does not, it does not mean that we are good enough. So he gives all of these evidences of his goodness and what he has done even from Acacia Grove to Gilgal and that's covering, you know, that's just a phrase saying exhibit, D is a series of events that there are two many to mention.

So I'm going to, I'm going to present all of those events as one piece of evidence by where it began and where it ended that you may know, the righteousness of Yahweh and then the, the implied response then in and verse 6 is yes, your righteous. And we're not, we got to figure out now.

What to, you know, how to respond to such a good God, as he is with what verse 6 with what shall I come before? You always and bow myself before the high God. So I come before him with burnt offerings with calves. A year old. Well you always be pleased with thousands of rams, 10,000, rivers of oil, shall I give my firstborn for my transgression?

The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul. Now this is actually thinking back to you to different times that in the history of Israel. That things have been done as if they were unto you but you can tell already by the the last one of those.

The horror right when when they did that and and.

The Lord would say.

That has never come into my mind.

You're trying to serve me the way other below the servants of Moloch serve their God.

But so they're asking.

OK, what are what are good?

Works is basically the.

The question right in versus 6 versus 6 and seven.

What should we do in response to you?

And that's the context in which we get the verse that we already talked about a little bit earlier.

He has shown you, oh man, what?

Is good and what does Yahweh?

Require of you, but to do justly.

To love mercy.

And to walk humbly with your God. Justly, whatever is righteous according to God's word, he has shown you to love mercy. And the word there is.

It means steadfast love and again he has shown you that you are not only to do righteously, but the first part of doing righteously is to love how God has loved and to respond in kind its covenanted love.

And to walk humbly with your God.

Were you raising your hand?

Someone over there, sorry, peripheral vision and to walk humbly with your God.

Now it's very very similar.

When we get to Romans 12, the very next passage, the very next footnote.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, and that's not just saying God is merciful, so depend upon him, that's true.

But it's also saying God has just shown you his mercy, so respond to him.

Romans chapters one through 11.

Many of us when.

If you didn't grow up reformed and you had to come into being reformed Romans chapter one through chapters one through 11 were probably a precious portion of God's word that he used to show you our complete depravity and how there was nothing good and not even any spiritual life in US.

But all that could have produced faith to come to God, but only because he decided to before the world began, and only because he decided to in love, and only because he has now done what he decided and given faith as a gift.

By his by his spirit, are we even able to trust in Jesus who himself has done everything that makes a man right before God?

That what you do does not make you right before God, only what Jesus has done makes you right before God and then in nine through 11 he starts talking.

About the history of that from all eternity to the point at which all of his Saints will have been brought to faith and will have been gathered in.

And that's where Chapter 11 ends.

And having made that whole case, he now says, by the mercies of God.

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.

So in response to that, and dependence upon that in response to what God has done for you in Jesus and in dependence upon what God has done done for you in Jesus, very, very similar.

When Micah six is talking about good works.

When he says offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, we're obviously not going to get there, but there's.

There's the what shall I?

What shall I do, or with what shall I come before Yahweh, and the horrible sacrifice that is alluded to at the at the end of chapter, verse seven there in Micah 6.

So there's connection there, and there's connection with.

The the response of Samuel or the response of solve and Samuel confronts and, and for Samuel.

15, and he really wants to be credited for these sacrifices that he's offered.

And if we put first Samuel 15 in Romans 12 language, so well, actually God wanted a living sacrifice.

He wants obedience, not all this stuff that you think he's he should be so grateful to you for giving him.

And how does that happen? Romans 12/2 do not be conformed to this world. That's where we get the wrong idea of what being a living sacrifice or offering unto God.

Our reasonable response as a service, our logical response as a service says do not be conformed to this.

World if you if you if you get your ideas.

Of what is good from the world?

Which includes your own flesh leanness.

Because your remaining sin is an agreement with the world, not with God, and so don't don't don't get your idea of what is good from yourself.

Well where should we get it?

Do not be conformed to.

This world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

That you may prove.

What is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God so?

There's more that would need to be done right there.

Suffice it to say or more that would need to be explained by it, but I'll just give you a summary and he's saying God has told you what to do.

And as your mind is conformed to his word and you do what God has said.

To do you will find that what he has said to do is good.

What he has said to do is acceptable or pleasing.

What he has said to do is perfect and you'll abandon the idea.

That anyone else can come up with or tell you what is a good work other than God.

Now that makes doing good works.

Glorious and wonderful, because suddenly it's a response to our God who has been good to us.

It is a response that is, according to the word of our God, that he has given us and it's a response in dependence upon the grace of our God that applies.

Christ to us in order that we can do what he has said, good works.

Gloriously good.

And I want everyone of you children to remember that because there will be people boring.

Any extraordinarily miraculous, so much so that God helped me, I can't imagine it happening, but may he do it anyway?

Barring a glorious reformation and purification in his church, you will run into people who, when you talk about being zealous to obey the commands of God.

They will.

They will try to talk you out of it, but good works by the believer are a glorious thing in this world.

Yes Dave.

So give us an example because they are.

Going to those people who call themselves Christians.

Who defined?

Appreciation by good work.

How do you answer that person?

You answer that person by saying.

Good works are what Jesus has done and they are all my hope before God and good works are what Jesus is like.

So when the Holy Spirit makes me like Jesus, he makes me to love and do good works.

So it's good to love them.

And it's good to do them because that's what happens to a person when the Holy Spirit is making them like Jesus.

Because that's what Jesus is like.

So they see many people.

That do good things.

How do.

They know that that's not Jesus.

Ah, are they doing those things in response to the goodness of God, and dependence upon redeeming grace, we're going to get to that, and the rest of the chapter is a long chapter.

I go slow, I understand.

So there are questions that we have and it's a very good question and the chapters are are very pastoral, right?

They they give you.

Some of the the doctrine, and then they anticipate some of these extra questions that we're going to have and answer those in in subsequent paragraphs.

So I'm glad that that's a question.

I wonder if anyone else had that question.

I was talking to three little girls at Presbytery yesterday and their momma had just told them to do something and one of them.

Looked like she was hesitating.

So I did.

With fear and trembling, but it was appreciated.

Praise God.

What you have to use wisdom to do.

I jumped in to help Mama because I knew that there were Christian girls and I said, you know, sometimes it's hard to know what to do or what Jesus was.

But as soon as Mama told you to do that, it wasn't hard to know what Jesus wanted anymore.

'cause Jesus said to obey your Mama.

So as soon as she said that, you could immediately know this is what Jesus wants me to do.

And if you can remember it that way, it won't be hard to do it because you'll be doing it.

In response to Jesus who loves us and died for us.

And of course the three little girls were like.

That's a lot of.

Theology, Mr.

But I think you want me to obey my Mama.

Actually I I think.

There was some helpfulness and we always pray for the spirit to bless the truth.

Don't try to be.

Don't try to cut theology out of what you say.

Write truth from the Bible that undergirds everything is what you're praying that the spirit will bless.

To do the work in the heart to produce what we hope for as a result anyway, we're.

We're at the time now, so let's pray.

Oh how we thank you are good and glorious God that it is your pleasure to show you our goodness by giving yourself for those whom you had determined to love and redeem in Christ.

And we thank you that you have done according to your words, that if we were to make a case from.

Scripture of all of your righteousness, and all of your goodness that we would spend the rest of eternity as we hope to do.

Recounting your righteousness and goodness to us, and we thank you that you have also given us in your word all that we need in order to know what every good work is to respond.

Do you?

And we pray that your spirit would now take this short amount of study that we have done and bless it to us.

For we know that your word has been breathed out by you and that you use it to equip us for every good work.

Glorify yourself in doing so all our life long.

All our children lifelong all the life long of generations yet unborn until you have gathered us all and perfected us all in a new heaven and a new earth where we will do good works forever.

We ask it in Jesus name Amen.