

Emmaus Essentials
The London Baptist Confession of 1689
Chapter 16 - Of Good Works
For Distribution on 04/07/2014

Chapter Outline

Taken from ST 535 Baptist Symbolics Chapter Outlines by Dr. Renihan

Introduction

I. Paragraph 1 - Good Works Identified

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.

(Micah 6:8; Hebrews 13:21; Matthew 15:9; Isaiah 29:13)

- A. Positively - Only what God requires
- B. Negatively - Not what men think are good works
 - 1. This cuts to the heart of man made religion which:
 - a) Rejects God's way
 - b) Follows it's own way
 - 2. The confessions do not attempt to define good works because to do so would be unfruitful. Not, what would Jesus do, but what did Jesus say - in all his word.

II. Paragraph 2 - The Nature of Good Works

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.

(James 2:18, 22; Psalms 116:12, 13; 1 John 2:3, 5; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Matthew 5:16; 1 Timothy 6:1; 1 Peter 2:15; Philippians 1:11; Ephesians 2:10; Romans 6:22)

- A. Reiteration
- B. Fruit and evidence of a true and lively faith.
- C. Bring many blessings to believers:
 - 1. Manifest thankfulness
 - 2. Strengthen assurance
 - 3. Edify the brotherhood
 - 4. Adorn the Gospel
 - 5. Stop the mouths of adversaries
 - 6. Glorify God
- D. The God-centeredness of the act:
 - 1. They are his workmanship
 - 2. The fruit is holiness
 - 3. Justification AND Sanctification
 - 4. The end result is eternal life

III. Paragraph 3 - The Source and Practice of Good Works

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; 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.

(John 15:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Philippians 2:13; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 6:11, 12; Isaiah 64:7)

- A. Not Natural but Supernatural
 - 1. Only believers can do good works
 - a) The glory of God must be our aim!
 - b) "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4–5, ESV)
- B. The ability to do them comes from:
 - 1. Graces received
 - a) "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God," (2 Corinthians 3:5, ESV)
 - 2. The influence of the Holy Spirit
- C. This does not imply quietism
- D. Believers must be diligent in stirring up the grace of God
 - 1. "And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:11–12, ESV)
 - 2. Stirring up the grace of God - conundrum
 - 3. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works," (Hebrews 10:24, ESV)

IV. Paragraph 4 - The Limitations of Good Works

They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.

(Job 9:2, 3; Galatians 5:17; Luke 17:10)

- A. Against supererogation - Saints who do all that God expects and more store up merit. See Muller 212

V. Paragraph 5 - The Weakness of our Good Works

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; but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants; and because as they are good they proceed from his Spirit, and as they are wrought by us they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's punishment.

(Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 4:6; Galatians 5:22, 23; Isaiah 64:6; Psalms 143:2)

- A. We cannot merit pardon
 - 1. Because of the disproportion between them and God's glory
 - 2. Because of the infinite distance between us and God
 - 3. They are unprofitable to God
 - 4. They cannot satisfy (in the technical theological sense) his righteousness
- B. We can never be profitable servants to God
 - 1. Whatever good is in them is from the Spirit, but
 - 2. They are always tainted by our sins and so,
 - 3. They can never endure God's judgement.

VI. Paragraph 6 - The Acceptableness of Christian Good Works

Yet notwithstanding the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreprouvable in God's sight, but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and

reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.
(Ephesians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5; Matthew 25:21, 23; Hebrews 6:10)

- A. Believers works, as their persons, are accepted in Christ
- B. Not because of any blamelessness in them
- C. But because God loves his Son, and sees them in him.
 - 1. "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:5–6, ESV)
 - 2. "you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5, ESV)

VII. Paragraph 7 - The Rejection of Non-Christian Works

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.

(2 Kings 10:30; 1 Kings 21:27, 29; Genesis 4:5; Hebrews 11:4, 6; 1 Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 6:2, 5; Amos 5:21, 22; Romans 9:16; Titus 3:5; Job 21:14, 15; Matthew 25:41-43)

- A. Works done by unregenerate men may be
 - 1. Commanded by God and
 - 2. Of good usefulness to others
- B. But they lack three things:
 - 1. They don't proceed from a heart purified by faith
 - a) "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks." (Hebrews 11:4, ESV)
 - b) "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6, ESV)
 - 2. They are not done in the right manner according to the Word (disinterestedly)
 - 3. They are not done with the right purpose in mind—the glory of God.
 - a) "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV)
- C. Therefore, these works must be viewed in 2 ways:
 - 1. They are sinful—even though they are good works,
 - 2. they do not qualify a man for grace from God
 - a) ""Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matthew 6:2, ESV)
 - b) ""And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matthew 6:5, ESV)
- D. Their absence: but if men do not do them, they deepen their sin and increase God's displeasure.
 - 1. ""Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'" (Matthew 25:41–43, ESV)

Conclusion