

Heidelberg Catechism 8-9 – Good Works Can Never Give You Comfort

Beloved in the Lord: Your first parent, Adam, did not do the good works God expected of him but he disobeyed God, **so he lost the comforts God gave to him in the Garden of Eden.** If he had done good works he would have been **confirmed in righteousness** and **would have had comfort forever!** But he didn't and God cursed him and **confirmed him in that state of inability to do good.**

And you too were cursed, you too lost the ability to do good works, and you too lost comfort, as Adam was your federal head. His curse, sins, and inability came on you! You will hear about this today...but you will also hear a message of hope.

Our headings are:

You can't do good works to receive comfort

Though God equipped man to do Good works to receive comfort

So Christ did good works for you so you could receive comfort

Our goals are: **That you will praise God for Jesus' good works for you, and love and serve him in return.**

You Can't Do Good Works to receive comfort

8 Q. **BUT ARE WE SO CORRUPT THAT WE ARE TOTALLY UNABLE TO DO ANY GOOD AND INCLINED TOWARD ALL EVIL?**

A. Yes, **unless we are born again,** by the Spirit of God.

1. If you go back to the time before the flood, you'll get a sense of the extent of man's corruption – in his heart and in his action.

Genesis 6: 4 There were **giants** on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the **sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them.** Those were the **mighty men who were of old, men of renown.** **5** Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

But let's first identify these people in the text:

"Giants" were "mighty men" or "men of renown" or "fallers upon men." They were not tall men with big muscles. You could be a 'giant' in your field of study or expertise... a figurative use of the term. So you must understand these men as **warriors, murderers or kidnappers.** They were corrupt in their every "intention." Their works reflected what was in their hearts.

"Sons of God" simply meant people who followed God. These were not angels. Angels don't marry or reproduce.

"Daughters of men" was used in contrast to the "sons of God." It would have been strange to say: "Sons of God" married "sons of men." The point was, **believers married non-believers.** This always results in increase wickedness.

2. After Noah and his family came out from the ark after the flood, God pointed out the continuous sinful state of man's heart.

Even the godly Noah had a rotten son!

Genesis 8: 21 And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, **although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;** nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

Job reiterated the same theme...and Moses and Isaiah, years later. **Man lost that true comfort** because of sin.

Job 14:1 "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. 2 He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue. 3 And do You open Your eyes on such a one, And bring me to judgment with Yourself? 4 **Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?**

Deuteronomy 32: 5 "They have corrupted themselves; **They are not His children,** Because of their blemish: A **perverse and crooked generation.**

Isaiah 53: 6 All **we like sheep have gone astray;** We have turned, every one, to his own way...

3. Today you still see the extent of man's corruption - calling evil good and good evil.

a. Our government says that Valentine decorations at the Dollar store is essential, but worship is not essential.

b. Many want the civil government to provide for man's needs from the cradle to the grave. They want rights to sufficient food, housing, education, and healthcare – whether they work or not. **They think if everyone has equally, then perfect happiness will come – true comfort.** Christians are buying this too! (God has given the civil government no such mandate.)

c. Teachers train children to make idols of themselves – and love themselves. They see self-love as a pre-requisite for a harmonious society. God condemns such actions bluntly. Self-love is sin. Self-love is the reason for more sins. (2Tim 3:2)

d. Children are taught to call the government when parents spank them so the government can liberate them. But God demands you spank your children for their training in godliness. To the state, spanking removes comfort.

e. Abortion, euthanasia, and self-murder are considered good. (A hospice in Manitoba was recently closed down by the government because they won't help to kill old or sickly people.) God considers these things attacks against his image. But wicked people argue: If I kill my unwanted child or sick child, I would be saved from hardships. If I kill myself, I will feel no

more pain. A man who investigated Planned Parenthood for selling babies bodies for experiments was charged by the present US Vice President for trying to buy baby bodies (he wasn't really) but Planned Parenthood that sells the body parts wasn't. **President Biden's theme restored funding of abortions in Africa**, calling the Trump administration immoral for stopping it.

f. Society views all forms of adultery as expressions of love – which they hope would bring comfort. They only find pain, shame, diseases, and emptiness when sex is outside of the marriage bed. If you say it is perverted to live an immoral lifestyle, you are now being accused of inciting violence.

4. As in the time of Noah and the judges, many view the world through their own eyes, reversing God's law.

Man isn't just falling short of God's law...he is doing the opposite.

Worse, **man thinks these his actions are right and does them.** This is always the case when men turn away from God.

The only way man's problem can be fixed and man is restored with the ability to do good works is outside himself.

So don't let the world cause you to redefine sin.

Though God Equipped Man To Do Good Works to receive comfort

9 Q. BUT DOESN'T GOD DO MAN AN INJUSTICE BY REQUIRING IN HIS LAW WHAT MAN IS UNABLE TO DO?

A. **No, God created man with the ability to keep the law.** Man, however, tempted by the devil, in reckless disobedience, robbed himself and all his descendants of these gifts.

1. God made man very good and gave him the full ability to keep his law.

When man was made, God said man was "very good." He was perfect in every way. Gen. 1:31.

2. Man's deliberate decision to defy God and eat the forbidden fruit brought damnation on his own head.

Genesis 3: 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" 12 Then the man said, "**The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.**" 13 And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "**The serpent deceived me, and I ate.**"

Man chose to listen to the Devil instead of listening to his Heavenly Father and behaved recklessly.

3. If Adam had passed the test and refused the forbidden fruit, then all his natural descendants and he would have been confirmed in righteousness forever, but Adam robbed himself and all his descendants of being confirmed in righteousness and receiving the resulting comfort.

What a precious legacy that would have been, but Adam stole it from you. Now you are confirmed in sin.

Genesis 3: 4 Then the **serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.** 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. **She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.**

John 8: 44 "You **are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do..."

4. God, then, is simply doing a rational thing when he demands that you keep all of his laws perfectly.

And those who don't obey God's holy laws perfectly are under his eternal curse.

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "**Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.**"

So Christ Did Good Works For You to receive comfort

1. Because you can't do good, and because God demands good works for you to receive his comfort, you need someone to perfectly meet all of God's demands.

You can't contribute one iota to your comfort. You are passive in your regeneration, just like you were passive in your physical birth. Jesus emphasized this was the case: man had to be reborn...not from his mother's belly again – in water, but through the work of God's Holy Spirit. He applies the blood of Christ to your life. **He applies the good works of Christ to your life.**

John 3: 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

2. Some pastors preach that in order to be born again you have to believe you are a sinner, you have to believe Christ died for you, and you have to ask Jesus to come into your heart (a phrase never found in the Scriptures).

As long as you do this, they say, you are regenerated. This is wrong. **To believe you are regenerated that way is to rob Christ of the glory that belongs to him and to exalt man as an agent in his salvation.** You are not regenerated by any action of yourself. **Yes, you do repent and do good works, but that is a response to your regeneration.** You have to be awakened first. God is the first mover, not man. (And he moves you to repent!!!)

Regeneration is not caused by your good parents, by your pastor, by going to a Christian school, by being baptized, or by attending worship services.

Sometimes the world thinks we think we are better, but we are not! We are only who we are because of Jesus! In fact, many in the world may live seemingly better lives than we!

3. When you are born again you are then able to do good works.

Even though you get rewarded in heaven for good works, your good works are only accepted because they are offered through the perfect Jesus – who cleans up your good works. For a work to be considered good by God it has to be done from faith in Christ, for the glory of Christ, and by the law of Christ.

4. Knowing that only when the Holy Spirit applies the work of Jesus you can get comfort, it should motivate you to evangelize.

You know the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or any other religious person cannot please God because his works cannot please the Lord – not one single work – no pilgrimage, no torturing of the body...no giving of alms...no allowing himself to be crucified. He needs the good works of Jesus!

Conclusion:

You can't do good works to get and to keep comfort because you are corrupt. This is not God's fault, but your parents'. God made you with the ability to do good works and receive his perfect comfort. Only Jesus' good works – **his perfect obedience...and his perfect sacrifice of himself...can bring back true comfort to you that you lost in Adam.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Praise the Lord for your new heart. Don't let this song get old. Praise him in the morning and praise him in the noon time, and praise him in the evening. Praise him with voice and music. Let the Lord know you have true comfort and you love Jesus for giving it to you.

2. Let your praise of the Lord be used by him to draw others to him. Don't ever be shy to announce to the world that Jesus is real. (Can anyone who looks over your social media posts know you are a Christian and you love Jesus?) Young people, never be ashamed to speak of Christ's love for you; your friends need to hear it! Your love for Christ – expressed by praise - speaks louder than voice. Voice is loud. Love is louder. This will call men to receive new life and receive Christ's comfort.

Finally: How hopeless you are without a new heart without Jesus! You can only get that new heart and new life by asking Christ for it. The new heart and new life came because Jesus gave his life for sinners. So call on him to take away your sins and give you that new heart.