

# Heidelberg Catechism 62-64—Good Works do not save you ; Good Works do not even help to save you

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The last time you learned from God's Words that you are saved by grace alone, through faith alone. I said that the doctrine of faith is a most humbling doctrine. There is not a single thing you can do to earn your salvation, so there can be no ego in your salvation. But there are those who argue that their good works at least earn them some credit toward their salvation. **Arminians** (which include Pentecostals) are the largest group that believes this. They use phrases like "God has no hands but yours" or "God has done all he could do and now it is up to you." The Arminians mean to say that you must cooperate with God in your salvation. **Roman Catholics** teach that God must give you faith which will cause you to do works, and only when you do those works will God justify you. The Bible teaches neither of these! These are lies from hell's pit, lies that rob our Savior of the credit that belong to him. Let us look at what the Bible actually teaches.

Our headings are: **You good works don't meet God's salvation standards, Your good works are only rewarded because they are purified,** and **You will always pursue good works if you are faithful.**

Our goals are: **That you will do good works to show that *the* good work has already been done in you by Jesus Christ.**

## **Your Good Works Don't Meet God's Salvation Standards**

62 Q. WHY CAN'T THE GOOD WE DO MAKE US RIGHT WITH GOD, OR AT LEAST HELP MAKE US RIGHT WITH HIM?

A. Because the righteousness which can pass God's scrutiny **must be entirely perfect** and must in every way **measure up to the divine law**. Even the very **best we do in this life is imperfect** and stained with sin.

**1. God requires perfect works from you if you want to be right with him. But you can't do perfect works.**

**2. Why can you do that? For your good work to be acceptable by God, it has to be done from faith in Jesus Christ, according to the law of Jesus Christ, and for the glory of Jesus Christ.**

**A good work must be from Faith in Christ:**

Hebrews 11:6 But 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 diligently seek Him.

You need faith to do good. But only God can give faith to you. God can't give you faith unless you are regenerated. So God must regenerate you first. You are passive in your birth. You don't have good genetics遗传. You were born in sin. Your genetics reflect your reality: You are children of the Devil and he is in enmity with God.

John 8: 44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him..."

**A Good work must be according to the Law of Christ:**

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Galatians 3:10..."Cursed is everyone who does not continue...in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

When you obey God's law, it must be complete and perfect, and your motive must be pure. But your motive can't be pure unless your heart is pure. Your heart can't be pure until God regenerates you and changes your heart first.

**A good work must be for the Glory of Christ:**

1Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

**3. Even the best work you do is tainted玷污with sin.** If you help someone and hoped to get the slightest glory, it is not a good work. Even if you made sure you provided everything you parents needed...or if you dig a dozen wells in Africa, or you pay all your taxes, it is tainted with sin, and therefore, by itself, that good work is no good. It is abominable – totally unacceptable to God.

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags肮脏的破布; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Even the best you do is only your duty.

Luke 17:10 "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."

**4. The picture is worse. Not only is man work unable to do anything good, the fact is, man is only able to commit sin! If you**

are not a Christian, everything you do is bad!

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.**

**5. Those who try to use good works to earn his salvation are doing a bad thing. In other words: Good works are bad works if you** want to use them to earn your salvation or help earn your salvation. The Lord calls those who hope to use good works to earn their salvation “abominable.”

6. This is a **motivation for evangelism** 福音传道, isn't it? You know that the Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, or any other religious person cannot please God because his work cannot please the Lord. You must speak to him about Christ's work.

### **Your Good Words are only Rewarded because they are offered through Christ**

63 Q. HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT THE GOOD WE DO DOESN'T EARN ANYTHING WHEN GOD PROMISES TO REWARD IT IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT?

A. This reward is not earned; it is a gift of grace.

1. If your good works are not good enough to save you, why is God pleased to reward you for your good works in this life and in heaven? Answer: God is kind. He accepts your good works because he sees them through your Lord, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's work is like a eye-glasses...when the Father looks at you, he doesn't have that repulsive feeling as when a non-believer tries to do good works. Because of Christ between you and God, God's view of you changes. Your good works then become acceptable. That is why the Apostle Paul could say:

2Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2. What kind of good works does God reward in earth and in heaven? There are all kinds of good works for which he rewards you. **Any thought,** word, or action in obedience to the 10 commands God will reward on earth and in heaven. So some may have done outwardly good works and are heralded as being truly good by fellow Christians, but they may not be as rewarded as some who may have done less outward good works but had more good thoughts of God and said more kind words to others. Good thoughts and words bring much glory to God as well. So be careful. God wants good works by **thoughts,** words, and actions.

3. But that is general answer. What are some specific things that will bring great rewards in heaven and on earth?

a. Enduring persecution...

Mathew 5:12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Even though the person might have complained when he was persecuted, God would be pleased to reward his imperfect work because his imperfect work was done through the glasses of Christ's perfection.

b. Giving up family, friends, or career... for the sake of serving Jesus Christ. This is always a tough one...but sometimes friends or family may walk away from you because you are living for Jesus. He will reward you.

c. Being generous to the poor... as the Lord promises to restore to the giver many times over. It is true that they may not be perfect in giving...and may even want some credit in the world, but because you are a Christian and you give through the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the Lord will reward your work.

Proverbs 19:17 He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

4. What rewards might you get in this life? Love, peace, truth, friends, comfort, material things...etc.

Matthew 6:1 "Take heed **注意** that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself **reward you openly.**

Psalm 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.

5. What rewards might you get out of this world? The rewards out of this world are: crowns of righteousness and other unspecified glories. You will have to wait for heaven to understand them in fullness. For sure, you will have perfect blessedness in which you will be able to praise God eternally.

### **You will always pursue Good Works if you are faithful**

64 Q. BUT DOESN'T THIS TEACHING MAKE PEOPLE INDIFFERENT AND WICKED?

A. No. It is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude.<sup>1</sup>

1. **As long as you are in the Vine, Jesus Christ, you will bear fruit.** The Vine is good. The Vine transfers his nutrients 营养 物质 to you and you can't help but produce good fruits...

Luke 6:43 "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 "For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

1John 2:3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

Only if a branch has fallen off the vine could it then not bear fruit. There is no neutrality in Jesus Christ. No branch remains for decoration!

**2. You will do good works to show your love God.**

**3. How does this translate today?** A few examples:

a. You will not presume your children are saved; you will work as hard as you can to make sure they understand the Word of God and trust the Lord for themselves.

b. You will not assume that because you are saved you can be indifferent about worship in church and in the home. Instead, you will work hard to listen to the preaching and struggle to understand what you read so your soul will be nourished and that you can nourish your family.

c. Because you are daily cognizant of the greatness of Christ's work for you, you will show it by praising him. You will not complain when things don't go the way you want. Those in the vine will simply draw from the root and produce worthwhile fruits.

### **Conclusion:**

You or others may look at your good works and be most impressed by them, but God isn't at all. He said that your good works (unless he views them through Jesus Christ) are like dirty women's cloths. No too impressive, is it? Your good works can do nothing, not even help in a little way, to earn your salvation. You do good works as a result of your salvation. God uses your good works, though not perfect, to reward you in heaven. Furthermore, if you are truly a believer in Jesus Christ who has been saved by him, then you will, without doubt, do good works. Fruit bearing is intrinsic.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. While good works don't save you, don't ignore doing good works which are like treasures that you store up in heaven. Those treasures you will enjoy when you get there. 2. Jesus Christ made it possible for you to do good works. You good God recreated you through the shed blood of Jesus Christ to do good. Yes, Adam lost that ability to do good, but Jesus, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam, has restored it. 3. The best work you can do is love. Love your neighbor and tell him of Jesus and hell. Love God and worship him.

Finally, if you have thought of yourself as good, I hope God is humbling you today and showing you that your good works are nothing and can never even help to save you. Only if you receive by faith the life of righteousness and the death of Jesus Christ will you be saved. This is the only thing that truly matters in the grand scheme of life. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?