

HC Q&A 91 –Responding to your Salvation: Good Works

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You need to “live as a new man” now that you have been regenerated. The new man **evidences his new life by doing good works**. From this statement some natural questions arise: What are good works? How can I know what good works are? What is the standard 真正的准则 of determining good works? And these are important questions! Why? There are wide beliefs in what good works are and how we are to do them! Some people believe that helping the old and the sick to die (euthanasia 安乐死) is a good work. Some people believe that the government’s sharing the wealth of the world equally to all members of society is a good work. Many believe that public education is a good work as it comes “free” of cost to poor people. Many people, even in the church, believe that democracy is a good work and should be promoted. President George Bush believed that democracy is good. Please let God speak to you on this subject to you today!

Our headings are: **Good Works – Qualifications**, and **Good Works – Limitations**.

Our goals are: **That you will understand what a truly good work is** in order that you may do it to please the one who did the greatest Good Work for you -saving you through his Son.

Q & A 91 - Q. What do we do that is good? A. Only that which arises out of true faith, conforms to God's law, and is done for his glory; and not that which is based on what we think is right or on established human tradition.

Good Works –Qualifications

Good Works arise out of faith

1. A good work is only a good work if it were done from true faith in Jesus 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 没有信, 就不能得到 神的喜悦; 因为来到神面前的人, 必须信 神存在, 并且信他会赏赐那些寻求他的人。

If you have no hearty trust 从内心深处的信靠 in God, based on knowledge of what he has done, then you can’t do good works. Your soul must always be resting in Jesus Christ and drawing from him as the source of your good works.

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.

2. Why is it sinful if your action is not from faith? Can one not simply do a good deed by himself?

Whatever you do, even the smallest thing, must be done with the full persuasion 劝导 or conviction 信念 that it is the right thing to do.

Romans 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for **whatever is not from faith is sin.**

You cannot please God if your motive is imperfect. God wants a pure heart for every action. So even the most splendid thing 最精彩的事 you would ever do... saving someone's life... giving wise counsel to those in trouble... shoveling your neighbor's driveway next week... it is not a good work if it were not done from faith. You must have no mental reservations about what you do. Roman Catholic teachings allow mental reservations...not God!

3. What about those who say: "I let my conscience be my guide?" Isn't doing good work from a clear conscience good enough? Are they wrong who say that? Yes, they are wrong. God's standards are much higher than your conscience. The conscience was damaged by the Fall and is not pure. So it must not be your standard.

4. However, at the same time, you must never violate your Christian conscience 良知. Though your conscience is a lower standard and tarnished 玷污 by sin, you must never do something that your conscience convicts you is sin. **Let me give you an example:** If you bought food on the Sabbath for someone who is starving, but in your heart you think it is wrong, that is a sin. At one time Paul pointed out that if you believe it is wrong to eat a certain meat (which might be good to eat – but you think it isn't good) and you still eat it, it is sin to you. RC Sproul: "...if a person is taught and comes to believe that wearing lipstick is a sin and then wears lipstick, that person is sinning. The sin resides not in the lipstick but in the *intent* to act against what one believes to be the command of God."

5. What about if others recognize your work to be good, isn't it then good? It may be. But others can only judge your outward actions. God doesn't call your work good if you lack faith in Jesus Christ. Consider the rebuke he gave to those who were attempting good works without faith in him!

Isaiah 29:13 Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

God knows the heart. So make sure it is working well –working to please him!

Matthew 15:17 - "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies 难道不知道一切进到口里的, 是进到肚腹, 然后排泄到外面去吗? 18 但从口里出来的, 是发自内心, 才会使人污秽。 19 因为从心里出来的, 有恶念、凶杀、奸淫、淫乱、偷盗、假见证和毁谤

When the heart is clean, good works will come out of it. When the heart is dirty, dirty works will come out – even if man thinks his work is good. The outward act might look exactly the same with others, but it is not considered to be good. You might help the victims of the bus and train crash in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago, but if you did not do it because you are responding in faith to Christ, it is not a good work.

Good works must conform to God's Law

6. Good Works are only considered good if they are done according to God's Law.

Matthew 5:19-20 - "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven 因此, 无论谁违背诫命中最小的一条, 又这样教导人, 他在天国中必称为最小的; 但若有人遵行这些诫命, 并且教导人遵行, 他在天国中必称为大。20 我告诉你们, 你们的义若不胜过经学家和法利赛人的义, 就不能进天国。

So those who allow new converts (novices) to start preaching the Gospel when they don't understand the Gospel properly aren't doing a good work. Those who think they are wise by not spanking 击打 their children for disobedience but lock them up in their room don't do good. Those who think that they don't have to obey the Sabbath 安息日 anymore aren't doing good things. Those who advocate for democracy, aren't doing a good deed. (God's law is what runs a country, not man's law.) Those who believe they need to adjust worship so that it is more appealing to young people, aren't doing good. Those who believe they should be Robin Hood and steal from the rich and give to the needy are not doing a good deed. If it is not a good deed, it is a bad deed! Good intentions are not good enough!

7. Good works are must be done according to the spirit of the law of Christ. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with examples of how the Pharisees pretended to obey the law but they did not conform to the spirit (intention) of the law...often they only conformed to the letter of the law. But no work is considered good if it were not done according to the true spirit of the 10 Laws. (You'll hear more about this next week.) The letter kills; the spirit gives life.

8. Further, you may not even break the smallest, seemingly most insignificant 最微不足道 law, or your "good" work would not be considered good. If you break one law, you break them all. They are part of one package. On the other hand, God will greatly bless those who obey his 10 laws and those who teach others to do so also. (The law points us to Christ by showing us our sins. The law shows us how to live in Christ and show our thankfulness to him. The law is a rule for civil law for all mankind.)

Good works must be done for God's Glory

9. Good Works are only considered good if they are done for the glory of God. The Scriptures speak frequently does on this.

Matthew 5:16 - "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

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

1Peter 2:12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1Samuel 15:22 Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..."

10. Consistent 相互一致 Christian good work by example is a means of leading men to honor and please God, and a means of greatly promoting man's highest good. And Matthew 5:16 above is emphasizing the manner of work... **your good works must be done in such a way that men would glorify God in heaven.** You are a city on a hill and YOUR people are watching you! So show good works in a domestic, civil, or religious setting: in preaching, hearing, praying, fasting, helping the poor, serving the family, sharing in the church, or in the world, in private, or in public. Doesn't this mean you must know the Scriptures well in order to do well? Doesn't this mean you have to ask God to show you where and how you can do well?

9. Don't do good works for people to like you. Do good works because you love God and want to glorify him.

Good Works – Limitations

1. Good works cannot save you from the fires of hell. Good works cannot even help save you. If there were saving merits in good works you would be prone to 倾向于 forget that salvation is from the merit of Jesus Christ alone. The truth is, man likes to take credit for 邀功 what Christ has done. But man shouldn't. Jesus Christ is jealous for his worship.

2. Where do the Scriptures make this abundantly 非常 clear?

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Since you can only get life through Christ's life and death, you must not take no credit for your eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that **not of yourselves**; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Everything you have you have received!

Romans 3:10-11 As it is written: "**There is none righteous, no, not one;**
11 There is none who understands; There is **none who seeks after God.**

Even if you wanted to, you could not do good.

3. While your good works don't merit 应获得 your salvation, you must respond to your salvation by doing good for God's glory. And only God can help you, even after you are regenerated, to do good works.

Philippians 2:13 **for it is God who works in you both to will and to do** for His good pleasure.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

4. Good works are done both in physical物质的things, and spiritual精神上的things –and in things which may be **seen or unseen!**

Titus 2:7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility无论在什么事上你都要显出好行为的榜样, 在教导上要纯全, 要庄重

5. Good works don't come naturally, they need to be taught; good works need to be learned.

Titus 3:14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

This goes against all our human sentiments and self-importance, but it is the truth. You need to start training your children early so that they learn to do good things. From the time you start teaching a child to say: "Please" and "thank you," you are beginning to teach them good works.

Conclusion:

What are good works? Good works are works to show you are converted - works that proceed from faith, works that are done according to God's law, and works that are done for the glory to God. This is the test you are to use before you do anything. If you find that you are doing something because you want people to think highly of YOU, then it is not a good work. If you do a good work because you want people to love YOU, then it is not a good work. If you do a good work simply because YOU think it is a good work, it isn't good work. You do good works because God saved you, he secured you, and you want to please him. And yet, by doing good works God rewards you. His rewards are substantial实质, eternal, and non-destroyable.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: May you, having understood your position in Christ, then fulfill your responsibility and do truly good works with diligence. May you receive his help by his Word, Spirit, and the mutual encouragements of each other to do these good works.

Finally, Deuteronomy 12:32 "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." Can you say you have done this? If not, you are under the condemnation of God and bound for hell. **But** don't despair! There is hope! Christ can fix that problem for you if you ask him to take away your sins, fill you with his Holy Spirit, make you his child, and then enable you to do the good works he has commanded. Ask him to do so today!