

# Heidelberg Catechism 8-9 – Good Works Can Give You Comfort

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Adam did not do good works so he lost the comforts he had in the Garden. He passed-on to you that inability to do good works. This is why I have attacked the ineffectiveness of your good works to bring you comfort. I make no apologies for that. But I have not attacked “good works.” “Good works” are good. I have only attacked “your” good works. Today you will hear from God’s Word why I have been attacking “your” good works and you will see how Jesus’ good works, which are credited to you, gives you true comfort.

Our headings are:

**You can’t do good works**

**Though God equipped man to do Good works**

**So Christ did good works for you**

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

## You Can’t Do Good Works

8 Q. BUT **ARE WE SO CORRUPT 败坏 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.**

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**.<sup>5</sup> 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.

These “mighty men” or “men of renown” were “fallers upon men.” They were not tall men with big muscles. They were warriors, murderers or kidnappers. God described them as **corrupt in their every “intention.”** Their works reflected what was in their hearts. (The middle phrase. “Sons of God” simply meant those who followed God. These were not angels. “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 normally results in increase wickedness.)

### **2. Even after Noah and his family came out from the ark after the flood, God pointed out the continuous sinful state of man’s heart.** God did think that good parents would make good children.

Genesis 8: 21 And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma馨香. 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.** Man calls some things good, but God calls it evil. Man calls some things evil, but God calls it good. And by doing what he thinks is best, man hopes to gain comfort! Some examples.

**a. Many people 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 for these things. They think if everyone has equally, then perfect happiness will come – true comfort. (God has given the civil government no such mandate.) The civil government uses over-taxation and inflation to steal from those who have. Sometimes, in order to provide for these things which are not required, the government is pressured to reduce defense spending – something required.

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

**c. Children are taught to call the government when parents spank them so the government can liberate them. But** God demands that you spank your children for their training in godliness. To the state, spanking removes comfort. And a teacher can take a 13 year old child to have an abortion... for the so-called “good of the child.” But the teacher forgets about the innocent child.

**d. Abortion, euthanasia 安乐死, and self-murder are considered to be good.** God considers them an attack against his image in man. They 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. One man recently described euthanasia as a blessing. A man who investigated Planned Parenthood for selling babies bodies for experiments was charged for trying to buy baby bodies (even though he wasn't) but Planned Parenthood was left alone.

**e. Society views all forms of adultery as expressions of love – which bring comfort.** Of course they find that there is much pain, shame, diseases, and emptiness when sex is outside of the marriage bed.

**This is a complete reversal of God's law with the expectation of comfort.** Man isn't just falling short... he is doing the opposite. It is not that man thinks that what he is doing is wrong, but still does them. **Man thinks these his actions are right and does them.** They don't believe that God's laws are being broken.

**4. Like in the time of Noah and the time of the judges, there are many who view the world through their own eyes.** This is always the case when men turn away from God. This is a reflection of the corruption of man's heart! The only way his problem can be fixed and that man can do good works is outside himself. But it was not always so!

### **Though God Equipped Man To Do Good Works**

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 that man was “very good.” He was perfect in every way. Gen. 1:31.

**2. It was man's deliberate decision to defy God and devour the forbidden fruit and bring damnation on his 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 不顾一切.**

**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 comfort.** This confirmation would have been a most precious legacy to leave for his children, 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 must keep all of his laws perfectly.** And those who don't obey them 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**

**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. And that is the fact: 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 himself emphasized that this was the case: man had to be reborn...not from his mother's belly again, 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 – terribly 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 (and receive comfort) 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. **Regeneration is not caused by your good parents, by your pastor, by going to a Christian school, or by attending worship services.**

**3. When you are born again you are then able to do good works – but because those good works are never perfect, they have no saving properties. Even though you get rewarded in heaven for good works, they 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 that 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 one's self to be crucified.

**Conclusion:**

You can't do good works to get and to 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.**

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 evening. Praise him with voice and music. Let the Lord know that 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. He lived and died for you. He is your hope. He gives you assurance. His Holy Spirit is

living in you. There was no hope without him. 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! 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 the wicked. If you know you are wicked 邪恶, call on him to take away your sins and give you that new heart.