

Dudley Do-Right or Do-Dud?

I. Good Works Defined (16.1)

- ▶ Positively – “Only such as God has commanded in his holy Word”
 - ✓ Scripture alone is our rule for faith and practice
- ▶ Negatively – “not such as...are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention”
 - ✓ Matthew 15:1-6 –

 - ✓ Exodus 32 –

 - ✓ Deuteronomy 4:2 –

 - ✓ Deuteronomy 6:17-18 –
- ▶ The good works that God commanded in his word includes the intent of the heart
 - ✓ Matthew 15:7-9–

 - ✓ Psalm 51:16-17 –
- ▶ “Goodness and badness are defined by the law of God, not by our self-serving legislation” or from “the culture around us” (R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess*, Vol. 2, p. 171)

WCF 16.1 – 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 pretence of good intention.

II. The Root and Purposes of Good Works (16.2)

- ▶ The root of good works – “a true and lively faith”
 - ✓ James 2:17-22 –

 - ✓ WCF 14:1 – The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts
- ▶ The Purposes of Good Works – by them believers...
 - ✓ “Manifest their thankfulness”
 - ↳ Psalm 116:12-19 –

WCF 16.2 – 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.

- ✓ “Strengthen their assurance”
 - ✎ 1 John 2:3-5 –
 - ✎ 2 Peter 1:5-10 –
- ✓ “Edify their brethren”
 - ✎ Matthew 5:16 –
- ✓ “Adorn the profession of the Gospel”
 - ✎ Titus 2:5-12 –
- ✓ “Stop the mouths of the adversaries”
 - ✎ 1 Peter 2:15 –
- ✓ “Glorify God”
 - ✎ 1 Peter 2:12 –
 - ✎ John 15:8 –
- ✓ Good works is what we were created in Christ Jesus for
 - ✎ Ephesians 2:10 –
 - ✎ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 –
- ✓ “Having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end eternal life.”
 - ✎ Romans 6:22 –
 - ✎ Hebrews 12:14 –

III. God’s Help in Good Works (16.3)

- Apart from God’s daily working in us by his Spirit – we cannot do good works
 - ✓ John 15:4 –

WCF 16.3 – 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, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure: yet are they 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.

✓ Galatians 5:22-25 –

▸ Warning – “Don’t just stand there!”

✓ God does not call us to passivity and quietism

✓ We don’t just sit around waiting for the “leading of the Spirit” to do the revealed will of God

↳ Philippians 2:12-13 –

↳ 2 Timothy 1:6-7 –

▸ St. Augustine – “Pray as though everything depended on God” (because it does). “Work as though everything depended on you” (because he calls you to do so).

IV. Good Works to Spare?

▸ This section refers to the Roman Catholic doctrine of supererogation

▸ Works of supererogation are those works that are “above and beyond” the call of duty – works that go beyond what God requires

▸ According to Roman Catholic teaching, there have been a few saints who lived lives of such extraordinary righteousness that they accumulated more merit than they needed in order to gain direct entrance into heaven. Their excess merit was then supposedly deposited into the treasury of merit, where it is available to others. (R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess, Vol. 2*, p. 189)

WCF 16.4 – 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 the duty they are bound to do.

▸ So what would be a work of supererogation?

▸ Psalm 143:2 –

V. Good Works Do Not Save or Add to Our Salvation

▸ Good works are not meritorious in any way – and they cannot be because of the vast disproportion between our works here and the glory to come, between us and God

✓ Romans 3:20 –

✓ Ephesians 2:8 –

WCF 16.5 – 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 judgment.

✓ Isaiah 6:1-5 –

✓ Psalm 16:2 –

› The best we can be, even if we have done our duty, are unprofitable servants

✓ Luke 17:10 –

› This does not mean there is not good in our works – but whatever is good proceeds from the Spirit

› But because we are sinners, our good works are always tainted by weakness and imperfection

✓ Isaiah 64:6 –

✓ Psalm 143:2 –

VI. Encouragement to do Good Works

› Though not meritorious toward our salvation in any way, and although they are “defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment” (16.5), the good works of believers are accepted in Christ

› They are not accepted “by” Christ – they are accepted by God because we are “in Christ”

› Just as our sin is covered by the righteousness of Christ, so are the imperfections of our good works

✓ Hebrews 11:4 –

› God does reward our good works as he sees fit – not because he is obligated, but because he is gracious

✓ Hebrews 6:10 –

✓ Matthew 25:21 –

✓ “Augustine taught that when God gives rewards to his people in Christ Jesus, he is crowning his own gifts.” (R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess*, Vol. 2, p. 194)

WCF 16.6 – 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 unprovable 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.

VII. “Good Works” in God’s Sight Require Right Relationship with Him

- ▶ Sometimes Christians are put to shame by the lives of unbelievers, and yet such “goodness” cannot earn God’s favor or even be truly “good” before him
- ▶ Non-Christians can outwardly conform to the law and even do civic good – but they are judged by their intent, their motive and their inward disposition
- ▶ Matter of fact, unregenerate men can only do “bad works” before God because they are still spiritually dead and are his enemies, and their hearts remain unpurified by faith
- ▶ This should not cause us pride – it should call us to self-examination
 - ✓ 1 Corinthians 13:3 –

WCF 16.7 – 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 an 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, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.

- ▶ Even though not good before God, it is still better for unbelievers to outwardly do what is right before the Lord rather than just give themselves over to sin completely
 - ✓ Matthew 10:14-15 –
 - ✓ Matthew 11:20-22 –