

## CHAP. XVI. - *Of Good Works.*

1. Good works are only such as God has commanded in his holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant of Scripture, are devised by men out of blind zeal or any pretense of good intention.
2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith. By them believers show their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, build up their fellow believers, adorn the profession of the gospel, shut the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God. They are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, so that, bearing fruit unto holiness, they may attain the outcome, which is eternal life.
3. Their ability to do good works is not at all from themselves, but entirely from the Spirit of Christ. And—in order that they may be enabled to do these things—besides the graces believers have already received, there must also be an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit working in them both to will and to do God's good pleasure. This truth, however, should not cause believers to become negligent, as though they were not bound to perform any duty without a special moving of the Spirit; rather, they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.
4. They who attain the greatest heights of obedience possible in this life are so far from being able to go beyond duty and to do more than God requires, that they fall short of much that is their duty to do.
5. We cannot, by our best works, merit forgiveness for sin, or eternal life at the hand of God. This is true because of the great disproportion between our best works and the glory to come, and because of the infinite distance between us and God. We cannot benefit God by our best works nor render satisfaction for the debt of our former sins, for when we have done all we can, we have done merely our duty and are unprofitable servants. This is because, insofar as they are good, these deeds proceed from the Spirit; and, insofar as they are done by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.
6. Nevertheless, because believers are accepted through Christ, their good works are also accepted in him. They are accepted not because believers are in this life unblamable and unprovable in God's sight, but because he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, even though it is accompanied by many weaknesses and imperfections.
7. Although the works done by unregenerate men may in themselves be things which God commands and things which are useful to themselves and others, yet—because they do not come from a heart purified by faith, are not in a right manner according to the Word, and are not done for the right purpose, which is to glorify God—they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God or make one suitable to receive his grace. Yet, neglecting them is even more sinful and displeasing to God.

Of Good Works, WCF Chapter 16  
Phil. 2:12, 13; Jas. 1:22–25; Jas. 2:17–24 Sunday Evening, September 4, 2022

III. Sect 3. Source of Good Works

- A. The Source of Good Works Is Not by Ourselves Alone Jn. 15:4, 5; 2 Cor. 3:5
  
- B. The Source of Good Works Is from the Work of the Spirit  
Phil. 2:12, 13; Heb. 13:20, 21; Ezek. 36:26, 27
  
- C. The Source of Good Works Is Also from Our Work, Depending on the Work of the Spirit Jas. 1:22–25

IV. Sect 4. Correction of Good Works

- A. Can We Do More than What God Requires?
  
- B. We Cannot Do More than What God Requires Rom. 7:14; Lk. 17:10; Jas. 3:2; 1 Jn. 1:8

V. Sect 5 and 6. Merit of Good Works

- A. Our Good Works Merit Nothing Jas. 2:17–24 (Rom. 4:3, 10,11)
  
- B. Our Good Works Are Rewarded
  - 1. Our Good Works Are Received Through Christ Eph. 1:5, 6; 1 Pet. 2:5

*Augustine: “See Thy work in me, not mine. For if thou seest mine, thou wilt condemn it. If thou seest Thine own thou wilt crown it. For whatever good works are mine are from Thee.”*

- 2. Our Works Are Rewarded Through Christ Heb. 6:10; Matt. 25:21

*John Owen: “It is true, our interest in God is not built upon our holiness; but it is as true that we have none without it.”*