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"GOOD WORKS"

By the late C. D. Cole

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10)

The Scriptures have much to say about good works. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Believers must be careful to maintain good works. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8). The rich in this world must be rich in good works, ready to share their good things with the needy. "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (I Tim. 6:18).

Our Lord testified that the works of the world are evil. "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). He also testified concerning the Pharisees, that all their works were done for human praise. "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments" (Matt. 23:5). We also read of dead works, works of the flesh, and works of the devil. And so we need to discriminate in dealing with the subject of good works.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR GOOD WORKS

Who can perform a good work in the sight of God? The Scriptures make it plain that none but the saved can engage in good works. "For

we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Good works are the fruit of the Spirit, and none but the saved have the Spirit. Good works are the result of salvation and not the cause of it. The Divine order is salvation, then service. We are saved to serve God and others. In every realm except mechanics, there must be life before activity. Every man by nature is dead in sins and alienates from the life of God. The belief that a sinner may work towards salvation is a heresy of the deepest dye. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5); "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim. 1:9). All the work that the lost man does to ingratiate himself into the favor of God is a dead work and needs to be repented of. There is no way into the favor of God except through His Son. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

THE NATURE OF GOOD WORKS

A good work in the Scriptural sense, the only true sense, is a work that pleases God, and brings upon the doer God's approbation and blessing. A man may perform an act that will meet the human conception of a good deed, but God may judge otherwise. What men might pronounce good, God might reject as evil. Men may reward for that which God will censure.

How may one know when he is engaged in doing good? This is a very important question. Multitudes are in a whirl of so-called Christian activity, nervously executing man-made programs, only to reap in the end a terrible awakening and a sore disappointment. Read Matt. 7:22, 23.

It is not our aim to enumerate the good deeds a Christian may do, but rather to show the necessary elements in any work to make it a good work in the sight of God. As individuals, particular deeds may vary according to our relation to society and to our opportunities.

1. A work of faith is a good work. To do that which God commands, just because He commands it, is a good work. A work of faith is possible only to those who have faith. Works of faith are often opposed to human reason. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is filled with works of faith. Human reason did not dictate the acts of Noah, Abraham, and others mentioned in this chapter. The only reason behind a work of faith is that God says do it. And this is to become a fool in the eyes of the world. It was only because Noah believed God that he built the ark.

2. A labor of love is a good work. Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." I Corinthians, chapter 13 emphasizes the necessity of love as an element in good works. Faith works by love. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). Faith and love are twin graces God wrought, and where these are, good works will surely follow.

The unregenerate, so far as the external act is concerned, may do a good deed; however, the inward motive as well as the outward act is essential to a good work in the sight of God. A cup of water, given in the name of a disciple of Christ, is a good work, while the gift of a million dollars to a good cause may fall short of a good work. Here is the acid test for every good deed; is it done for the glory of God, and from love to Christ? If so---

(1) It will not be done for human rewards. This was the motive of the Pharisees in almsgiving. And it is to be feared that many professing Christians want their rewards here and now, and therefore, their motive is to please men rather than God. And the writer must confess that his greatest temptation has been to preach to please men--something he has had to confess before God. He dares not

claim a holy motive in all he has done. A good work is done for the glory of God and will be rewarded by Him in the day of judgment. It is not wrong to please men if they are pleased by our seeking to please God.

(2) A labor of love is not done out of envy and strife. "Love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil" (I Cor. 13:4, 5).

(3) It will not be done for prizes, banners, etc. All sorts of means are being resorted in today to keep church members active in some form of Christian activity. What is needed today is the faithful preaching of the Word, speaking the truth in love, and in utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit for results.

(4) Acceptable service must flow from fellowship with Christ. If we have not learned to worship in secret, we cannot worship in the public assembly. If Christ is not real to us; if we are not walking and communing with Him, it is but mockery to speak of Him to others. It is only when He is precious to us that we can sincerely recommend Him to others.

Paul said that Christianity in the last days would be characterized by people having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. II Tim. 3:5. And this is the certain result of too much public service apart from much secret prayer.

ILLUSTRATION

The story is told that when Handley Page was making an Eastern flight, he and his companion descended at Khobar in Arabia. While there a large rat, attracted by the smell of food, managed to get into the plane. When the flight was resumed, Mr. Page discovered the presence of the rat by the sickening sound of gnawing behind him. He thought with horror of the damage those pitiless teeth might do to some vital part of the plane. What could he do? It suddenly occurred to him that a rat cannot stand a high altitude; it is made to live on the surface or burrow beneath the soil. So he decided to soar. He turned the nose of the plane upward and rose higher and higher until he himself found it difficult to breathe. He listened--and to his delight the rat was found to be dead. Now, there are moral pests in the nature of fleshly lusts that war against the soul: worldly amusements in various forms. Our only safety is to soar. These things cannot stand heaven's air. They die in the presence of Christ Who died for us. Prayer and Bible study lift us into an altitude that is too high for sinful amusements.

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WORKS

Good works are important as necessary evi-

dences of salvation. They do not procure salvation but manifest it. They are not the cause but the effect of the new birth--created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

The works of the Christian come before him in judgment to be rejected or rewarded. This is not true of the believer's sins. They were laid upon Christ and He bore them in His own body on the tree. In respect to salvation, the believer's sins were put upon Christ and judged in Him. In respect to chastisement, they are dealt with in this life. Read Heb. 12:5-11. The believer will be rewarded for his good works when Christ comes. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (I Cor. 4:5).



BY HIS BLOOD GOD GAVE MAN ETERNAL LIFE

THE DEVIL'S MERCHANDISE

It was announced that the devil was going out of business, and would offer all tools for sale to the highest bidder. On the night of the sale they were all attractively displayed--and a bad looking lot they were: hatred, jealousy, envy, malice, sensuality and deceit, and all the other implements of evil. Apart from the rest lay a harmless-looking wedge-shaped tool, much worn, and priced higher than any of them. Someone asked the devil what it was.

"That is 'discouragement.' "

"Why do you price it so highly?"

"Because," replied the devil, "It is more useful to me than any other tool. I can pry open and get into a man's conscience with that when I could never get near him with any others; and once inside, I can use him with my discouragement in any way that suits me best. It is much worn because I use it with nearly everybody, as few people yet know that it belongs to me and that I use it to achieve my ends."

But the price placed on discouragement was so high that the devil owns it still.--Maritime Baptist.

