

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 16.-Of Good Works.

VI. Yet notwithstanding, the persons of Beleevers being accepted through Christ, their good workes also are accepted in him¹, not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreproueable in Gods sight²; 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 imperfections³.

Question 1.—*Though none can by their good works merit eternal life, are the good works of believers, being accepted in Christ, also accepted in him?*

Answer.—Yes. Exod. 28:38; Gen. 4:4; Heb. 11:4. The good works of sincere believers are, like their persons, in spite of their imperfections, accepted because of their union with Christ Jesus, and rewarded for his sake, Eph. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:5. All our approaches to God are made through Christ, Rom. 5:2. It is only through him that we have access to the Father by the Spirit, Eph. 2:18. Whatever we do, “in word or deed,” we are commanded to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” Col. 3:17.

In the dispensation of the gospel, the gracious work of the believer and the gracious reward he receives from God are branches from the same gracious root, Eph. 2:10. The same covenant of grace provides at once for the infusion of grace in the heart, the exercise of grace in the life, and the reward of the grace so exercised, 2 Cor. 5:5, 17. It is all of grace—a grace called a reward added to grace called a work, 2 Cor. 9:8; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29. The one grace is set opposite to the other grace as a reward, for these reasons: 1.) To act upon us as a suitable stimulus to duty, Heb. 10:35. God promises to reward the Christian just as a father promises to reward his child for doing what is its duty and what is for its own benefit alone, Ps. 103:13; Mal. 3:17. 2.) Because a certain gracious proportion has been established between the grace given in the reward and the grace given in the holy exercises of the heart and life; but both are alike given for Christ’s sake, Luke 19:15-19. This proportion has been established—the more grace of obedience, the more grace of reward—the more grace on earth, the more glory in heaven—because God so wills it, and because the grace given and exercised in obedience prepares the soul for the reception of the further grace given in the reward, Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 4:17.

Question 2.—*Are these good works wholly unblameable and unreprouable in God’s sight?*

Answer.—No. Job 9:20; Ps. 143:2. That no merit of condignity attaches even to the good works of saints, is clear from Luke 17:9, 10. We are God’s property, Ps. 100:3. He has, at the outset of our transacting with Him, ownership in all our service, Isa. 43:21. Hence, if we even served Him perfectly, (which we never do,) we could not claim that we had paid God any overplus of our dues, or brought Him into our debt, Job 35:7. He might approve our fidelity, but He would owe us no wages, Job 22:2. In Rom. 6:23, the Apostle

¹ Eph. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:5; Exod. 28:38; Gen. 4:4; Heb. 11:4.

² Job 9:20; Ps. 143:2.

³ Heb. 13:20, 21; 2 Cor. 8:12; Heb. 6:10; Matt. 25:21,23.

actually breaks the symmetry of his antithesis, in order to teach that we merit nothing of God's commutative justice. Death is the wages which sin earns, Gen. 2:17; but eternal life is the gift of God, and not wages earned by the Christian, John 4:14. The following passages teach the same, Rom. 5:15-18; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5.

Question 3.—*Is God looking upon these good works in his Son, pleased to accept, and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections?*

Answer.—Yes. Heb. 13:20, 21; 2 Cor. 8:12; Heb. 6:10; Matt. 25:21, 23. The essential merit that earned the reward is Christ's, Matt. 7:21-23. Yet it is related to the loving obedience of the believer, as appointed consequence, so that we are seated with him in his throne, Rev. 3:21. Thus it appears how all the defects in his evangelical obedience (defects which, were he under a legal covenant, would procure the curse, and not blessing,) are covered by the Savior's righteousness; so that, through Him, the inadequate works receive a recompense, 1 Cor. 3:10-15. Moreover, it is clearly taught that God has seen fit, in apportioning degrees of blessedness to different justified persons, to measure them by the amount of their good works, Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:8, note that the reward is "according to," but not "on account of" the works. See also, 2 Cor. 9:6; Luke 19:17, 18. Not only the sovereignty, but the wisdom and righteousness of a gracious God are seen in this arrangement, 2 Cor. 4:6, 7. Thus a rational motive is applied to educe diligent obedience, Ps. 19:11. Thus it is evinced that the gospel is not a ministration of indolence or disobedience; and God's verdicts in Christ not inconsistent with natural justice, Matt. 10:42. It is thus, because the grace given on earth is a preparation of the soul for more grace in heaven, Heb. 12:14. And last, good works are the only practical and valid test of the genuineness of that faith, by which believers receive the perfect merits of Christ, Jas. 2:22. This last fact, especially, makes it proper that the "free reward" shall be bestowed "according to their works;" and explains a multitude of passages, which Papists suppose make the reward depend on the works, Gal. 5:6. Our works, as well as we, are "accepted in the Beloved," Eph. 1:6.