

“Of Good Works” part 15 WCF 16.7.5

All Unbelievers' Works Are Evil

2022.01.09 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

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WCF 16.7 (TPH p928)

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;^a yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith,^b nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word,^c nor to a right end, the glory of God;^d they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God.^e And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.^f

a. 1 Kings 21:27, 29; 2 Kings 10:30-31; Phil 1:15-16, 18. • b. Gen 4:3-5 with Heb 11:4, 6. • c. Isa 1:12; 1 Cor 13:3. • d. Mat 6:2, 5, 16. • e. Amos 5:21-22; Hosea 1:4; Hag 2:14; Rom 9:16; Titus 1:15; 3:5. • f. Job 21:14-15; Psa 14:4; 36:3; Mat 23:23; 25:41-45.

Haggai 2:10 On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹ “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, ¹² “If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?’” Then the priests answered and said, “No.” ¹³ And Haggai said, “If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?” So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.” ¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, “ ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the LORD, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

Romans 9:14 What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, “*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*” ¹⁶ So then *it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.* ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “*For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*” ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Titus 1:15 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Job 21:14 Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. ¹⁵ Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?’

Psalms 14:1 The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt. They have done abominable works. There is none who does good. ² The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. ³ They have all turned aside. They have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one. ⁴ Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call on the Lord?

Psalms 36:1 An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: there is no fear of God before his eyes. ² For he flatters himself in his own eyes, when he finds out his iniquity and when he hates. ³ The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. ⁴ He devises wickedness on his bed. He sets himself in a way that is not good. He does not abhor evil.

Matthew 23:23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. ²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Matthew 25:41 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Our Father in heaven, We confess with the psalmist that our goodness is zero apart from you that there is no goodness in us. There's only goodness in Christ So we thank you for giving him to be ours. We thank you for your spirit who makes us alive and gives us faith to be joined to Jesus.

We thank you for the good works then that you have prepared for us to walk in. Once we have believed in Jesus and to walk in by faith in Him and we pray O, Lord that you would help us to have right thinking about these things as it concerns, our own hearts and our own works.

And as a concerns, the works of others that we might think rightly about them and love and desire for them, your salvation apart with from which they can do nothing good either. So we pray for the help of your spirit as we consider some things from your word. Now that you would give light to our minds and that the understanding that you give us and the renewing of our minds, you would use to continue transforming us so that we wouldn't be conformed to the world.

But rather we would be conformed to Christ. So do this for us. We pray as we ask it in his name. Amen.

All right, so the last paragraph chapter 16, in the confession is works done by unregenerate men and that means men who have not been made spiritually alive, who have not received spiritual birth. They've been born physically. So the to use the language behind this, they are generate and that they've been born physically but they have not been born spiritually or born from above.

They don't have that birth from the Holy Spirit. There's a pastor teacher, who wrote a book on the new birth, and he tried to emphasize that by titling, it finally alive because we're born spiritually, dead, or we come into this world spiritually dead. So we're done by those who have not been made alive yet by the spirit works done by unregenerate men.

Although for the matter of them, They may be things which God commands. So outward does it does the action specifically can form in the activity itself to the rule for the matter of them. They may be things which God commands and of good use both to themselves and others.

Both in the Providence of God who works all things together for the good of those who love him. And who has given commandments and honors, his commandments by making them generally tend towards the good. You know, Proverbs is full of observations about how the exercise of wisdom and the obedience to God's commandments in God's providence is made beneficial.

So what men who have not been made spiritual alive do even if it has an external conformity to what God commands and is being made beneficial to themselves and to others yet because they proceed, not from a heart purified by faith nor are done in a right manner. According to the Word nor to a right end, the glory of God.

So those are things that unregenerate men do not have. They don't have saving faith in Christ. And the scripture says without faith, that is impossible to please God. And whatever it is not proceed from faith, this sin, nor is it done in a right manner? According to the Word that is the not only that the word is not their standard.

Although there are some who think it is just like the Pharisees thought the word was their standard although they added lots of their own things that they thought were equal to the word that they thought was their standard. But Jesus opened for them that the word and the standard that it demands goes all the way to the heart, right?

And this, the Lord had shown us both in the way each table of the law concludes and and in the the way he summarized his law. So first table of the law concludes with a remember, in order to consecrate and remember in order to keep only as a very internal heart command for for Sabbath keeping, we tend to focus as the Pharisees tend to focus and we're all recovering Pharisees to one extent or another.

On the things that you do not do In six days, you shall labor and seventh day. You shall not and all the but that's not the substance of the command. So he ends the first table of the law with a heart come in. Remember and consecrate and then he ends the second table of the law with a heart.

Command thou shalt not covet. And that was the the law especially that got the Apostle Paul, right? When he's giving a illustration of how sin in him sees the commandment as an opportunity, just to show how bad the sin was inside him. He especially highlights the Tenth commandment because our hearts are are not nearly as

Easy to control as our hands and our lips. So he thought, perhaps he was keeping six, seven eight, nine, and then he gets to 10 and he says it says, thou shalt not cover it and immediately he covets worse than he ever has before. Because he's thinking about all the things he desires to do, which we do with the fourth as well.

You hear about what the day is for. And you start to say, but can I do this and can I do this? And what if I want to do that and you're already, instead of what God wants the day to be for figuring out how you can bend, how God, what God wants today to be, for to permit of what you want the day to be for, or how you want the day to give you rest and so forth.

So nor are they done in a right manner? According to the word, there's a lot, there's a lot there nor to a right end. The glory of God they are therefore and that that's where we are. That the works of unregenerate, men are all evil are all sinful. Now, they aren't as sinful as they could be, but they are sinful, right?

So they're not always transgressing, you know, the letter of the law in and what's commanded to do. But they're always done from a principal of sin. They are therefore sinful and cannot, please God, and we'll see that in the first three references that you see there and we we started elsewhere as well but hey Haggy i2 verse 14 and I gave you versus 10 through 14, there to consider it.

Romans 9 verse 14. And Titus one verse 15. So they cannot please God nor can they make a man? Meat suitable able prepared to receive grace from God and we'll see that especially in Titus three verse 4 and then the last section and yet their neglect of them, the fact that they don't do them is more sinful and displeasing unto God then then if they had tried to do them.

So just because we can't doesn't get us out of the obligation to do it. We're just helpless, which we deserve to be in our first father, Adam. And we continue with every sin to deserve, even more to be helpless, But God in his mercy offers himself as our help in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But the you can't say well I'm not a believer yet and I know that everything I do is sinful so I'm going to sin as much as I want. That itself, of course, is a sinful desire, and a simple way of reasoning and it results in more sin and every one of those things increases guilt.

So you have the mercy of God, that is offered to the sinner. And you know, Romans 2 says that is meant to lead us to repentance but we often actually apart from grace. All we do is store up more and more wrath against ourselves unto the day of wrath.

All right. So let's let's jump in into the passage. Hi guy or Hogati. Two versus 10 through 14 on the 24th day of the ninth month. And the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came by Hagee-eye the prophet saying thus, says, Yahweh of hosts now, ask the priests concerning the law saying.

If one carries, holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge He touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any food, will it become? Holy Then the priests in certain said, no, hey, I said if one, who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, Will it be unclean.

So the priests in certain said, it shall be unclean Then Hagia answered and said, so is this people? And so is this nation before me, says, Yahweh and so is every work of their hands and what they offer there is unclean, okay? So he's talking about the temple and he's talking about sacrifices that are being offered according to the command of God.

And we had considered those things in Amos 5, 21 and 22. And I think we, you know, we didn't do Isaiah one together and I'm not sure where we're 12 is in Isaiah one, but he starts out the book of Isaiah accusing his people as well. But even things that God commanded, If they are done by an unbelieving person, can The thing that God commanded make that person wholly, and pleasing to God, or Does the uncleanness of the heart that does not love?

God does not love His. Glory has not been joined to. Jesus Christ. Washed in his blood, attuned for by him. Does the uncleanness of the person transmit to the work? Do you see how God used even the structure of his cleanliness laws? He said, you know, other food doesn't become holy just because a consecrated guy carrying consecrated food bumps into it, right?

Yeah, the guy doesn't go everywhere. He touches he makes things. Holy. There's only one who has a holiness that when he is joined with someone else. Who has unclean the unclean one gets made. Holy rather than the holy One being made unclean who has a holiness like that. It's only Jesus, isn't it?

So God had given the Israelites cleanliness laws that illustrated this wonderfully for them. You know the priests who has been consecrated with the meat that has been consecrated. Neither the consecrated priest nor the consecrated meat could be wholly enough to make the things that they touched be also consecrated.

In fact, the blood had to be spilled looking forward to Christ, even to end up with a consecrated priest. And then that consecrated priest had to receive and blood had to be spilled and fire had to be burned in order for the meat to be consecrated. But if someone who is unclean touches a holy thing, one of those holy things, It would no longer be be consecrated.

It would no longer be clean unto God. Even the thing that had been consecrated and had been holy when it was touched, by the the desecrated person who had touched a dead body, and become

ceremonial unclean. It would be made unclean. Now, this is something that when I first started becoming aware of reform, theology Invite junior, high and high school.

A really had a hard time with because I had grown up in a youth group that was for all practical purposes, secular was some Christianese attached to it and the gospel was clear enough that you could hear about Christ and believe in him. But we didn't think seriously about anything.

And we thought that what we did was pretty good and when we thought about all of our friends, for instance, at school and I was public school in junior high and high school, you know, I would think of some of the kids as the bad kids and some of the other unregenerate unconverted kids as the good kids, you know, people that I did charity work with and, you know, the point of high school for me was to build a resume that would eventually get me admitted into medical school.

So I did lots of charity work but your conscience wants you to think that you're doing it because you're charitable. So we were very virtuous self-righteous. You know, pre-med school type type kids. And when I started to learn reform theology, when one man in our church of 5,000, offered a Sunday, school class on something called the Westminster Confession of Faith.

And, and we started to learn about it. This was one of the things that really bothered me to think that all of the good kids and the vast majority of what I did was actually sinful before God. Yeah, I used to struggle with. Why do bad things happen? A good people.

I now know that only ever happened once, and that was to Jesus, because he's the only good people. And the more I understood, the more I came to understand about how the only goodness that I had ever done was what had come from Jesus through faith. And what I did and not from me, the more I understood that all those good kids that I thought were really savable because they were a lot more, like me than some of those other kids that everything they had ever done was displeasing to God and that they weren't good kids and that they weren't more saveable than those other kids that I thought were worse.

But everything they had ever done was sinful before God and provoked his wrath. The best thing they had ever done. Okay, Increased. The wrath of God against them and and their guilt before God. You're probably not surprised that I had never heard preaching and teaching through the book of Leviticus.

Let alone Hagia applying Leviticus, but I think this illustration that the Lord used with his people for what needed to be true about them. And what they did at the temple is very useful for seeing that all the all the works of unbelievers are sinful, Romans 9, verse 14, through 18.

What shall we say? Then Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not for he says to Moses. I will have mercy on whom ever. I and we'll have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever. I will have compassion said then it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs but of God who shows mercy.

Okay so this is actually overlapping the the two parts The work is sinful and cannot please God nor can it make a man, meet ready? Saveable to receive grace from God. So God alone is the one who produces anything good in anyone. We all deserve to be vessels of wrath.

The only thing that makes a difference is God Himself and his showing us mercy For the scripture says to the Pharaoh for this very purpose. I have raised you up that I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore, he has mercy on whom he wills and whom he wills.

He hardened, If God left you to yourself so that you would Harden, If he did not, if he did not by his power, and by his mercy, make you different than yourself, right? We see sometimes some people make the mistake of thinking that God hardening Pharaoh's heart did something to Pharaoh, to make him what he wasn't that God made Pharaoh worse than Pharaoh was, but God hardening Pharaoh's heart as it were set thorough in stone.

Pharaoh was already that bad and God ordained or in his providence, would remove the restraining common grace that he gives to everyone that keeps them from expressing fully. The extent of their wickedness in this world, let feral harden. Now, that's an intentional activity of God. I'm not trying to take away any responsibility from God.

That's what Pharaoh deserved. That's what every single sinner deserves. It's why it's so amazing that there's a world not just full of unbelievers, but even of those who will never believe and yet, for the sake of His work in this world, God is not yet hardening them to the fullest extent.

So God alone by His mercy ever, makes someone come to him, everybody ever makes someone desire him. And if we had gone through the whole book of Romans which obviously we can't right now, we would see that there's none who seeks after God. All right. Titus 115 to the pure.

All things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works. They deny him, being

abominable disobedient, and disqualified for every good work, right? So, there are people who profess to know God and that should burn our ears.

A little bit. Just like, when Jesus in Matthew 7:22 says, that in the last day, the rule will be many who say, Lord Lord in your name, did we not in your name? Did we not in your name? Did we not right? The only, the many in Matthew 7 are a many who know that Jesus is Lord.

And that only that, which is done in his name is good, and that in his name is salvation. And yet, Jesus says to many, who had that theology, we look around. We say there aren't many who have that theology. And you know, the pool of who this could be, is shrinking on us, right?

Same similar thing here that The profess to know God, but in their works, they deny him. Why? Because they're unbelieving the reality about them doesn't match what they profess. And that means that they are defiled their mind is defiled, their conscience is defiled and everything. They do the sinful before God and culpable and, you know, it's encouraging.

The first part of that verse is not really part of our lesson, but to the pure, all things are pure you and I we never do anything without sin. We have that remaining sin, that clings to us. We have that pride before God desiring that he would notice how good we are and especially before men or self-serving, we indulge the flash, you know.

But Christ's blood has wiped out, the guilt of our sin. And in every good thing that we do as far as how how God rewards our works, He especially rewards the good that we do. So, again, the unbeliever defiled and this is the word that that makes this to be used as a proof text here, defiled, and unbelieving.

The un the unbeliever, everything everything they do is not viewed by God. As a good work, Nothing they do is viewed by God is a good work. That's why I included as they would have expected us to remember the context of verse 16. They're disqualified for every good work.

One of the problems in increase was that there were unbelieving people who were trying to get, who claimed to be able to tell the Cretan church, how they could become better. And the the Holy Spirit through Titus is saying every single work they do is wrong. Why would you listen to such people?

Okay. And then finally Titus three four and with that we'll wrap up Section 5. But when the kindness and love of God, our Savior toward man appeared not by works of righteousness, which we have done. But according to His mercy, he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

It has never ever. Ever, ever the work of a man that got him. Ready to believe. No, man. Ever made himself more able to believe. That's why in the relationship between repentance and faith. We say that repentance proceeds from faith. Although they always happen at the same time and you never have one without the other.

Repentance proceeds from faith. Why? Because not by works of righteousness that we have done and repentance. Genuine repentance is a work of righteousness but only by the mercy of God. So the work of the works of an unbeliever, never make them more saveable which should encourage you about those for whom you praying and to whom you witnessed in about whom you care.

Dearly that seem to us in our uninstructed, flesh to be least saveable because Jesus came to save, sinners, and none of them are doing anything until he saves them. That makes them more savable. So some people they hear this biblical doctrine, they say that's an awful thing to say.

You mean no non-Christian has ever done a good work? I say well that's what the Bible teaches. So yes, but it actually gives me hope that every single non-Christian is savable by my God, and it keeps me from being discouraged or despairing over them. And it encourages me, just to use the means that my God says He will use to save because when he honors this means and he exerts his power, He makes them alive and by his mercy and the washing of regeneration, with His Holy Spirit, He brings them.

He brings them to faith and they are saved. Well, we'll take the last section the yet they're neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God next week. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you that your gospel is the is your power for salvation. And in it, your righteousness is revealed that is by faith from start to finish and we do pray. Lord, now, especially many of us. Just having in the course of listening to and thinking about the teaching thought about that nearest one to us in this life over whom we have grieved and for whom we have prayed and we come now with renewed confidence from your word.

And we ask that it would not be of him who wills or him, who runs not by some outward works that we might have thought would make them more savable or nearer to being saved. But that by your mercy you would save them. Come. Now we pray in the Next part of our day.

Is we head over to the other building to worship you? We pray that your spirit would apply Christ to us that that which is from us. And sinful would be wiped away by his blood and that, by your spirit, working out his life. And his goodness in us, we would worship you as well.

And as rightly according to your word from the heart as we might and we pray that you would be glorified and we pray that we would be blessed and we ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ. The righteous, Amen.