

Rom. 12:1-2 (WCF 16:1) “Regulated Worship”

For the Children: People in New Zealand say all kinds of things are “good.” They might think it is good to believe that there is no God; or that couples should not bother to get married. They might think that it is good for everyone to drive an electric car or eat plants and insects instead of red meat. As God’s children, though, we get our idea of what is good from the Lord. He tells us in His Word what He wants us to do. We should not try to make up some new ideas of our own on what is good. We also know that good deeds must be done to glorify God and to show thankfulness to Him. We know that good deeds must be made clean by the Lord Jesus. **Questions:** Why do our deeds need to be made clean by the Lord Jesus? Give some Biblical examples of people who thought they were doing good, yet it wasn’t pleasing to God. How does God change us so that we can do more and more good?

Introduction:

First Point: What We Do Not Give

- 1) Gifts Refused: The Lord is not bound to accept gifts men mistakenly think will please Him, just because these gifts meet the expectations of the sinner. He defines what is “good,” and He defines what is an acceptable offering or service.
- 2) Bad Relationship with the Lord: Service to the Lord that arises from conformity to the world/this present evil age is unacceptable to God. “Conformed” means shaped outwardly. It indicates that believers who know the Lord may nevertheless allow their deeds to be shaped by the world.
- 3) Unholy Deeds: Unholy deeds are not “acceptable” = “well-pleasing” to the Lord. Only that which is built on the foundation of Christ and moved by His Spirit are holy. Unbelievers can never offer anything holy. Believers can offer holy service, but do not do so in every case.
- 4) Out of Line with His Word: Works that are out of accord with God’s Word – which reveals His will - are also unacceptable. This can happen in 2 ways. First, some deeds are contrary to God’s law. But deeds that are not warranted by the Word are also unacceptable. Such deeds arise from man’s will and imagination, not from God’s revealed will. This is a version of the Reformed “regulative principle.” See Rom. 14:23; LD 35, Q/A 96; BCF 30-32, and WCF 16:1. For some Biblical examples of deeds offered by God’s people, but not warranted, see Lev. 10 and 1 Sam. 15.

Second Point: What We Do Give

- 1) By the Mercies: Deeds that arise from right relation to God, are built on the foundation of Christ and moved by His Spirit, are motivated by gratitude for God’s mercies. Moreover, such deeds can only be made acceptable to God by His grace and mercy in Christ.
- 2) Spiritual Service: Acceptable deeds also involve “spiritual service.” The word “spiritual” here means “reasonable” or “rational” – “spiritually intelligent” worship that considers the reasons for serving God, as we find them in His Word and moved by His Spirit. Such deeds are not done from mere custom or to satisfy the expectations of other people.
- 3) Metamorphosed Service: Good deeds are those that arise from the “transformation” (metamorphosis) that God works in His people. We are commanded to “be transformed” in this way. This word does involve an inner change. It involves the “renewal of the mind,” enabling “reasonable service.” It leads the believer to accept God’s definition of “good” and of service. It supplies the right motives and looks to His Word. The command to be transformed implies that we co-operate with the Spirit in this metamorphosis.
- 4) That We May Prove: If we do co-operate in this way, we will be able to demonstrate the rightness of God’s will, as we apply His Word to our doing of good deeds. There will be joy in doing His will. Eventually, His evaluation of deeds built on the foundation of His Son will be seen to have been acceptable to Him.

Conclusion: