

## “Of Good Works”

### 1689 London Baptist Confession, Ch. 16

1. Good works are only such as God has commanded in his Holy Word, (Mic. 6:8; Heb. 13:21) and not such as without its warrant are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intentions (Mt. 15:9; Isa. 29:13).

2. These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; (Jas. 2:18,22) and by them believers manifest their thankfulness (Ps. 116:12-13), strengthen their assurance (1 Jn. 2:3,5 2; Pet. 1:5-11), edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel (Mt. 5:16), stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, (1 Tim. 6:1; 1 Pet. 2:15; Phil. 1:11) whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereto (Eph. 2:10), that having their fruit to holiness they may have the end eternal life (Rom. 6:22 ).

3. Their ability to do good works is not all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ (Jn. 15:4-5); and that they may be enabled thereto, besides the graces they have already received, there is necessary an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure (2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 2:13); yet they are not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the Spirit, but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them (Phil. 2:12; Heb. 6:11-12; Isa. 64:7).

4. They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do (Job 9:2-3; Ga 5:17; Lu 17:10 ).

5. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come, and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom by them we can neither profit nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins (Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:6); but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants; and because as they are good they proceed from his Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and as they are wrought by us they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God’s punishment (Isa. 64:6; Ps. 143:2).

6. Yet notwithstanding the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him (Eph. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:5); not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreprouable in God’s sight, 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 imperfections (Mt. 25:21,23; Heb. 6:10).

7. 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 (2 Ki. 10:30; 1 Ki. 21:27,29); yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith (Gen. 4:5; Heb. 11:4,6), nor are done in a right manner according to the Word (1 Cor. 13:1 ), nor to a right end, the glory of God, (Mt. 6:2,5) they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, nor make a man fit to receive grace from God (Amos 5:21-22; Rom. 9:16; Tit. 3:5), and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God (Job 21:14-15; Mt. 25:41-43 ).