

Lord's Day 32
23 May 2010

Beloved, good works have a necessary place in the life of the Reformed believer. But, the Christian does good works not to merit or earn with God so that he will have eternal life. Instead, a Reformed believer is zealous of good works because he is grateful to God for what God has done in his life. He confesses that Christ has saved him from his damnable sins through the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary. And arising from the cross, he enjoys union with Christ, he is declared just in the sight of God. He is made holy, and he is looking forward to his glorification in heaven. In another words, a Reformed believer does good works because he is thankful and joyful. The opposite of it is the grumpy, complaints, discontentment with the ways of God. The believer cannot help it but be thankful.

Good works in a Christian is not an option. If there are no good works in your life, then Christ does not live in you. The apostle James says, faith without works is dead, or without works your faith is no true faith at all for good works is evidence that you have true faith or good works are a fruit of true faith. Therefore, good works are indeed necessary in the life of the Christian. This is because we have been renewed by the Spirit of God to do good works. Good works is the for the glory of God and the fruit of good works is that we are assured that we are in the faith and our good works are a means to lead other to Christ.

Good works are necessary firstly because we have been renewed spiritually, secondly for the glory of God and finally for the profit of God's people.

What is renewing grace? Answer: Christ having redeemed and delivered us by his blood, also renews us by his Holy Spirit after his own image. First, he renews us by his Holy Spirit. The purpose of God in Christ is to deliver his people from eternal death and to bring them into favour with God. Deliverance is an aspect of that salvation and the second aspect is God has established a covenant with his people. He did that by putting his laws in our mind, and wrote them upon our hearts. He says that he will be to us a God and we shall be to God a people. After completing the atonement at the cross, he ascended on high and sat at the right hand of God as a prince and saviour. Christ sends upon his people, the grace of the Holy Spirit who by his divine power regenerates, converts, enlightens, strengthens and sanctifies them to the service of God. The grace of pardon and sanctification goes hand in hand for the sanctification is the sealing of the pardon and the earnest or down payment of the perfect redemption. And besides, the believer by his redemption is united in Christ. We are made one in him and the union of Christ is absolutely necessary and personal. And the Holy Spirit lives and reigns in all his members. Therefore, we are renewed after Christ's own image. The image or the likeness of Christ, is the seal of the Spirit by which he stamps on the believer's soul as belonging to Christ. And so for the believer to live is Christ. He lives in Christ, with Christ, to Christ and for Christ. And in the believer's heart Christ is formed as the hope of glory. And those who

do not have the Spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of obedience and love, he is none of Christ's. And the Holy Spirit is not a mere force or impulse but moves us by His word.

So lively gratitude is awakened in our soul towards God because of our redemption from eternal death and the restoration of the divine favour. The believer out of gratefulness to God for the great blessings, asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits to me?" The believer desires to testify his thankfulness by more than feelings or words. What will be the most acceptable to God? What is it he most delights to see in his children? Answer: it is obedience, the honour done to his holy law, the reflection of his holiness in the life of his servants: this is thank-offering we are to render to him. Our whole conduct is to testify our gratitude to God for all his blessings. Gratitude is an expression of thanksgiving to God. Gratitude is never an attempt to pay back to God what he has given us. The fact is that we have nothing and we owe God everything for our salvation God is the absolute owner of all things. He says, "I know all the fowls of the mountain: and the wild beasts of the field are mine" (Psalm 50.11). Concerning our salvation, we owe absolutely everything to God, even the privilege, ability and the desire to do good works. Good works are God's gifts to us. Ephesians 2.10 says, "for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has ordained that we should walk in them". And we are thankful to God through the good works that we do.

But, we must not think we are co-labourers with God. I Cor. 3.9 do not teach us that we labor together with God, but that the apostles and their helpers are co-labourers with one another in the service of God. We can do nothing except by his grace express our gratitude and praise his holy name. True gratitude consists only in this, that we show forth the glorious praise of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (I Peter 2.9). A beggar that receives a beautiful suit of clothes from his donor does not show his gratitude by rolling in the mud with it, but rather by showing his new suit and telling others from whom he received it. You will not show thankfulness to God by continuing his sin, but rather by purifying himself by putting off the old man and putting on the new man, walking in righteousness.

We testify by the whole of our conduct our grateful to God for all his blessings. And this includes our prayers unto God because our prayers to God are the highest expression of thankfulness to God. And this whole of our conduct includes the various sphere of our life. We must declare the praises of God in our home before our children. Psalm 78.4, "We will not hide *them* from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done". We must also show forth God's praise in the school, before the employer and employee, in the shop, office and in the street. And above all, we declare his praises in the great congregation, in the midst of the church and before the angels of God. And in our conduct we must show that we have fellowship with him by not walking in darkness by walking in the light (I John 1.6, 7), not walking a life of sin for that shows that we

do not know God and but doing what is right. The whole of our conduct also includes our personal life in soul and body, with all our abilities and talents, our life in every relationship in the world, in the home, in society, in the state and church. It also includes living the antithesis. We cannot serve two masters: God and mammon. We hate darkness but we love the light.

Good works is necessary in the life of the Christian for the glory of God. This is the purpose of good works. In fact, this is the only purpose. This is expressed in this Lord's day, which teaches us that the purpose of good works is, "that we testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, and that he may be praised by us". God's glory is the purpose of all things, and according to Scripture all the works of his hands must praise him. Praising God is the highest sense of the work of salvation. It is true that the catechism mentions to two more ends of the good works of the Christian: that "everyone may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof" and secondly, "that by our godly conversation, others may be gained by Christ". It would be more accurate to view them as the fruits of good works than the purpose of good works. Psalm 116 has the same keynote of the Catechism, which speaks of misery, redemption and gratitude. In the first part, David declares that the sorrow of death compassed him, and the pains of hell got hold upon him. He found trouble and sorrow but he called upon the name of the Lord and he was redeemed. And thus, he found the Lord gracious; righteous and merciful for God delivered his soul from death, his eyes from tears and his feet from falling. And now in gratitude, he seeks to glorify and praise the Lord for his salvation. And Psalm 113. 1-3, "Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name *is* to be praised". And from Matthew 5.16, 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven". The light of the Christian is not original in him: it is reflected light. The original is in God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The light of God in believers must shine forth in good works which they do through the grace of God. The purpose is that their father who is in heaven may be glorified when men behold their good works. And In II Cor. 4.15, "for all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God".

We praise God for all the works of his hands. First, in all the works of his hands God reveals he is God and that there is no god besides him. He is good and he is light and there is no darkness in him. But after sin entered into the world, and death came by sin and the curse and the wrath of God spread its horrible wings over which the works which God had made. And that same darkness corrupted the minds of man and filled his heart. But God began a new work – the work of salvation and redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Secondly in the accomplishment of his work, he reveals his glorious praise in a far higher degree than ever was revealed in the world of creation. In redemption,

he became known as the God who raises His Son from the dead. In Christ he reveals his everlasting covenantal love. And in the cross, he reveals in it the power of his love, his sovereign grace to his own, and his abundant mercy by which he draws him out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And finally, good works are necessary for the two-fold profit of God's people. Firstly, the assurance that we are in the faith. To do good works as the fruit of faith is inevitable. For it is impossible that those who are implanted in Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness (Q64). And so it is impossible that one who lives a life of sin can have the assurance that he is a believer for no unchaste persons, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunk, slanderer, robber of any such like, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. And this truth is taught in Matthew 7.16-20 and James 2.14-17. But, we must not misunderstand this truth by changing this into a statement that good works assure faith. True and saving faith does not need any props or external support. Faith stands alone for faith itself assures faith (QA21). Faith is firm assurance of all that God has revealed to us in his word. Faith is therefore assurance. Faith is also assured confidence that we have the forgiveness of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation. Faith itself is assurance that we are in the faith. Neither must we say that good works are the ground of our assurance of faith. The ground of our assurance is always God's gracious and unchangeable election in Christ. It is only in Christ that we can possibly lay hold upon the assurance and comfort of eternal election. Christ as he is revealed in the gospel is the ground of all the assurance of our faith. It is in the cross that we behold the everlasting love of God. And it is in his cross and through his resurrection that we are assured that the perfect righteousness, of the forgiveness of all our sins and our everlasting adoption unto children of God. And if any believer would attempt to view his good works as the ground of his assurance, he would fall in the pool of doubt and despondency for our sins are every with us and if we look upon our good works to find assurance of faith, we are bound to sink into great discouragement. The spirit of God works this assurance of God's unchangeable election in the heart. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith and so the author of assurance. He works faith in our hearts and strengthens faith by the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. By the spirit, we are sealed unto the day of redemption. He testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God and without the Spirit, we cannot have this blessed assurance. And so it is by the gospel that the Holy Spirit works assurance in our hearts not walking in the way of sin but by walking in the way of truth (Rm. 8.12-16)

The second fruit that by our good works we lead others to Christ. No man can gain others to Christ God surely can use our godly conduct as a means to bring the unconverted to Christ. And the result is that the ungodly will glorify our heavenly father in true faith and thankfulness. It also means that they glorify the work of grace which our heavenly father performs in them that are chosen in Christ, for without him, they cannot be brought to the faith. They hate the light

and the works of the light manifested by the believers in Christ. They persecute the believers because they love darkness rather than light.

And lastly, those who are gained to Christ are the elect. And this can never take place without the preaching. Romans 10.13 to 15 teach us “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

May God use us as his instruments to lead others to Christ. God’s people are zealous to do good works for they are thankful to God for what he has done for them to the praise and glory of God. Amen