

Lord's Day 33  
Sermon notes by Pastor Paul Goh  
**30 May 2010**

Beloved, last Lord's Day, we learnt the consequence of our deliverance from sin and our faith in Jesus Christ is that we do good works. We do good works not to the merit with God or to earn our salvation, but instead, good works are always done out of a lively gratitude to God for saving us in this great salvation. And we also learnt that the one and only purpose for doing good works is the glory of God.

And today, let us go on to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the elect. God's sovereign work of his free grace is glorified in the continuing conversion of his people, which causes his people to hate, mourn and forsake his sons and at the same time to love, delight and to do all the will of God in all good works. Today we consider the following: what is the true nature of conversion? What is its relationship to regeneration? What are the two aspects of conversion? And what is the relationship of good works to the work of conversion?

The theme is true conversion. First, we consider the nature. Secondly, the parts, and finally, the fruits.

What is the nature of the true conversion? The purpose of God in the gospel is to deliver his people from the power as well as the guilt of their sins. And so there is a radical change in the heart of the believer from a sinful to a holy life. This transformation will be completed in the fullness of the redemption, that is, when the believer is taken up to be with Christ, his head and messiah. On earth, it will be a gradual and progressive transformation. This is called conversion. The conversion of a sinner from sin to holiness comes from the sovereign and divine power which is exerted on the soul of the elect. This is achieved by changing its principles and motives of conduct, though the work of grace in our hearts, minds and will freely and not out of compulsion. Conversion, therefore, is indeed accomplished by the grace of God working in the hearts of the elect.

But this work cannot begin without the first work of regeneration. Regeneration is to be born again of the power of the Holy Spirit by the seed of the Word of God (I Peter 1.23). It is an imparting of the new spiritual life to the soul and the fruit of it is holy deeds. In the first place, regeneration is the very first fruit of the union of the elect with Christ. When a branch of the fruit tree is grafted upon the trunk of another tree, the every result is the organic union of the nature and life of the tree. And if the grafting is successful, the in-grafted branch receives the beginning of a new life. The same is true of a elect sinner who is principally united with Christ. He is a branch of the wild tree of the guilt of and corrupt human nature. He has a sinful nature that brings forth evil fruit. And when the dead sinner is united with Christ and in-grafted into Christ, he has new nature and the life of Christ is imparted to him. Thus, he is renewed in his heart and he is become a new creation, old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new, II Cor. 5.17. And from this new spiritual

nature, there is the thankfulness to God for having delivered him from the power of darkness and translated him into the kingdom of his dear son. And the fruit of this thankfulness is the two-fold work of conversion in the soul of the elect – the mortification of the old man and the quickening of the new man.

Mortification, literally is the slaying or putting to death. Rom. 7.13, “if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Col. 3.5, mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth”. The word, old man is taken from Eph. 4.22 and it refers to the sinful nature which we are born with. And according to I Cor. 2.14, the old man is also called the natural man which does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.

Therefore, the mortification of the old man according to the catechism is, it is a sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins, and more and more to hate and flee from them. It must be noted that the believer who has this sorrow. He is sorrowful because of his offences against God. He mourns for all his past and presents sins, not because he dreads the punishment he deserves and cannot escape from, but because he has done such grievous wrong against the holy God, who is so kind and merciful to his soul in Jesus Christ. Therefore, he trusts in the mercy of God through the righteousness of Christ, the ground of his atonement. Therefore with true faith he looks upon Christ as his Saviour. By faith, he knows the holy spirit giving him grace to repent and pressing home upon his heart and conscience the Word of God and enlightening his minds. The Spirit turning his affections and graciously working effectually in his will and now dwelling in him, moving and strengthening him unto those good works. This sorrow is the sign of true conversions, the sorrow of sins which a sign from firm faith in the mercy of God and proceeds from the fear of God.

Quickening, literally is reviving or making alive and hence it means to strengthening or increasing life. This new man according to Eph. 4.23 is the work of the holy spirit in regenerating the elect sinner. And according to the catechism, the quickening of the new man is “a sincere joy of heart in God through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works”. Faith, hope and charity and the greatest is love. The new man can be quickened, nurtured, perfected only by love. It is the love of Christ who awakens love in our hearts. We love him because he first loved us. The love of God constraineth us to live not unto ourselves but unto him who died for us and rose again. It is the love of God in Christ which transforms the believer into a willing and obedient creature of God’s will. And his life – giving miracle, the prophet stretched himself on the body of the child. So does Christ by the holy spirit, in regenerating love, closely embrace the elect, warming it with his sown divine warmth, breathing into it his own divine breath, until it returns the glow, the breath, and rises with him a new creature. The first effect of this love of God, through faith is joy. Joy that that we possess Christ as our own. Joy is the great love he has shown us and in the delightful joy we bear towards him. Joy in the beauty we bear towards him. Joy in our deliverance from the displeasure of him whose love is our greatest happiness. Joy in the assured hope of a perfect eternal state of heaven and joy that he will accept

our gratitude to him. But Christian joy, must be more than a lively passion. It inspires the soul with a divine energy, and gives vigorous strength for the joy of the Lord is your strength. And is why the catechism says, "with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works". And so the believer, with joy in his heart asked, what can I do to please him. It is now his delight and rejoices to obey God's will. The commands are not grievous to him for they are the perfect law of liberty. The love of God fills his soul giving him joy to do every good work. And in this way, he becomes more and more like Christ, with whom the Father is well pleased.

Therefore, to mortify the old and put on the new man means practically and concretely, in the sins that defiles us from within us is not angry that cause upon to sin and that do not carry over your anger in the next day; do not steal but work in order to give those who are in need. And concerning the sins of the tongue, put away lying but speaking truth with our neighbour. See to it that we speak no corrupt speech but words that are edifying. And all the bitterness, wrath anger and evil speaking by put away and instead there is tender – hearted in forgiving our brothers, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. By these deeds, the quickening of the new man is the sinner joy of hear in God through Christ, that we love and delight to live according to the will of God in good works. And good works is the fruit of true spiritual conversion.

What are good works? Good works are only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to his glory; and not such as are founded on our own imaginations, or the institutions of man. It is the calling of believers to live from the principle of regeneration in the midst of the world, antithetically and to walk in all good works. Mathew 5.14-16; Eph. 2.10, which emphasizes the truth that our good works are the fruit of grace of God, and that they are ordained by God from all eternity, that we should walking those works. And we are God's workmanship. He has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus by the wondrous power of his grace. This wonder of grace he performed in us that we should do good works. Good works are always those that are in agreement with the will of God, as revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. God alone is good and thus his will is good. He alone has the prerogative and is able to determine what is good. Firstly, good works are characterised by unconditional and unquestioning obedience to the will of God. When God speaks, we are silent. When he command, we obey without murmuring, without objection and without reservations. We never assume that authority to determine for ourselves what shall be called good. This implies the utility principle (which is profitable or useful) may not count possibly to determine for ourselves what shall be called good. Secondly, what is considered good works? Suppose a man rescues a child from a burning house, endangering his own life as a result, and act which is certainly praiseworthy before men – is such an act necessarily a good work in God's sight? Or a church member drops a \$50 in the offering bag for the cause of charity or mission – is that outward act sufficient to determine what is good before God? The answer is NO. Firstly, the law of God is the law of love and secondly, the outward appearance of a deed is but a small part of the entire act as it is witnessed by God. Behind those outward acts is the mind of the

giver that planned it, the desire to that act, the will that finally determined that act. This means that his whole inner man was in action before he dropped the money in the bag. Besides, the law of God is the law of love. The law of God is this, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength – it is a law of love. This implies that in all of our works we are motivated by the love of God.

The purpose of good works is his glory and this purpose must be ours if our good works are to be good in his sight. Hence, good works are motivated by the will and the desire to reach that purpose. Therefore, in order to determine whether a certain action is good works, we must not only ask what I did but why I did it. Suppose that you are an diligent student and a question arises, why are hardworking student And if your answer is that you love the Lord God with all your heart and you desire to serve and to promote the glory of God, then your hard work is a good work. Or suppose you come to another conclusion, that the reason why you are diligent is because you want to have a good grade and to please your mother and eventually to have a good career. Then what you do is not a good work at all. Your reward is gone and you are seeking yourself, worldly gain and you are not seeking God's glory.

There are a few instances in Scripture that illustrates that apparent good works is nevertheless is evil in the sight of God. The Pharisees were indeed very religious. Painstakingly he observed the law. He fasted, prayed and gave alms and observed the Sabbath blamelessly. He went to the temple and offered his sacrifices and paid his vows. In the sight of man, he was a perfect example of piety and his good works were numerous, nevertheless the Lord called him a hypocrite (Mat. 6.2, 5, 16). In the old testament, Jehu who outwardly appear to do good works while outwardly motivated by selfish ambition and his purpose was not the glory of God. We read in II Kings 10.29-31. He received a special command from God to exterminate the house of Ahab for their wickedness. And he very zealously and thoroughly obeyed God and did his work well. Yet, although he was zealous in obeying the Lord outwardly, he never departed from the ways of Jeroboam, the caused Israel to sin. Jehu's motive was corrupt for he this for his glory and to realise his ambition to be king. Though he succeeded to be king, he was nevertheless condemned and punished for the very good deed which he performed. This is confirmed by the prophecy of Hosea 1.4, "And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little *while*, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel".

Therefore, when the holy spirit takes hold of a man, he takes hold of his heart, regenerates him, makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, unites him through faith in Christ, dwell in him to sanctify him. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good work which God has ordained that we should walk in them. This is also the reason why the root of all good works is faith in Jesus Christ. By faith we are in Christ Jesus, one plant with him, so that we live out of him. He lives in us and works in us so that we bear fruit of good works. And w have the privilege of walking in good works, that we may give thanks to God forever. Amen.