Good Works and the Christian Life

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I. The Relationship of Good Works to Our Salvation

A. The First Extreme: Legalism

i. Practical Legalism: _____ like good works contribute to salvation.

ii. Theoretical Legalism: Explicitly _____ that good works contribute to salvation.

B. The Second Extreme: Antinomianism

i. Practical Antinomianism: Acting like _____ is irrelevant to believers.

ii. Theoretical Antinomianism: Explicitly saying God's law is irrelevant to believers.

C. The solution to both: The Gospel

i. Titus 2:13 and 3:5: God "saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy," in order "to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

II. The Necessity of Good Works

A. Antecedent vs Consequent Necessity

i. Legalism: there is an _____ necessity to good works (before justification)

ii. The Gospel: there is a _____ necessity to good works (after justification)

B. WCF 16 (See page 2)

III. James 2:24

A. The problem stated.

i. James 2:24, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."

ii. But Rom 3:28, "A person is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

B. How do we make sense of these two verses?

i. Roman catholic church argues that James's "_____" are different from Paul's.

ii. Protestant Melanchthon only distinguished Paul's and James's _____.

C. But the correct way is to distinguish Paul's justification, works, and faith from James's.

i. Paul's faith: real living faith that _____ and rests upon Christ for salvation.

1. James's faith: a professed faith, but insincere and without trust (Jas 2:14).

ii. Paul's works: obedience to the law in order to be justified.

1. James's works: obedience to the law as a _____ person (2:12–13).

iii. Paul's justification: a person's _____ standing before God.

1. James's justification: being *shown* to be righteous, being _____.

D. James says that faith without works is dead—it isn't true faith (2:17, 20, 26).

i. This doesn't contradict Paul at all; James clarifies w/ the example of Abraham.

Westminster Confession of Faith: Ch. 16 On Good Works

16-1. Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention.

16.2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness; strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto; that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end eternal life.

16.3. Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And, that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure; yet are they 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.

16.4. 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.

16.5. 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; 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; 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 judgment.

16.6. Yet notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreproveable 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.

16.7. 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: 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; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God.