

Of Good Works, Part 3 (Job 9:2-3)

Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) Chapter 16, Paragraph 4

Doctrine: Concerning ‘Works of Supererogation’

Overview of Context

- Those whom God has sovereignly chosen, He freely and effectually calls, justifies, **sanctifies**, perseveres and will glorify.
- The salvation of man from the penalty, power and presence of sin is all of God’s **grace** – that is, His free and unmerited favor.
- Justification is through **faith** alone in Christ alone.
- Sanctification is, likewise, dependent upon God’s **grace** – as the Holy Spirit instructs and matures the saints in love and gratitude to God.
- Good works are the Christian’s **obedience** to the Word of God.
- Good works are the **evidence** of salvation, not its cause.

Defining ‘Works of Supererogation’

- The Romish doctrine of ‘Supererogation’ is that one who may appeal for salvation to the ‘saints’, whose ‘works’ were so bountiful that some of their **merit** was unnecessary for their salvation, and so it may be applied to ‘common’ men/women for their salvation.
- The clearest example of this is found in Rome’s practice of indulgences, in which ‘common’ men/women could **purchase** the merit of ‘saints’ either for themselves or for a deceased relation.

The Heresy of Supererogation

- The Confession of Faith rightly responds: ‘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’.
- Our works do not and cannot earn us **favor** with God.

- Supererogation is undeniably heresy:
 - i) Denying the **sufficiency** of Christ’s imputed righteousness,
 - ii) Removing Christ as the only **mediator**,
 - iii) Neglecting the **sinfulness** of sin,
 - iv) Maligning the **holiness** of God,
 - v) Favoring man’s **works** rather than God’s **grace**.
- The effects of such doctrine:
 - i) Leave sinners to remain with **false** assurance in their misery,
 - ii) Enslave others to **fear** and uncertainty,
 - iii) Perpetuate the **tyranny** of wolves among goats.

Warning Against Modern Forms of Supererogation

- Supererogation is **still** the doctrine of Rome.
- This is similar to the false-prosperity-Gospel teachers who claim to dole out God’s **blessings** in exchange for money.
- Supererogation is rooted in the false, Romish ‘sacrament’ of **penance**, which is ubiquitous in culture and must be guarded against, and is summarized in this common sentiment: ‘I did something bad, and therefore I must now go and do something good (with even more fervor) to make up for that bad thing’.
- Rather, we preach and confess **repentance** of sins, not penance for sins.

Applications

- 1) **Humility** in understanding our good works before the Lord (Lk 17:10).
- 2) **Prayer** that God would no longer suffer such blasphemy would be taught (Mt 6:9-10).
- 3) Seek to **proclaim** the true Gospel to all!
- 4) Be on **guard**, for old heresies often don new faces (1 Jn 2:26).