

Of Good Works, Part 5 (Hebrews 11:6)

Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) Chapter 16, Paragraph 7

Doctrine: Concerning The Works of Unbelievers

Regarding the External

- Good works are those which are in obedience to God's Word.
- The works of believers, though graciously accepted and rewarded by God, can neither justify before nor merit favor from God.
- What then of the works of unregenerate men?
- The Law of God is so clear by the light of nature, that even unregenerate men may seemingly and externally obey the patterns of God's law (Rom 2:14).
- Unregenerate men may live in such a way that, in God's common grace, they are temporally a benefit to themselves and to others (2 Kings 10:28-31).
- We may see this and understand this to be so because we know that the Law of God is good, if used lawfully.

Regarding the Internal

- Yet these external works are not true obedience because of internal sinfulness.
- The unregenerate man is unable to truly obey God because their works proceed not from a heart purified by faith, which is necessary to demonstrate true repentance (Heb 11:4).
- Nor does the unregenerate man do such works in a right manner, that is according to the prescription of God's Word (1 Cor 13:1).
 - i.** A 'right' result, carried out in the wrong manner (e.g. 'the end justifies the means,' wrong attitude)
 - ii.** A 'noble' pursuit, carried to a wrong result (e.g. love)

- Nor does the unregenerate man do such works to the right end, that is for the glory of God (Mt 6:2, 5).
 - i.** Blatant and Clear Idolatry (the service of false gods)
 - ii.** The 'love' of neighbour, but the neglect of God
 - iii.** The end of self-service

The Verdict

- Such works, therefore, are sinful and cannot please God (Amos 5:21-25).
- Nor can such works make a man meet (fit) to receive grace from God by his own merit, seeing that our works cannot save and these are not even true obedience to God (Rom 9:16).
- Yet, the neglect of unbelievers of such external obedience is more sinful and displeasing to God.

Applications

- 1)** Be prepared to give a defense of the hope that is in you: Biblical ethics is incomprehensible to the wicked.
- 2)** Evangelism: Such a common question can often turn into a Gospel conversation.
- 3)** Prayer for Conversion of Unbelievers: That God would make the dead alive in Christ, as only He can do, as the Gospel is made known.
- 4)** Prayer for Just Leaders (Pr 14:34, 1 Tim 2:2)
- 5)** Continued, Faithful Obedience to the LORD