

"Of Good Works" part 3 WCF 16.1.2, The Danger in Defining Our Own Good Works

2021.10.03 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

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WCF 16.1 (TPH p928)

I. Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy Word,^(a) and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention.^(b)

^(a) Micah 6:8; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 13:21.

^(b) Matt. 15:9; Isa. 29:13; I Pet. 1:18; Rom. 10:2; John 16:2; I Sam. 15:21, 22, 23.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." ⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ⁷ or, "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

John 16:1 "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. ² They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. ³ And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.

1Samuel 15:13 Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

¹⁴ But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

¹⁵ And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

¹⁶ Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night."

And he said to him, "Speak on."

¹⁷ So Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? ¹⁸ Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'

¹⁹ Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"

²⁰ And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. ²¹ But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

²² So Samuel said:

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He also has rejected you from being king."

²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. ²⁵ Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."

²⁶ But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

So good works are only such as God have commanded and his holy word and not such as without the warrant there of our devised by men out of blind zole or upon any pretense of good intention. Now, scripture would not have

had to teach us that second part and the confessions summarizing, what the scripture teaches would not have had to say the second part, if we did not have a tendency to default to devise for ourselves what could works are.

And if this was not something that we were in danger of doing out of blind zeal, or what we thought was, or even pretended was good. Intentions. So out of all the examples in the Bible that could have been provided for this, the danger of coming up with our own idea of what good works are they've chosen Romans 10 to John 16:2 and 1st Samuel.

15 21 through 23. Now, I don't know if this particular order is intentional but what we have is in Romans 10 that when we come up with our own good works, we are in danger of sending against ourselves. And in John 16, if we come up with our own idea of what good works are, we are in danger of sinning against others.

And in first, Samuel 15 that when we come up with our own idea of what good works are, we are in danger of sending directly against God himself. Now, when you think about intending to do good and being zealous, we would say that those are good things. And so the fact that we are in danger of sinning against ourselves and against others, and even against God, in doing this ought to give us great caution that we not end up doing this though.

The thing about blindness is that it's blind and one of the things that we're blind to when we're defining good works, is that we're actually doing evil. So if you were if you thought you were doing good to your child, for instance, you thought that something you were giving your child was medicine.

You were convinced, you're very diligent to the schedule, make sure they never missed the medicine. And then you discovered that because it was not according to knowledge, it turned out to be poison. You would be horrified, right? Well, that's what we do to ourselves and to others. And even against God, when we define for ourselves, what good works are, that's pretty sobering.

And so we can be thankful to God. That he has defined for us. What good works are and that he rules and overrules everything that we do, he is the one who grants and makes the good things that we do independence upon Christ and from the character of Christ.

But even on top of that, he's the one who has to make it fruitful unto his glory and to our good. So, if I live introduction, Romans 10:1, sending against self John. Romans 10. Sending against John 16, in against others. For same of 15, centing against God, Romans 10:1, the apostle is in the middle of discussing.

What will happen with the Jews? This has because and what is one of many of our favorite chapters? Romans chapter 8, he's just been clinging to the un failing faithfulness of God. How those whom he those whom, he brings to himself, cannot be separated from his love. And then there is that clincher that is in Jesus Christ.

But many of the Jewish people have rejected, Jesus Christ and so that brings up the problem that Romans 9 through 11 are as answering in the book of Romans and we're kind of right in the in the middle of that. But what about the Jews? And the answer is that those who are God's by everlasting election are the ones who come to him through, Jesus Christ and they are the ones from him.

His love cannot be separated. And so there is a Israel who are in Israel of the flesh who are merely physically descended. And then there is the Israel of promise those who are as it were, the spiritual children. And they are not only from the nation of Israel, but from all nations.

So, at the beginning of chapter 10, he's talking about the GSN, He says, brethren my heart's, desire and prayer to God for Israel, is that they may be saved For. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness.

Have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ, is the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone who believes from, Moses rights about the righteousness, which is of the law. The man who does those things shall live by them, but the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above, or who will descend into the abyss that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

But what does it say? The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith, which we preach that, if you confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead. You will be saved for with the heart, one believes, and to righteousness.

And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. The scripture says, whoever believes on him will not be put to shame for the reason no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon him for whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And so righteousness, and salvation is not something that we could accomplish. Cannot you cannot help yourself be righteous before God anymore than you could help God. The sun become a man. Jesus Christ, do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? That is to bring Christ down from above or any of us able to help Jesus become a man.

Of course, not or who will send descend into the abyss that is to bring Christ up from the dead. And any of us able to help Jesus be resurrected, of course not. And so, the only ways that we the only way that we could be made righteous God, becoming a man and living obediently and dying as a sacrifice and in our place and rising again from the dead.

God is the one who had to do that and God is the one even who gives this confession with the mouth and believing with the heart. As Romans 10 would go on to talk about faith, coming by hearing the word of God. So Israel needs to be saved, but they're not saved.

Why is it because they have no zeal? No, the apostle says in verse 2. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness. Have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Now, it's a good thing to have zeal, isn't it? We live in a world and we have seen in our own hearts, that sometimes shows itself in our being sluggish and lazy and not caring at all, is like, children. If you've got mass sheet, I don't know if you, you know, we all have different things that we do but you're you're drilling your math, facts and you're doing your mad minute and you got your hundred, you know, problems on on the page and time are goes off and you just kind of doodle around the edges of the page and don't do any of the problems and then the timer goes off again.

To say you're done, you fail. And a lot of people who fail, that way, he's say, well, he did really badly, and then you see, you do another one, and he's determined that he's going to try hard and he, you know, timer goes off. And he fills out that page just fast as he can.

With every number, he could think of and timer goes off is done and he still did really badly. The second time he was zealous but it was not according to knowledge. Now, that's, you know, I know there are tears shed over method our house and that could be a very emotional experience, but that's nothing compared to what it would be.

Like if while avoiding the laziness of those who do not care about any idea of God, or any idea of righteousness or any idea of spiritual things, if you in this life are zealous, but not according to the Word of God. Not according to the fact that God's righteousness alone can be counted for you and that comes only through faith in what Jesus has done, and not what we do.

And that the righteous living that God produces in those who have trusted in, Jesus is only according to the righteousness that God describes in his word. Then you can have that second mad minute. Math zeal, and come to the judgment and find yourself, without the righteousness of Christ, counted for you.

And that all that, the good that you thought you had done was actually evil. And not according to the Word of God. So yes zeal and good. Intentions are important but they're actually positively harmful if they're not according to the truth of the scripture. That's why we must hold to the biblical fact that good works are not such as without the warrant there of are devised by men out of line seal or upon any pretense of good intention.

You can hear the, the apostles agony. He does not think that the Jews are getting brownie points or any kind of credit with God, for their zeal. He's agonizing that they would be saved from what they are doing in their zeal. Secondly, zeal. That is not according to knowledge, doesn't just put us in danger of sinning against ourselves.

It put us in danger of sending against others and John chapter 16. The Lord Jesus is talking to his disciples and he says these things I have spoken to you that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time is coming.

That whoever kills you will think that he offers God service and these things they will do to you because they have not known the father nor me. Yes. Just I right before using to think same things. Could be said about the those who killed Christ, that they had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge.

So they misusing that some of some of them. Yes. I mean some of them were just hateful right there wasn't good intention. There were religious excuses for getting rid of the one that they hated but you know I think there were right. I think Paul especially himself is a great example of that, as he hunted down the church and Christ told him that he himself was the one that Paul was first.

He hated the name of Jesus and he thought he was serving. God. That was the next step in his ascendancy. As the great religious Jew of the world, the greatest of the Pharisees. Yes. David, I was just going to say two weeks ago, I trafficked with my work a Jewish name and it is amazing to me.

I'll tell us for their faith and how well they know who Christ is, but they did not him an ignorance in surely, you know, used before very knowledgeable about things. And so, they're all electricity all about Christ. I'm thinking about the people who have no idea of Christ, you know, is that they are, but he was very selfless who knew he was one, but yet he was ignorant of his events, right?

Well, one of the dangers is the false deal actually has the help of the flesh, right? Because the flesh is totally wicked in and of itself. And so a zeal that is not independence upon the Lord Jesus. And in devotion

to the Lord, Jesus, you're flesh. Helps you with that one of the difficulties for us who, who trust in Christ and, and have a new nature from him, is that our remaining sin?

That remaining fleshlyness actually fights against true zeal. So, so there are those when establishing their own righteousness, like the Jews are trying to do. They actually in some ways can put believers to shame if you're just measuring the amplitude, right? Just meant to measuring the intensity of the zeal more people that clean Christ, stop Christ, the nature just very thank you.

So in the second place, not only ending up sending against ourselves but sending against others and especially Christ, these things as spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time is coming. That whoever kills, you will think that he offers God's service.

Don't know if y'all have gotten any of these conversations, I've gotten into these conversations talking to someone trying to find a quick route to the the gospel desiring to see them, come to faith in Christ and be saved. And one of the objections is well, you know, religion is caused more war and more death than anything else, which is first of all, a lie in historical fact, selfishness, probably, although statism is catching up, right?

Most, most of the history of men without Christ is is every man for himself murdering and being murdered in the last 150 years ago or 150 years or so. You know there's this collaborative state lie that we can all get together and do another good and that is actually exhibit a for men coming up with his own good works because we're into the hundreds of millions.

Now of those who have been murdered that way, especially looking at what happened in what is now called Russia and was called Russia, last hundred and fifty years. China, another place. So first of all, it's a historical factual lie, but second of all you can say, yeah, that's exactly right apart from faith, in Jesus Christ belonging to him and actually following him according to what he says, religion leads to murder.

Jesus said so in John 16, he said the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God's service, all religion is wicked except the religion of trusting in Christ and according to the scriptures and being conformed to his image. According to the scriptures, there is one true religion and much of what others will say to try to resist talking about the claims of Jesus upon them is actually something that the Bible says about all the religions except for the true religion of the Bible, these things I spoke to you that you should not be made to stumble.

They will put you out of the synagogue's. Yes. The time is coming. That whoever kills, you will think that he offers God's service and these things they will do to you because they have not known the father or me elsewhere. Of course. The Lord says this is eternal life and sure.

I think it's the beginning of the next chapter that we would know the father that we would know the sun. Again, if we don't have God alone in his word alone to find for us, what good works are then we can actually end up murdering those who belong to Jesus Christ and thinking that we are doing them, doing them.

Good. One of the things that, you know, I don't know, the not everything is been decided on for our deacon candidates, but recommended it to them even if it's not used in the training and recommend it to all of you as there's a little book from about 10 years ago, called when helping hurts and it's it's a book on how to handle charity and trying to help those who are in need.

And it's, it's not primarily, it's not necessarily richly theological, but it just shows that there are many things that are well intended that actually end up harming and this is true. Most of all when we start defining, what good works are not by God's word and what he says to do for instance, you know, straight Bible principle, he who will not work.

I'll not eat, right? You've and if you, if you violate that principle, however, well intended and you let your kid come to the dinner table and they had a chore that they were told to do and they didn't do it. Are you helping your child when you know those tears?

You know, your heart and oh well I guess you can go ahead and have dinner and then do it afterward and it never gets done afterward, right? We're reinforcing spiritually, harmful things in our children, they needed to to follow the Lord and what his word says more than they needed that meal.

I mean, unless it's actually been like 40 days since I've eaten and started your kids to death or anything anyway, but the the principal holds true. And here's a most egregious example of it, that there are those who kill and think that they're offering God's service because they have defined.

What is right? Finally first Samuel 15, I'll read the whole thing, we'll just very briefly state. The point then Samuel went to Saul we're starting in verse 13. Then Samuel went to saw and saw, said, Tim blessed. Are you of Yahweh? I have performed the commandment of Yahweh. But Samuel said, what then is this bleeding of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen, which I hear saw was supposed to have completely eliminated the Malkites and, and all that.

They had Saul said they have brought them from the amalkights, for the people spared, the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to Yahweh. You're God and the rest, we have utterly destroyed So you can hear the he's admitting at the end. At the end of verse 15.

He knew what he was supposed to do. Utterly destroy them all but he came up with a good work. God loves sacrifices. He really likes the the smell of roasting accent and sheep. Now, that's not what the sacrifice is. Were about God, loves his son and the sacrifice of his son and the sacrifices that he had specifically commanded that looked forward to Christ.

There's no inherent value in the cutting of a, you know, medium sized, mammal's throat and the burning of the carcass and the spilling out of the blood. There's no inherent value of that at all, but he saw something that God had commanded in one context. And now, he's using, as an excuse for disobeying, a clear command of God, his good intentions, and his religious deal this.

By the way when Calvin preaches. You know, one of his Christmas Day sermons, this is the passage that he refers to for those who didn't usually come to Sermon on that day. But they came because it was December 25. Then Samuel said to Saul,

Then Samuel said to Saul be quiet and I will tell you what you always said to me last night and he said to him, speak on say Samuel said when you were little in your own eyes where you not head over of the tribes of Israel and did not yell way annoying.

You king over Israel. Now, y'all who I sent you want to mission and said, go and utterly destroy the sinners, the amount kites and fight against them, until they are consumed. Why then did you not obey the voice of Yahweh? Why did you swoop down on the spoil and do evil in the sight of Yahweh?

Now saw doubles down on his reasoning. Saul said to Samuel but I had a day deal away and sorry I have a baby all day and going on mission on the mission on which you always sent me and brought back a gag king of Alec, I have utterly destroyed them all kites, but the people took of the plunder sheep and oxen the best, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed too, sacrificed to you all your God in Gilgo.

So Samuel said has your way as great delight in burnt offerings. And sacrifices as in obeying, the voice of Yahweh behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed, then the fat of rams for rebellion is as the sin of which craft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh. He also has rejected you from being king, then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned for I've transgressed the commandment of y'all in your words because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship y'all way.

But Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of your way and you always has rejected you from being king over Israel. Good. Intentions, apart from obedience to God's Word, produce not good works. But what God says is rebellion, that is as the sin of which graphed and stubbornness that is as iniquity and Idolatry.

Yeah, this is a hard truth. We have to admit about ourselves that we cannot define what good works are and that even with our zeal and our good intentions, we may end up doing that, which is most offensive unto God. You know, brother asked about worship. Last week is precisely because worship is so important and our highest calling that zeal apart from knowledge.

Good intentions apart from God's definitions is so harmful and so offensive. And so when we define good works for ourselves. We're in danger, sitting against ourselves. We're in danger of zealously. Sending against others. We're in danger of zealously. Sending against God. Let's pray.

Our father in heaven, we would not be cold, we would be zealous, but we would be zealous. And that which pleases you. And so we pray that we would not be conformed to the world, but that you would renew, renew us and conform us to Christ to buy the renewing of our minds from your word.

We pray for your spirits help. We know that many have handled the scriptures and gotten them wrong. We pray that you would keep us from error. We thank you most of all that Christ. Never got anything wrong that he was always full of zeal unto you and that he did perfectly according to your word.

And that this is what you have counted for us, through faith, in him, with him, as our righteousness. We ask that you would make us be like him, who is perfectly righteous for. We ask it in his name, amen.