

A study of Jesus Christ

After having completed the study regarding the particular aspects of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, it is also necessary to look at our response, or those works that would show proper gratitude for what we have received from Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. Instantly, when we hear the words "show proper gratitude" we should already be at a loss for there is no manner in which we can even imagine what a proper gratitude would be for the immense gift we have received. It is evident, then, that we should look to the Holy Spirit for what a proper gratitude would be, as we shall show.

Before we unravel the essence of good works, it may be helpful to first look at its place in the gospel.

Our deliverance has three major components: Our recognition of our misery, our deliverance, and our gratitude. This not only charts for us the manner in which we were delivered by Christ's sacrifice, but it also shows us the manner in which we should approach our repentance for our sins, which is to first recognize that we have sinned (or, gain a knowledge of our sinful state and actions, which is done through a knowledge of the law), then accept the merits of Christ for our sins, and finally, demonstrate our forgiveness and change of heart by the works we perform; the last being a consequence and not a cause.

We may conclude that true repentance occurred if the works of gratitude is joyfully shown, plentiful and visible, and this God requires,

- a) Because of the glory of God inasmuch as the chief end of our redemption is thankfulness which means we fully believe, accept and praise God for the merits of Christ.
- b) Because of our consolation, which consists in our deliverance from eternal death by the free grace of God. Only those who obtained this deliverance desire to show their gratitude to God. Half-hearted or a cool heart towards gratitude and good works either shows a lack of knowledge of the gifts received or the depth of misery from which deliverance has been gifted.
- c) Because we can, clothed with the merits of Christ, render unto God such worship as is lawful and acceptable. God disapproves of all worship which grounds itself in self-will and pride. We must,

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therefore, show from the word of God what is the nature of true thankfulness, which is that worship that is due to God.

- d) Because we can now know that all our good works are expressions of thankfulness as guided and given by the Holy Spirit, and that they have no merit in the sight of God.

What, then is thankfulness or gratitude?

It is, in general, a virtue acknowledging and professing the benefits and gifts that we received from someone else. It is also the expression of the greatness of the benefits and gifts themselves with a desire to perform towards our benefactor such duties as are becoming and possible. We can divide our gratitude into two categories, namely, Truth and Justice.

Truth, because it acknowledges and makes mention of the benefits received. The doctrine of prayer flows from this category.

Justice, because it desires to return thanks equal to that which has been received, which is nothing other than a true worship of him, consisting of obedience and good works.

It is clear from this definition that there is no reciprocity possible or even attempted, since we cannot repay Christ for his sacrifices and imputing righteousness onto us. When we desire to return thanks "equal to that which has been received" we give our lives to Christ since our whole lives are the extent of what we have received from Christ, plucked from the horrors of eternal death.

The root of both these elements of gratitude is the conversion of man to God: for the works of nobody, but those who are regenerated are good and pleasing to God.

True Christian thankfulness, therefore, which is what we teach here, is an acknowledgement and profession of our gracious deliverance, through Christ, from sin and death. It is a sincere desire to avoid sin and everything that might offend God, and to conform our lives according to his will. It is to desire, expect and receive all good things from God alone, and none other, by a true faith, and to render thanks for the benefits received.

We dealt with our conversion and righteousness previously in this study, which precedes our works of gratitude and only a proper understanding

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and belief of our deliverance and righteousness will flow into an understanding and practice of proper gratitude.

Since our ability to comprehend our sinful nature is through a knowledge of the law of God, and our deliverance is through faith in Christ (the gospel), it flows that we should have an accurate understanding of the law and the doctrine of prayer, which are subjects we would deal with in future studies.

Question: But if we have been delivered from our misery by God's grace alone through Christ alone and not because we have earned it, why must we still do good?

We do good because Christ by his Spirit is also renewing us to be like himself, so that in all our living we may show that we are thankful to God for all He has done for us, and so that He may be praised through us.

Rom 6:12, 13 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Rom 12:1, 2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

1Pe 2:5 - 10 you ... as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." ⁷This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," ⁸and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. ⁹But you are A CHOSEN

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RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

1Co 6:17 - 20 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. ¹⁸Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

We do good so that we may be assured of our faith by the fruits we bear. If we are lacking good works or feel we are not all that obligated to perform good works, we should repent and seek to understand what it is from which we were delivered and the price that was paid by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to effect that deliverance. Coming to that understanding would convict us of the seriousness of not bearing the fruit of gratitude.

There are two consequences in the execution of good works, namely, inward and outward.

Inward:

Mat 7:17 - 20 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰So then, you will know them by their fruits.

Gal 5:22, 23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

2Pe 1:5 - 11 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither

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useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Outward:

The outward consequence of good works is that others may see our virtues expressed in the merits of Christ so that they may be convicted of their sinful lifestyles and be won over for Christ. The Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of the elect still caught up among our onlookers to desire to be among us when they see us properly and lawfully displaying our gratitude to Christ for His merits.

Mat 5:13 - 16 You are the salt of the earth ... ¹⁴You are the light of the world ... ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

1Peter 2:12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1Peter 3:1, 2 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word, by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

We cannot separate our redemption from good works because the causes of good works are our redemption and the habitation of God within us by the Holy Spirit. Removal of our redemption would remove good works and removal of good works would indicate that no redemption occurred. (Rom 6 and 8)

Good works make us conformable to God and are therefore, a necessary process in our sanctification. Our hearts are purified by faith because in all those to whom the merits of Christ are applied by faith there is kindled the love of God and a desire to do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

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Conversion, then, also means to be converted to God from our evil works since evil works are the fruits of the flesh, manifestations of ingratitude and evidences of unbelief.

Question: But what are good works?

Only those works that arise out of true faith, conforms to God's law and is done for His glory alone. It is not that which is based on what we think is right or on established human tradition.

It is done out of true faith:

Joh 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

It conforms to God's law:

Lev 18:4 You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God.

1Sa 15:22 Samuel said, Has the LORD as much 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.

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

It is done for His glory alone:

1Co 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Col 3:17, 23, 24 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. ²³Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

1Peter 4:11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be

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glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

It is not on human tradition:

Deu 12:32 Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

ISA 29:13 The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.

Eze 20:18 I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers or keep their ordinances or defile yourselves with their idols.'

Mat 15:7 - 9 You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ⁸'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁹BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'

Next week we shall look in more detail at the following:

- I. What are good works?
- II. How may they be performed?
- III. Are the works of the saints pure and perfectly good?
- IV. How can our works please God since they are only imperfectly good?
- V. Why must we perform good works?
- VI. Do our good works merit anything in the sight of God?