

The Law and the Gospel

John Colquhoun (1815)

Chapter 12-Part 2 (Lesson 19)

The Nature, Necessity, and Desert of Good Works

Good works are necessary in the life of the believer. However, before we understand and examine the necessity of good works, we must first remind ourselves of what good works are _____ necessary for.

1. Our good works do not move God so as to _____ Him to show us mercy and grace

“They are not needful to recommend us so to the favor of God so as to excite His compassion and goodwill to us or to produce the smallest change in His intentions concerning us. The change to be promoted by the continual practice of good works will be only in ourselves; it cannot be in God.”

“We must, then, never depend on our own good works but always on the spotless righteousness of Christ and on the gracious promises of God for all the effects of His mercy and favor.”

2. Our good works do not give us a _____ to believe in Christ

“They cannot obtain for us a right to believe in the Lord Jesus, nor is it requisite that they should.”

“How can good works be necessary to afford us a right to trust in the Savior when we must begin to trust in Him before we can perform the smallest good work?”

3. Our good works do not _____ us to then have a personal interest in Christ

“A personal interest in Christ must either be received as a gift of sovereign grace, by faith only, or not received at all. Many convinced sinners err greatly in this matter. They hope that their reformations, their frames, and their performances will so recommend them to God as to procure for them a saving interest in the person and work of Christ. Thus, they themselves try to begin the work of their salvation and then to trust that the Savior will help it forward.”

Quoting some of the works of Arminian theologians of the day John Owen wrote, “‘Sometimes,’ they say in their synodical writings, ‘God calleth this or that nation, people, city, or person, to the communion of evangelical grace, whom He Himself pronounceth worthy of it, in comparison with others.’...Strange doctrine, that men should fear God, know Him, serve Him in sincerity, before they ever heard of the gospel, and by these means deserve that it should be preached unto them.”

“All the faculties of our souls, by reason of that spiritual death under which we are detained by the corruption of nature, are altogether useless, in respect of any power for doing that which is truly good.”

4. Our good works do not provide the right for _____ in sanctification

“They are necessary as means and also as evidences but not as procuring causes of progressive holiness. It is not the good fruit that make the tree good, but, on the contrary, it is the good tree that produces the good fruit. It is not the good works of believers but the infinitely perfect righteousness of the second Adam that entitles them to increasing holiness both of heart and life.”

“Therefore, while they ought to be diligent and zealous in performing all good works, they must not presume to place the least dependence on their performances of them for a title to continued supplies either of sanctifying or comforting grace. Instead of trusting to their own endeavors for a continued increase of inherent holiness, their duty is to rely on the righteousness of Jesus Christ for their whole title to it.”

“It is by faith in the Lord Jesus as their ‘righteousness and strength’ that they are sanctified as well as justified....Though good works are indispensably necessary in them who are sanctified, yet they are so far from being requisite to procure for the saints a title to progressive sanctification that these could not perform so much as one of them till after they began to be sanctified.”

5. Our good works do not obtain for us a right to _____ life

“It is not their own good deeds but His righteousness that is meritorious of eternal life for them.”

“If their good works afforded them a right claim to eternal life, it would inevitably follow that they could not have a right to it till after they had performed them all. But the infinitely perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ gives them in their justification a complete right to life eternal, and that before they begin to do one good work.”

“For even if you were nothing but good works from the soles of your feet to the top of your head, you would still not be righteous, worship God, or fulfill the first commandment, since God cannot be worshiped unless the glory of truth and of complete goodness is ascribed to him, as truly must be due him.”-Luther

“They (good works) are not causes of obtaining the possession either of the beginning, the progress, or the consummation of salvation. They are indispensably necessary in all adult persons who shall be saved, but not necessary to obtain or acquire salvation. Believers are not saved by their good works but to them, as effects and evidences of their salvation already begun.”

“Men are, indeed, to be judged according to their works but are not to be saved according to them. The rule of judgment will be the law, but the rule of salvation will be the gospel.”