

Works of Faith---Ephesians 2:10

Many questions abound today as to what constitutes the works of a believer. What can a believer do to please God? Are there certain requirements necessary to a life of obedience? Where do I find that which by my obedience pleases God? Just as there are many questions, so are there many answers. Most of the answers given are usually wrong because they are based on obeying the O.T. laws, or the laws and commandments of men (Colossians 2:16-23), or tradition (Mark 7:1-13).

The Catholics go to confession, have penance, pay indulgences, etc., all with the idea they are pleasing God.

The Muslims pray toward Mecca and make the trek there once a year, crawl on their knees, etc., with the same thoughts as the Catholics that they are pleasing their god.

Modern religion or Christendom, whatever denomination, has their church membership, baptisms, Sunday school teachers, bus drivers, ushers, tithing, communion supper, even obeying the Golden rule, etc., all with the idea they are doing that which pleases God. While none of these may be wrong things in themselves, they are not found in the Scriptures as good works of a believer. In fact, **anyone can do them because they require no faith.**

A "work" is a deed or an act or labour. The Scripture speaks of four kinds of works. 1. Evil works. 2. Wicked works. 3. Dead works. 4. Good works.

A. Evil works.

This is the root or source of all that is bad, has an evil influence or effect. These works are said to be of Satan (John 8:41-44; 1 John 3:8,12; 2 John 11). These works are the activity of evil and are done by unregenerate men with their sinful nature. ". . . and the whole world lieth in *wickedness* (the wicked one)" (1 John 5:19). ". . . because his own *works were evil*, . . ." (1 John 3:12).

B. Wicked works.

These works are the fruit of evil works. There is a list in Romans 1:21-32. "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice *wicked works* with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties" (Psalm 141:4). "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by *wicked works*, yet now hath he reconciled" (Colossians 1:21). "And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adultries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these *evil things* come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23).

C. Dead works.

These works are those performed by religious men who do not have a new nature, but are still spiritually dead. They are performed without faith. They are done as a good work, they are done with a generous heart, and all are done with the idea they are gaining favour with God. They are called "rudiments of the world" (Colossians 2:8,20). They are called "elements of the world," and "the weak and beggarly elements" (Galatians 4:3,9).

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from *dead works*, and of faith toward God" (Hebrews 6:1). "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from *dead*

works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

These *dead works* are most generally connected with the works of the O.T. ceremonial system, i.e. holy days, tithing, water baptism, communion supper, etc. They are simply self-righteous acts which are not based upon any Biblical principle and most of them are not mentioned in the Scriptures, i.e. ushers, bus drivers, Sunday school teachers, soloists, quartets, singing in the choir, heading up the missionary society, etc. They require no faith to perform, they are done in the flesh, and they are performed as stated, "**Having a form of godliness**, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5). They look like the real thing, but have no power of God in them.

Paul made this warning when he stressed the difference between *dead works* and the living works of the Spirit of God, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:2,3).

God does not honour works without faith. Somewhere between *dead works* and good works the Gospel is believed. When the new creation takes place it (having a new nature) becomes the starting point for good works to be performed.

D. Good works.

In Paul's writings good works are **always connected with faith**. When the Lord was asked the question, ". . . What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?," He answered by saying, ". . . This is the work of God, that ye believe (faith) on him whom he hath sent" (John 5:28,29).

We read, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). These are the works which are ordained for each member of the Body of Christ to walk in. They are prepared by God, and God has fitted us for them by enlightening our minds to know His will, inclining our wills to His will, purging our affections, and by our exemplary conversation and perseverance in holiness they are manifest before men.

Paul writes, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, . . ." (1 Thessalonians 1:3). In other words, that which is energized by the Spirit in the new creature, and not something which is fleshly, false, or external, ". . . and the work of faith with power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11). "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5).

In his epistle to Titus, Paul states, "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of *good works*, . . ." (Titus 2:7). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of *good works*" (Titus 2:14). "All iniquity" includes wicked and dead works. "Zealous of *good works*" are those works which come by the new creation through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

What are good works or the works of faith?

The Body of Christ is a spiritual Body. The good works which we are foreordained to walk in must be those which Christ our Head directs us to do, and are of faith if they would please Him. Some of them might be considered commandments, but nevertheless are done in faith before God and not men.

1. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, 2 Timothy 2:15.
2. Meditate upon these things, 1 Timothy 4:15.
3. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, Colossians 3:16.
4. Fight the good fight of faith, 1 Timothy 6:12.
5. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, Romans 12:1,2.
6. Put on the whole armour of God, Ephesians 6:11.
7. Pray without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

8. Offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, Hebrews 13:15.
9. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, Philippians 2:12.
10. Be content in whatever state we are in, Philippians 2:14; 4:11.
11. Put off the conversation of the old man, put on the new man conversation, Ephesians 4:22-24.
12. Love one another, 1Thessalonians 3:12; Ephesians 4:32; 5:1.
13. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, Ephesians 4:3.
14. Reckon yourself dead to sin, Romans 6:11; Colossians 3:3.
15. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, Colossians 3:15.
16. whatsoever ye do do it unto the Lord, Colossians 3:17,23.
17. Walk worthy of the Lord and our calling, Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10.
18. Set your affections on things above, Colossians 3:2.
19. Rejoice in the Lord, Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16.
20. Let the mind of Christ be in you, Philippians 2:5.

There are more that can be added to this list, but this is enough to allow us to see the difference, and to see what God is pleased with in our lives. These are the *good works* of faith, which may not be visible to man, but are manifest between us and our Saviour. If these *good works* of faith are practiced faithfully the world will see Christ in us and the fruit which accompanies these works. ". . . that they may see your *good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Moses came down from mount Sinai after receiving the two tables of the testimony and did not know that his face shined (Exodus 34:29). I believe when we are faithful in performing the works of faith that the world will see the fruit of our salvation and God will be glorified.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to *good works*" (Hebrews 10:24).