

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

GOOD WORKS

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Bible Truths Explained

Good Works

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Good Works

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PART 1

Synopsis: Good Works

Good works, righteous acts, or deeds of merit cannot in any respect contribute toward a sinner's justification, nor can they assist in keeping a believer's salvation secure. Salvation is entirely of God's grace, and not by a person's works of righteousness. Regarding seeking justification by one's own efforts, good works can never merit God's favour. Nevertheless, good works can and do find God's favour when they issue from a heart renewed by God's unmerited grace. Good works resulting from a renewed heart are the fruits or evidence of a regenerated and sanctified life. The believer has been saved by grace: but God has saved him unto holiness of life and unto good works. God prepared these works beforehand that the believer should practise them or walk in them. All such good works as issue from love to God, and from justice, mercy and compassion toward one's neighbour, are commanded by God and are commendable in his sight. While adding nothing to the believer's salvation or eternal security, it is works of this nature that contribute toward the believer's reward in heaven.

Note 1: Justification is Not by Works

Very many people believe mistakenly that they can earn God's favour by their 'upright' lives or by their good deeds. They believe further that—by a sincere performance of these good deeds—they can merit God's approval and thus contribute toward their justification and redemption. These people do not submit to the righteousness that comes from God through *faith*. Rather, they seek to establish their own righteousness by *works*. Thus, although often very sincere in their beliefs and practices, these people try to make their salvation depend on the good things that they are able to achieve or perform in their lives. However, no matter how great the sacrifices they make, and no matter how many good deeds they perform, they cannot be justified by works of the law. For by works of the law no one will be justified. (Rom. 9:31-32; 10:2-4; Gal. 2:16,21)

Scripture References (ESV)

Justification is Not by Works

Romans 9:31-33

³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” {*Isaiah 8:14-15*;
28:16}

Romans 10:2-4

² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Galatians 2:15-16

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 2:21

²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Note 2: No-one is Able to Keep God's Law Perfectly

Frequently, people ask why good works cannot contribute toward a person's justification—especially if these good works proceed from a sincere heart. The answer is this: A person cannot be justified by his good works because—in order to be justified by works of the law—one must keep the law of God perfectly in thought, word, deed, attitude and inclination. Furthermore, that person must do so from the very beginning of his life to the very end—*without failing in even one point*. Since no one is capable of keeping God's law perfectly, no one can be justified by his righteous deeds or works of righteousness. In addition, since the law of God already *condemns* everyone as sinners, the same law cannot also *justify* them as righteous. (Matt. 5:20; Gal. 3:10-12; Jas. 2:10)

Scripture References (ESV)***No-one is Able to Keep God's Law Perfectly***

Matthew 5:20

²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Galatians 3:10-12

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." {*Deut. 27:26; Jer. 11:3*}

¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." {*Hab. 2:4*}

¹² But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." {*Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29*} (See Gal. 3:13-14)

James 2:10

¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (See vv.8-13; cf. Matt. 5:19)

Note 3: When Good Works are Unacceptable

There is, however, another reason why good works cannot contribute toward a person's justification. When performed by an unregenerate person (i.e. a person who has never experienced the new birth) good works—or works of righteousness—are '*works of the flesh*'; ¹ i.e. they proceed from a nature that is utterly depraved or wholly corrupted by sin. No matter how sincere a person's motives may be, their 'good deeds' issue from a heart that is at enmity with God by 'wicked works'. Essentially, this means that their works come from a heart and life that is still being controlled by the attitudes and practices of that person's unregenerate, fallen and sinful nature. God will not accept a person's good works while they remain at enmity with him and devoid of the Spirit of grace and of holiness. Regarding salvation, therefore, a person's good works or righteous acts are to no avail. Justification must come by God's sovereign grace—apart from deeds of the law. (Rom. 8:5-8; Eph. 2:3; Col. 1:21)

Scripture References (ESV)

When Good Works are Unacceptable

Romans 8:5-8

⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (See vv.1-13)

Ephesians 2:3

³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (See vv.1-9)

¹ *flesh*: Greek, σὰρξ **sarx**. The Greek word for flesh (**sarx**) can mean '*flesh*', '*body*', '*human being*' or '*sinful nature*'. In the present context, the last meaning is intended—i.e. a person's sinful nature. In the Bible, God views every person's fallen, sinful nature as vile, evil, corrupt and morally unclean. This is why an unregenerate person can never achieve acceptance by God through good works or meritorious acts. Their unforgiven sinful nature contaminates every part of their 'good works' or 'righteous acts' and makes those works totally unacceptable to the most holy and righteous God. Thus, if a sinner is to be saved and reconciled to God, God must take the initiative and forgive and justify that person by his grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Works plays no part in being justified or declared righteous in God's sight. This is purely the gift of God. However, good works are the necessary fruit that must be produced in the life of every person whom God has justified by his grace and is now sanctifying by his Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:21-22

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,
²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to
present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, (See v.23)

Note 4: God Requires Good Works

While good works can neither save a sinner, nor keep a redeemed child of God secure in his salvation, God nevertheless requires a person to practise them. In the case of an unregenerate person (an unbeliever) it is more blameworthy if he should neglect to do good, than if he should perform good deeds. At the Last Judgment, the degree of his punishment will be according to his deeds. In the case of a believer, God's Holy Spirit has recreated him unto newness of life. Although saved and kept solely and wholly by the grace of God, the believer must prove or demonstrate the reality of his regeneration and justification by works that are well pleasing to God, and which God has prepared for him from eternity. These good works are the expression of a true and living faith, and the fruit of a sanctified life. (Matt. 25:41-46; Luke 12:47-48; Eph. 2:10)

Scripture References (ESV)

God Requires Good Works

Matthew 25:41-46

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'" (See vv.31-40)

Luke 12:47-48

⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. (See vv.35-46)

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Note 5: Good Works that Honour and Glorify God

The kinds of good works that are pleasing to God are those that honour his name by fulfilling the teaching of his Word—the Bible. Works or spiritual fruit such as justice, mercy, equity, love, and compassion—together with all the kind deeds or righteous acts that arise from these attributes of mind—are properly known as good works. A believer should perform such works to the glory of God. Again, these works should be actively and practically of value to other people. This concern for the honour of God’s name, and for the welfare of our neighbour, becomes evident by the cheerful and willing performance of good works or acts of mercy. This is the outcome of a truly renewed and sanctified life, and the expression of heartfelt praise, gratitude and adoration to God for the great salvation that he has so freely and graciously bestowed upon us. (Micah 6:8; Luke 10:29-37; Jas. 2:14-17,26)

Scripture References (ESV)***Good Works that Honour and Glorify God***

Micah 6:8

⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
(See vv.6-7)

Luke 10:29-37

²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.” (See vv.25-28)

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in

peace, be warmed and filled”, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (See vv.18-25)

James 2:26

²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Related Bible Truths

Closely related to the doctrine of good works are the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and the last or final judgment. Only those good works that proceed from a life justified by God’s grace, and that are the fruit of a sanctified life, are approved of, and accepted by God. At the Final Judgment, every believer will give an account to God of the things done while in this body. Then, the Lord will judge each believer according to his deeds. Either he will receive his reward (in proportion to his works), or he will forfeit his reward. He will not, however, forfeit his salvation.²

Summary below

² See further on Bible Truths Explained: *Justification; Sanctification; The Second Coming*.

Part 1 Summary

BTE13 Summary — Good Works (ESV Edition)

Part 1: The Nature and Necessity of Good Works

■ Definition

Good Works are the righteous actions, deeds of mercy, and expressions of love that flow from a heart renewed by God's grace. They contribute nothing to a sinner's justification and add nothing to the believer's eternal security, for salvation is entirely of God's grace and never by works of righteousness. Yet God commands good works, delights in them when they arise from a regenerate life, and has prepared them beforehand for His people to walk in. These works serve as the evidence of true faith, the fruit of sanctification, and the basis for the believer's reward in the age to come.

■ Key Truths

1. **Good works cannot justify** — salvation is never earned by human effort or merit.
2. **Seeking justification by works rejects God's righteousness** — self-righteousness stumbles over Christ, the "stone of stumbling" (Rom. 9:31–33).
3. **No one can keep God's law perfectly** — perfect obedience from birth to death is required for justification by works (Jas. 2:10).
4. **The unregenerate cannot produce works pleasing to God** — their deeds arise from the flesh and a heart hostile to God (Rom. 8:7–8).
5. **Good works are required by God** — believers are created in Christ Jesus *for* good works (Eph. 2:10).
6. **Neglecting good works increases guilt** — unbelievers will be judged according to their deeds (Matt. 25:41–46).
7. **Good works express living faith** — faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17, 26).
8. **True good works arise from justice, mercy, compassion, and love** — they reflect God's character (Mic. 6:8).
9. **Good works must benefit others** — they are practical, active, and directed toward neighbour (Luke 10:33–37).
10. **Good works glorify God** — they are the believer's grateful response to grace.
11. **Good works are the fruit of sanctification** — they reveal a renewed and transformed life.
12. **Good works contribute to eternal reward** — believers will be judged according to their deeds, though not for salvation.
13. **Works performed in the flesh are unacceptable** — they cannot please God or contribute to justification.
14. **Believers must walk in the works God prepared** — obedience demonstrates the reality of regeneration.
15. **Good works are cheerful acts of worship** — they express gratitude, praise, and devotion to God.
16. **True good works flow from love to God and neighbour** — they are the hallmark of a sanctified life.

■ Biblical Foundations

Justification Is Not by Works

1. **Romans 9:31–33** — Israel pursued righteousness by works and stumbled over Christ.
2. **Romans 10:2–4** — seeking to establish one's own righteousness rejects God's righteousness.
3. **Galatians 2:15–16** — justification is by faith in Christ, not by works of the law.
4. **Galatians 2:21** — if righteousness were through the law, Christ died for no purpose.

No One Can Keep God's Law Perfectly

5. **Matthew 5:20** — righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.
6. **Galatians 3:10–12** — failure in one point brings the curse of the law.
7. **James 2:10** — breaking one command makes a person accountable for all.

When Good Works Are Unacceptable

8. **Romans 8:5–8** — those in the flesh cannot please God.
9. **Ephesians 2:3** — the unregenerate live according to the passions of the flesh.
10. **Colossians 1:21–22** — alienation from God produces “evil deeds.”

God Requires Good Works

11. **Matthew 25:41–46** — neglecting good works brings judgment.
12. **Luke 12:47–48** — responsibility increases with knowledge; deeds determine severity.
13. **Ephesians 2:10** — believers are created for good works prepared beforehand.

Good Works That Honour and Glorify God

14. **Micah 6:8** — God requires justice, kindness, and humility.
15. **Luke 10:29–37** — true neighbour-love is practical compassion.
16. **James 2:14–17, 26** — faith without works is dead.

■ Practical Implications

1. **Reject all confidence in works for salvation** — justification is by grace alone.
2. **Recognise the impossibility of earning God's favour** — perfect obedience is beyond human ability.
3. **Understand that works done in the flesh cannot please God** — regeneration is essential.
4. **Embrace God's call to good works** — they are commanded and prepared by God.
5. **Let good works flow from a renewed heart** — they must arise from love, justice, and mercy.
6. **Serve others practically** — good works must meet real needs.
7. **Express gratitude through obedience** — good works honour God's name.
8. **Live out visible faith** — works demonstrate the reality of regeneration.

9. **Remember that works affect eternal reward** — God will judge every deed.
10. **Walk cheerfully in holiness** — good works are the fruit of sanctification and the believer's worship.

■ **Summary Sentence**

Good works cannot justify or secure salvation, yet God requires them as the fruit of regeneration, the evidence of living faith, the expression of love toward God and neighbour, and the basis for eternal reward; they arise from a renewed heart, glorify God, and manifest the sanctified life prepared by His grace.

PART 2

Doctrine of Good Works: Faith and Works

There is no contradiction between the justification by faith spoken of by Paul and the justification by works spoken of by James. When speaking of justification by faith, Paul is referring to that justification by which God pronounces a repentant and believing sinner righteous in his sight. However, when James speaks of justification, he is speaking of that justification by which a converted person subsequently proves the validity of his faith by his day-to-day conduct or manner of life. The same word (justification) is being used in two distinct senses; or for two different—but related—purposes.³

Different Meanings of the Term ‘Good Works’

We may understand the term *good works* in different senses. In theology, the three most important of these senses are as follows:⁴

The Nature of Good Works

1. Firstly, works may be called good *when, as to the nature of them*, they are what the law of God prescribes and requires.

Such works may be performed by the unregenerate (the unsaved)—although not out of any conscious regard for God’s law. Although lacking the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, no man is so wicked, or so far removed from the general influences of God’s law, that he does not at some time perform good works. The Scriptures tell us that the Gentiles (the unconverted world of mankind) do by nature the things contained in the law; i.e. they perform acts of justice, mercy and charity. They may go to great lengths to help those in need; they may contribute generously to many good and worthwhile causes; they may even give their own lives—if necessary—to protect someone they love from danger. In and of themselves, all these acts are good and commendable. As to their nature, they are what the law of God requires. This kind of good works is termed *civil goodness*, since their sphere is confined to the social relations of men. Social works or acts of humanity, however, cannot commend a person to God, if these works proceed from an unregenerate and unsanctified heart and life. (Matt. 7:9-11; Rom. 2:14-15; 4:2; 5:7; Eph. 2:9)

Scripture References (ESV) *The Nature of Good Works*

Matthew 7:9-11

⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?
¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (See vv.7-8)

³ See further on Bible Truths Explained: *Justification*, under *Justification by Faith and Works*.

⁴ Based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1977 reprint], p.232 (emphasis added).

Romans 2:14-15

¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them. (See vv.11-16)

Romans 4:2

² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (See vv.1-5)

Romans 5:7

⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— (See vv.6-8)

Ephesians 2:9

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (See vv.8,10)

The Design and Motive of Good Works

2. Secondly, works may be called good *when*, as to the nature of them, and *as to the **design** or **motive** of the person performing them*, they are what the law of God requires.

In other words, a work is good when there is nothing either in the person or the act that the law condemns. In this sense, not even the works of the holiest of God's people are good. Since the Fall, no-one is ever—in this life—in such an inward state that he can stand before God and be accepted on the ground of what he is, or what he does. All our righteousnesses—all our best intentions and endeavours—are as a polluted garment (KJV, *filthy rags*) in the sight of the most holy God. (Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:10,20; Phil. 3:4-9)

Scripture References (ESV)	<i>The Design and Motive of Good Works</i>
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Ecclesiastes 7:20

²⁰ Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. (Cf. 1 Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9)

Isaiah 64:6

⁶ We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
(See vv.1-9; cf. Isa. 1:4-6)

Romans 3:10

¹⁰as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;
(See vv.9-18; cf. Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3)

Romans 3:20

²⁰For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight,
since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (See vv.19,21)

Philippians 3:3-6

³For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. (See vv.1-2)

Philippians 3:7-9

⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— (See vv.10-14)

Good Works as the Fruit of Regeneration and Sanctification

3. Thirdly, works may be called good *when they are the fruit of a **regenerated** and **sanctified** life.*

Although no works, even of the true people of God, are absolutely perfect; nevertheless, these inward exercises and outward acts that are the fruit of the Spirit are properly designated ‘good’, and are so called in Scripture. For instance, the Scriptures tell us that Tabitha (or Dorcas) *was always doing good*. Again, God's Word tells us that believers are created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*. They tell us that, through God's Word, the man of God becomes thoroughly

equipped *for every good work*. The Scriptures also tell us that Christ gave himself for us to purify for himself a people that are his very own, *eager to do what is good*. (Acts 9:36; Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:17; Titus 2:14)

Scripture References (ESV)***The Fruit of Regeneration and Sanctification.*****Acts 9:36**

³⁶ Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.⁵ She was full of good works and acts of charity. (See vv.32-43)

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (See vv.8-9)

2 Timothy 3:17

¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (See v.16)

Titus 2:14

¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (See vv.11-15)

Summary below

⁵ Dorcas: [Acts 9:36](#) The Aramaic name *Tabitha* and the Greek name *Dorcas* both mean *gazelle*. (ESV footnote)

Part 2 Summary

BTE13 Summary — Good Works (ESV Edition)

Part 2: Faith, Works, and the True Nature of Good Works

■ Definition

Faith and Works are distinct yet inseparably connected in the believer's life. Paul teaches **justification by faith** — God's act of declaring the repentant sinner righteous apart from works. James teaches **justification by works** — the believer's demonstration of genuine faith through obedience and godly conduct. The same term "justification" is used in two related senses: one referring to God's declaration, the other to the believer's vindication before men. Good Works themselves may be understood in different senses: civil goodness performed by the unregenerate, works that fail due to imperfect motives, and works that are the true fruit of regeneration and sanctification.

■ Key Truths

1. **Paul and James do not contradict one another** — they use "justification" in different but complementary senses.
2. **Paul speaks of God's declaration of righteousness** — justification by faith alone apart from works.
3. **James speaks of the believer's demonstration of faith** — justification by works as evidence of regeneration.
4. **Good works may be "good" in nature** — outwardly conforming to God's law even when performed by unbelievers.
5. **Civil goodness is real** — unbelievers may perform acts of justice, mercy, and charity (Rom. 2:14–15).
6. **Civil goodness cannot commend a person to God** — works arising from an unregenerate heart lack spiritual value.
7. **Good works may fail due to motive** — even the holiest believer's works are imperfect and stained by remaining sin (Isa. 64:6).
8. **No one can stand before God on the basis of personal righteousness** — all fall short of His perfect standard.
9. **True good works are the fruit of regeneration** — produced by the Spirit in the renewed heart.
10. **Scripture commends Spirit-wrought works** — believers are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph. 2:10).
11. **Good works equip the believer for service** — God's Word prepares the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).
12. **Christ redeemed His people to make them zealous for good works** — eager obedience is the mark of His possession (Titus 2:14).
13. **Good works reveal the reality of faith** — they are the outward expression of inward grace.
14. **Good works differ in nature, motive, and spiritual origin** — only Spirit-produced works are acceptable to God.

15. **True good works arise from sanctification** — they reflect the believer's transformed life.
16. **Good works vindicate faith before the world** — they show that the believer's profession is genuine.

Biblical Foundations

Faith and Works in Justification

1. **Romans 4:2** — Abraham could not be justified by works before God.
2. **Ephesians 2:9** — salvation is not a result of works.
3. **James 2** (referenced) — works demonstrate the reality of faith.

The Nature of Good Works (Civil Goodness)

4. **Matthew 7:9–11** — even the unregenerate know how to give good gifts.
5. **Romans 2:14–15** — Gentiles perform acts required by the law by nature.
6. **Romans 5:7** — people may even die for those they love.

The Design and Motive of Good Works

7. **Ecclesiastes 7:20** — no one does good and never sins.
8. **Isaiah 64:6** — all human righteousness is like a polluted garment.
9. **Romans 3:10** — none is righteous, no not one.
10. **Romans 3:20** — works of the law cannot justify.
11. **Philippians 3:3–9** — Paul rejects confidence in his own righteousness.

Good Works as the Fruit of Regeneration and Sanctification

12. **Acts 9:36** — Dorcas was full of good works and charity.
13. **Ephesians 2:10** — believers are created for good works prepared beforehand.
14. **2 Timothy 3:17** — Scripture equips the believer for every good work.
15. **Titus 2:14** — Christ redeemed His people to make them zealous for good works.

Practical Implications

1. **Understand the harmony between Paul and James** — justification is by faith alone, yet true faith is never alone.
2. **Recognise civil goodness for what it is** — commendable socially, but spiritually insufficient.
3. **Reject confidence in outward morality** — good deeds cannot justify or commend a person to God.
4. **Examine motives carefully** — even outwardly good works may be corrupted by inward sin.
5. **Depend wholly on Christ's righteousness** — personal righteousness is never adequate.
6. **Seek the Spirit's work in your life** — only Spirit-produced works are truly good.
7. **Be zealous for good works** — Christ redeemed His people for this very purpose.

8. **Let Scripture shape your conduct** — God's Word equips you for every good work.
9. **Allow your works to vindicate your faith** — obedience demonstrates the reality of regeneration.
10. **Live out the fruit of sanctification** — good works are the visible expression of a transformed life.

■ **Summary Sentence**

Faith alone justifies the sinner before God, yet good works vindicate the believer's faith before the world; civil goodness cannot commend anyone to God, imperfect motives corrupt even the best human deeds, but Spirit-wrought works arising from regeneration and sanctification are truly good, revealing genuine faith, fulfilling God's purpose, and expressing the believer's new life in Christ.

PART 3

Not All Good Works are Acceptable to God

As has been demonstrated on the preceding pages, both a regenerate person and an unregenerate person may perform good works. Clearly, however, good works performed by unregenerate men and women are not acceptable to God. This is because they originate from a heart and life that is not right with God. Although he may perform numerous good and commendable works, the unregenerate person remains alienated from God by those wicked works that proceed from his fallen, sinful nature. Those who are 'in the flesh'—i.e. those who live and act according to their unrenewed and sinful nature—cannot please God. (Rom. 8:6-8; Col. 1:21) We will discuss this subject more fully below.⁶

When Good Works are Acceptable to God

By God's undeserved grace, a sinner is regenerated and justified. Following the sinner's justification, God's Spirit works within that person encouraging him to perform those things that are pleasing in God's sight, and honouring to his holy name. Although far from perfect, the works of the children of God are truly and properly good, because:⁷

1. As to their **nature**, or as to the nature of the thing done, they are works which are commanded by God.
2. As to the **motive**, they are the fruits, not merely of right moral feelings, but of right religious feeling: i.e., of love toward God.
3. As to the **purpose**, they are performed with the intention of complying with God's will; of honouring Christ as our Lord and Master, and of promoting the interests of his kingdom.

Good Works Cannot Merit Salvation

As has been intimated already, a lifetime of good works can never save a person's soul, or commend that person to God. The one who seeks salvation and justification through obedience to the law, must keep the law of God perfectly in every detail. He or she must do this from the very beginning of his or her life, to the very end.

Clearly, this is an impossibility. Since the Fall, mankind lacks all ability to fulfil the law of God to perfection. Furthermore, all mankind has inherited original sin. On this ground alone, all humanity stands condemned. The fulfilment of the law would be to no avail, unless a person could make full atonement for sin (original sin and actual or personal sin). Had this been possible, the substitutionary and atoning death of Christ would have been superfluous.

⁶ See also on Bible Truths Explained: *Sin*, under *Protestant Doctrine of Original Sin*.

⁷ C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1977 reprint], p.237 (emphasis added).

Thus, God's Word says:

Galatians 2:21

²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness⁸ were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Galatians 3:21-22

²¹ Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. ²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (See vv.19-24)

No one, therefore, can achieve his justification by what he is, or by what he does (unless that person is totally without sin, as is the Lord Jesus Christ). Concerning fallen mankind, however, good works, acts of righteousness, professed or genuine and sincere obedience to the moral law, cannot be the means whereby any person is justified and reconciled to God. In his fallen state, mankind is utterly unable to merit God's favour. The only thing he merits—and merits justly—is God's righteous wrath against his sin.⁹

Good Works Have a Valid Place

Good works cannot save a person; nor, while that person remains in his unregenerate state, can good works commend him to God. Yet, for the redeemed of the Lord, good works have a valid and necessary place. They count toward a believer's reward in heaven (and, often, unexpected blessings on earth too). If, then, a person's good works are to receive God's commendation, and if they are to prove acceptable in his sight, they must proceed from a regenerated and sanctified heart. They ought also to come from a pure and humble state of mind. Again, they must accord with God's purposes for our lives.

Saved Unto Good Works

By his grace and mercy, God has saved us, through faith. He has saved us, however, unto good works. We are the new creation of God in Christ Jesus. We are his workmanship. God set his love upon us from before the creation of the world and determined that we should belong to him. Following on from this, the Lord has determined that we should honour him by carrying out those works that he has foreordained for us. Thus, the Scripture says:

⁸ *righteousness*: [Galatians 2:21](#) Or *justification*. (ESV footnote)

⁹ See further on Bible Truths Explained: *Free Will*, under *Free Will and Ability*. See also Bible Truths Explained: *The Fall of Man; Sin*,

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (See vv.8-9)

Titus 2:14

¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Faith that does not result in holiness of life and good works is not saving faith. If we say that we believe, yet do not practise those works that honour God—and to which God has called his people—we are denying the faith that we claim to possess. James illustrates this point by saying:

James 2:14-17

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled”, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (See vv.18-25)

James 2:26

²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Summary below

Part 3 Summary

BTE13 Summary — Good Works (ESV Edition)

Part 3: Acceptable and Unacceptable Good Works

■ Definition

Not all good works are acceptable to God. Both regenerate and unregenerate people may perform outwardly commendable deeds, but works arising from an unrenewed, flesh-dominated heart cannot please God. Only those works that proceed from regeneration, right motives, and sincere obedience to God's revealed will are truly good in His sight. Good works cannot merit salvation, yet they have a valid and necessary place in the believer's life as expressions of faith, fruits of sanctification, and actions prepared by God for His people to walk in.

■ Key Truths

1. **Unregenerate people may perform outwardly good works** — acts of kindness, charity, and moral goodness.
2. **Works done “in the flesh” are unacceptable to God** — they arise from a heart alienated from Him (Rom. 8:7–8).
3. **Unregenerate good works cannot remove guilt** — fallen humanity remains condemned by original and actual sin.
4. **Regenerate believers perform works that are truly good** — because they arise from a renewed heart and the Spirit's influence.
5. **Acceptable good works conform to God's commands** — their nature aligns with His revealed will.
6. **Acceptable good works arise from right motives** — love for God, not mere moral sentiment.
7. **Acceptable good works aim at God's glory** — they seek to honour Christ and advance His kingdom.
8. **Good works cannot merit salvation** — perfect obedience from birth to death is required for justification by works.
9. **Original sin makes perfect obedience impossible** — humanity cannot fulfil the law's demands.
10. **If the law could give life, Christ's death would be unnecessary** — Scripture denies this (Gal. 2:21).
11. **Good works cannot reconcile fallen humanity to God** — only Christ's atoning work can.
12. **Good works have a valid place for believers** — they contribute to heavenly reward.
13. **Good works must proceed from a sanctified heart** — purity and humility matter.
14. **Believers are saved *unto* good works** — God prepared them beforehand (Eph. 2:10).
15. **Christ redeemed His people to make them zealous for good works** — eager obedience marks true faith (Titus 2:14).

16. **Faith without works is dead** — genuine faith always produces practical obedience (Jas. 2:14–17, 26).

■ Biblical Foundations

Unacceptable Good Works

1. **Romans 8:6–8** — those in the flesh cannot please God.
2. **Colossians 1:21** — the unregenerate are alienated and hostile in mind.

Acceptable Good Works

3. **Works commanded by God** — their nature aligns with His law.
4. **Works arising from love for God** — right religious motives.
5. **Works aimed at God's glory** — obedience to Christ and service to His kingdom.

Good Works Cannot Merit Salvation

6. **Galatians 2:21** — if righteousness were through the law, Christ died for no purpose.
7. **Galatians 3:21–22** — the law cannot give life; Scripture imprisons all under sin.

Saved Unto Good Works

8. **Ephesians 2:10** — believers are created for good works prepared beforehand.
9. **Titus 2:14** — Christ purifies a people zealous for good works.
10. **James 2:14–17** — faith without works is dead.
11. **James 2:26** — faith apart from works is dead.

■ Practical Implications

1. **Do not trust in outward morality** — good works cannot save or commend the unregenerate to God.
2. **Recognise the limits of civil goodness** — commendable socially, but spiritually insufficient.
3. **Understand that acceptable good works require regeneration** — only Spirit-wrought works please God.
4. **Examine motives carefully** — true good works arise from love for God and obedience to His will.
5. **Perform works that honour Christ** — aim at His glory and the advancement of His kingdom.
6. **Reject any notion of earning salvation** — perfect obedience is impossible for fallen humanity.
7. **Rest in Christ's atonement** — only His righteousness reconciles sinners to God.
8. **Embrace the purpose of salvation** — believers are saved *unto* good works.
9. **Be zealous for good works** — Christ redeemed His people for this very purpose.

10. **Let your works demonstrate your faith** — practical obedience vindicates your profession.
11. **Seek purity and humility in service** — acceptable works arise from a sanctified heart.
12. **Remember that good works affect eternal reward** — God will commend Spirit-produced obedience.

■ Summary Sentence

Good works performed by the unregenerate cannot please God, but Spirit-wrought works arising from regeneration, right motives, and sincere obedience are truly acceptable; though good works can never merit salvation, believers are saved unto them, equipped by God's grace to walk in the works He prepared, and their obedience both vindicates genuine faith and contributes to eternal reward.

PART 4

Example of Christ

The Son of God came into the world with the express purpose of seeking and saving that which was lost. To this end, he died on the cross for the sins of his people. Even so, while his paramount concern was for the glory of God in redeeming the lost, the Lord Jesus never neglected to minister to a person's physical and material needs. During his public ministry, the Lord sought at every opportunity to do good to those around him. Concerning these things, the apostle Peter says:

Acts 10:38

³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. (See vv.34-43)

Those who were sick, he healed. Those who were possessed by evil spirits, he delivered. Those who were dead, he raised. To those who were blind, he restored sight. To those who were deaf and dumb, he restored hearing and speech. Thus, it is written:

Matthew 4:23-24

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. (See v.25)

Our Lord's whole life was an example of good works. He performed works that were right and acceptable in the sight of God. He did them—not for the praise and acclamation of men—but to honour and glorify God's majestic and holy name. So, too, the believer's life must be exemplified by good works. We must follow Christ's example. Thus, to his disciples, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Works Must be Pleasing to God

A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit; nor can it fail to bear fruit. If a fruit-bearing tree fails to bring forth good fruit at the proper time, it is barren. Barren trees, however, are cut down and cast into the fire.

So it is among those who profess faith in Christ. The tree is known by its fruit. Barren lives—lives still lived according to the dictates of the old sinful nature—are lives that deny any evidence of Christ's

redeeming work. They deny, too, the necessary evidence of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power in that person's life. These barren lives indicate, by their lack of good fruit, that they are devoid of the Spirit and life of God. Their end is to be cast into the fire—regardless of any outward 'profession' of faith in Christ. It is to such as these that the Lord Jesus spoke when he uttered this warning:

Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thorn bushes? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Concerning false teachers, and other false professors of the faith, the Lord will announce these solemn words:

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Again, the Lord will declare:

Matthew 25:41

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (See vv.31-46)

These people had works all right—works of iniquity. While professing to act in the name of Christ, they were workers of 'lawlessness' or 'evil-doers'. (Matt. 7:23 NIV) But of good works, or works pleasing to God, they had none. These people had works pleasing to men, and men commended them for their charitable acts. Their hearts, however, were not right with God. Therefore, all their acts of charity, benevolence, kindness and mercy will not avail them at the judgment seat of Christ. God judges a person according to his works. However, for a person's good works to prove acceptable and pleasing to God, they must arise from a regenerated life and a sanctified heart.

It is a serious and solemn matter to profess faith in Christ, yet not belong to Christ. A person belongs to Christ only through union with him in his life, death and resurrection. That person must be united to Christ through spiritual regeneration or rebirth. This involves faith in the redeeming and atoning work of Christ on his behalf. It also involves his being sanctified by God's Holy Spirit, and bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life.

Concerning false professors within the church, however, the apostle John records these words of the Lord Jesus:

John 15:1-6

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

Summary below

Part 4 Summary

BTE13 Summary — Good Works (ESV Edition)

Part 4: Christ's Example and the Necessity of Fruit

■ Definition

Christ Himself is the supreme model of good works. Though He came chiefly to accomplish redemption and glorify the Father, He continually ministered to people's physical, material, and spiritual needs. His life was marked by continual acts of compassion, healing, mercy, and service — all performed to honour God. Believers must follow His example, producing good fruit that demonstrates genuine regeneration. Works must be pleasing to God, arising from a sanctified heart, for barren lives reveal false profession and end in judgment.

■ Key Truths

1. **Christ's earthly ministry was filled with good works** — He healed, delivered, taught, and served (Acts 10:38).
2. **Christ met both spiritual and physical needs** — His compassion extended to every aspect of human suffering.
3. **Christ performed good works to glorify God** — never for human praise or recognition.
4. **Believers must follow Christ's example** — good works should characterise the Christian life (Matt. 5:16).
5. **A tree is known by its fruit** — genuine faith produces visible obedience and righteousness.
6. **Barren lives reveal spiritual death** — no good fruit indicates absence of regeneration.
7. **False professors may appear religious** — but their works are “lawlessness” rather than obedience (Matt. 7:23).
8. **Good works must be pleasing to God** — not merely impressive to men.
9. **Works done without regeneration are unacceptable** — even charitable acts cannot commend a false professor to God.
10. **God judges according to works** — but only Spirit-produced works are acceptable.
11. **Union with Christ is essential** — only those abiding in Him bear true fruit (John 15:1–5).
12. **Branches without fruit are removed** — false professors face judgment (John 15:6).
13. **True believers are pruned to bear more fruit** — God actively cultivates holiness in His people.
14. **Good works arise from sanctification** — they are the fruit of the Spirit's work in the heart.
15. **Profession without fruit is worthless** — outward claims cannot replace inward transformation.
16. **Christ's example sets the pattern** — believers must walk in His steps, doing good and glorifying God.

■ Biblical Foundations

Christ's Example of Good Works

1. **Acts 10:38** — Jesus went about doing good and healing all oppressed by the devil.
2. **Matthew 4:23–24** — Christ healed every disease and affliction among the people.
3. **Matthew 5:14–16** — believers must let their light shine through good works.

Fruit as Evidence of True Faith

4. **Matthew 7:15–20** — a tree is known by its fruit; barren trees are cast into the fire.
5. **Matthew 7:21–23** — false professors are rejected as workers of lawlessness.
6. **Matthew 25:41** — false professors face eternal judgment.

Union with Christ and Fruitfulness

7. **John 15:1–6** — abiding in Christ is essential for bearing fruit; fruitless branches are removed and burned.

■ Practical Implications

1. **Follow Christ's example** — pursue a life filled with compassion, mercy, and service.
2. **Let your good works glorify God** — aim at His honour, not human praise.
3. **Recognise that fruit reveals reality** — genuine faith always produces obedience.
4. **Examine your life for spiritual fruit** — barren living signals spiritual danger.
5. **Reject empty profession** — words without obedience cannot save.
6. **Ensure your works arise from regeneration** — only Spirit-wrought works please God.
7. **Guard against hypocrisy** — outward religious activity may mask inward lawlessness.
8. **Abide in Christ daily** — fruitfulness depends entirely on union with Him.
9. **Submit to God's pruning** — He refines His people to increase their fruitfulness.
10. **Live with eternal seriousness** — fruitlessness ends in judgment; fruitfulness proves true discipleship.
11. **Serve others practically** — Christ ministered to real needs; believers must do likewise.
12. **Let your light shine** — visible obedience strengthens witness and glorifies the Father.

■ Summary Sentence

Christ's life was the perfect model of good works, performed to glorify God and bless others; believers must follow His example, bearing the fruit that proves genuine regeneration, for only Spirit-produced works are pleasing to God, while barren lives reveal false profession and end in judgment.

PART 5

What Kind of Works are Good Works?

For a believer, those works are good which honour and glorify God and which benefit mankind. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind; and our neighbour as ourselves. (Luke 10:27) By their very nature, we cannot do the kind of works that Christ did; nor can we attain to the perfect quality of his works. However, we can still do works that honour and please the Father. If Christ had time to attend to the sick, to speak to the lonely, and to serve rather than be served, how much more should we do likewise?

Love Your Neighbour As Yourself

We cannot claim to have honoured God in the *first* great commandment, if we have failed to honour him in the *second*. For he who said:

Luke 10:27a

^{27a} ... “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind....” {*Deut. 6:5*}

Then added these words:

Luke 10:27b

^{27b} “...and your neighbour as yourself.” {*Lev. 19:18*} (See Luke 10:25-37)

Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable exemplifies practically the kind of help we should provide willingly for our neighbour. (Luke 10:29-37)

Love to Our Neighbour

Practical Examples

The Lord requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Effectively, this means that we must care for our neighbour as for ourselves. If we see a need, then we must help to meet that need. If our neighbour requires assistance of some kind, and we are able to provide that assistance, then, in the Lord's name, we must give the help that is needed—cheerfully, and because we care. Nor must we delay in providing the needed help, or make excuses for failing to act in time. To this end, the Scripture says:

Proverbs 3:27-28

²⁷ Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

²⁸ Do not say to your neighbour, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you. (Cf. Prov. 14:31)

In practical terms, we must visit the sick, the housebound and the lonely; or those in hospitals, hospices, care homes, prisons or other institutions. In our service to them, we must care for their material, as well as their spiritual needs; and we must provide them with comfort, hope and encouragement. (Matt. 25:34-40) To those in genuine need, we must contribute items such as food and clothing; being prepared to share freely of the things that—in his providence—the Lord has freely given to us. Thus, in sending forth the twelve on their mission, the Lord said:

Matthew 10:7-8

⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. (See vv.1-15)

In reminding forgiven believers of their obligation to share all things with others, the apostle Paul says:

Ephesians 4:28

²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (See vv.22-32)

We must not only *speak* kindly and compassionately, but we must also *act* kindly and compassionately. Faith without works is dead, and no dead person has the Spirit of Christ living within him. Inasmuch as we have done it unto one of the least of these, his brothers, we have done it unto Christ. Failing to do good to those in need, is failing to do good unto Christ. Thus, the Scripture declares:

Matthew 25:40

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (See vv.34-39)

Matthew 25:45

⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' (See vv.41-44,46)

A Pure, Sincere and Humble Heart

Good works, or offerings or gifts to God are not acceptable before him if we have neglected to do what God requires. We cannot compensate for a heart that is not right with God by the offering of sacrificial gifts. To this end, the Scripture says:

Micah 6:6-7

⁶ "With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,

with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”
(See vv.1-5)

We cannot, of course, offer our firstborn for the sin of our soul. Again, no amount of sacrifice is ever acceptable to God, if that sacrifice does not originate from a pure, sincere, and humble heart.

What God Requires

What does the Lord require of his people? The Scripture replies:

Micah 6:8

⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
(See vv.9-16)

God requires that each one of his redeemed and holy people demonstrate justice, mercy and humility in their lives. We ought to show *justice*, or absolute fairness and equity, in our dealings with all our fellow men and women. We should extend *kindness*, mercy, or tender love and compassion, toward our neighbour—and especially toward the needy within the church of God. We should exhibit *humility*—the opposite of pride—in our walk with God and in our attitude toward our fellow-believer.

A heart filled with envy, pride, greed, malice, ill will; and a gossiping, tale-bearing, backbiting and deceitful or lying tongue, are an abomination in the sight of a holy and righteous God. These are just some of the ‘sins of the flesh’ (or works of the flesh) that we must utterly forsake. Only by doing so, will the Lord accept and honour our good works, and receive our gifts and sacrifices in his name.

We must ever remember that God has not only *saved* us by grace, but he is also *keeping us secure* by his grace. Let each of us, therefore, take heed to ourselves, lest—because of a proud heart and a haughty spirit—we stumble and fall. Thus, it is written in the Word of God:

Proverbs 16:18

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.
(See v.19; cf. Prov. 11:2; 18:12)

Summary below

Part 5 Summary

BTE13 Summary — Good Works (ESV Edition)

Part 5: The Nature of True Good Works

■ Definition

Good Works are those actions that honour and glorify God and benefit our neighbour.

Although believers cannot perform works equal in perfection or power to Christ's works, they are nevertheless called to imitate His compassion, mercy, and service. True good works arise from love for God and our neighbour, are performed willingly and cheerfully, and must flow from a pure, sincere, and humble heart. They express justice, kindness, and humility, and they reject the sins of the flesh that corrupt the heart and hinder acceptable service to God.

■ Key Truths

1. **Good works honour God and benefit our neighbour** — they fulfil the two great commandments (Luke 10:27).
2. **Believers cannot match Christ's perfect works** — yet they must imitate His compassion and service.
3. **Loving God requires loving our neighbour** — obedience to the second commandment proves obedience to the first.
4. **The Good Samaritan exemplifies true neighbour-love** — practical, sacrificial, and compassionate help (Luke 10:29–37).
5. **Good works must be practical** — meeting real needs promptly and cheerfully (Prov. 3:27–28).
6. **Believers must care for the sick, lonely, and needy** — visiting and serving those in difficult circumstances.
7. **Good works include sharing material resources** — generosity flows from a renewed heart (Eph. 4:28).
8. **Kind words must be matched by kind actions** — faith without works is dead.
9. **Serving others is serving Christ** — what is done for “the least of these” is done unto Him (Matt. 25:40).
10. **Neglecting neighbour-love is neglecting Christ** — failure to act is failure to honour Him (Matt. 25:45).
11. **Sacrifices without obedience are unacceptable** — offerings cannot compensate for a disobedient heart (Mic. 6:6–7).
12. **God requires justice, kindness, and humility** — these virtues define true good works (Mic. 6:8).
13. **Pride, envy, greed, malice, and deceit corrupt good works** — they are abominations before God.
14. **Believers must forsake the works of the flesh** — only then will their works be acceptable to God.
15. **God saves and keeps His people by grace** — humility is essential to avoid stumbling.
16. **Pride leads to destruction** — a haughty spirit precedes a fall (Prov. 16:18).

■ Biblical Foundations

The Two Great Commandments

1. **Luke 10:27** — love God fully and love our neighbour as oneself.
2. **Luke 10:29–37** — the Good Samaritan illustrates true neighbour-love.

Practical Neighbour-Love

3. **Proverbs 3:27–28** — do not withhold good when it is in your power to act.
4. **Matthew 25:34–40** — serving the needy is serving Christ.
5. **Matthew 10:7–8** — freely give as you have freely received.
6. **Ephesians 4:28** — work honestly to share with those in need.

Serving Christ Through Serving Others

7. **Matthew 25:40** — what is done for the least is done for Christ.
8. **Matthew 25:45** — failure to serve the needy is failure to serve Christ.

A Pure and Humble Heart

9. **Micah 6:6–7** — sacrifices without obedience are unacceptable.
10. **Micah 6:8** — God requires justice, kindness, and humility.
11. **Proverbs 16:18** — pride leads to destruction.

■ Practical Implications

1. **Imitate Christ's compassion** — serve others as He served.
2. **Let good works flow from love** — both commandments must be obeyed together.
3. **Act promptly when needs arise** — do not delay doing good.
4. **Serve the sick, lonely, and needy** — visit and care for those in difficult circumstances.
5. **Share generously** — use your resources to bless others.
6. **Match words with actions** — kindness must be practical.
7. **Remember that serving others is serving Christ** — treat every act of mercy as an offering to Him.
8. **Reject empty religious sacrifice** — obedience and purity of heart matter more than ritual.
9. **Pursue justice, kindness, and humility** — these virtues define acceptable good works.
10. **Forsake the sins of the flesh** — pride, envy, greed, and deceit corrupt service.
11. **Walk humbly before God** — pride leads to spiritual ruin.
12. **Let your life display true neighbour-love** — it is the fruit of regeneration and sanctification.

■ Summary Sentence

True good works honour God and bless our neighbour, flowing from love, humility, and obedience; they imitate Christ's compassion, meet real needs cheerfully, reject the sins of the flesh, and express justice, kindness, and humility — for only works arising from a pure and sanctified heart are acceptable to God.

PART 6

Worship Without Works is an Abomination

The greatest gift or sacrifice we can offer to God is nothing compared with honouring God in heart and life. As we have indicated above, the Lord requires that we act justly or fairly in all our dealings with other people; for the Lord is a just and holy God. He requires that we love mercy and show compassion toward those who are in need; for the Lord is a merciful and compassionate God. He requires that we walk humbly with him, and not in the pride and conceit of our hearts; for the Lord is a great King, and his name is to be feared. Concerning the holiness of God, the psalmist says:

Psalms 99:5

⁵ Exalt the LORD our God;
worship at his footstool!
Holy is he!

Psalms 99:9

⁹ Exalt the LORD our God,
and worship at his holy mountain;
for the LORD our God is holy! (See vv.1-8)

Concerning the tender mercy or compassion of God, the Scripture says:

Psalms 103:6-12

⁶ The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.
⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
⁹ He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (See vv.1-5)

The same Scripture continues:

Psalms 103:13-18

- ¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
¹⁴ For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.
¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments. (See vv.19-22)

Concerning the absolute sovereignty of God, the Scripture says:

Malachi 1:14b

- ^{14b} ...For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be
feared among the nations.

These are the kinds of good works that are pleasing to God, and that honour his name. If, however, we do not practise these good works, then all our worship, all our service, all our sacrifices, all our thanksgiving, and all our prayers and praise to the Lord are an abomination in his sight. He will reject them utterly.

Hypocritical Service is an Abomination

Good works become an abomination in God's sight when a person performs them from a sinful and rebellious heart, from an unsanctified life, or as a cloak to cover a hypocritical life-style.

A person may appear outwardly pious or religious. God, however, knows his heart. No amount of outward show of religion, or practise of good works, can ever commend a person to God or win his approval, if that person's heart is not right with God. A hypocrite is a 'play actor'—one who acts a part. *But there are no parts for actors in the kingdom of God.*

A person may profess to be a believer. However, if for one reason or another, his heart is not right with God, then his sacrifices of praise and worship, and his good works, are totally unacceptable to the Most High God. To this end, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 58:4

⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.
(See vv.1-4a)

Insincere fasting is hypocritical fasting. Insincere religious service of any kind, is hypocritical service. If we would truly honour God with our good works and pious exercises, then these works and exercises must come from a sincere, clean, and humble heart. God does not listen to the prayers of his people when we, his people, do not fully acknowledge him as Lord of our lives, or when we attempt to conceal our sins and transgressions.

'In These I Delight'

The Word of God expresses very clearly, the kind of worship and service in which God delights:

Isaiah 58:6-7

⁶ "Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

The same Scripture continues:

Isaiah 58:9b-11

⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'
If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.
¹¹ And the LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.
(See vv.12-14)

In a similar vein to the above, James says:

James 1:26-27

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (See vv.19-25)

These are the things in which God delights. (Jer. 9:24.) These are the kinds of good works that are glorifying to God and worthy of reward in heaven—provided a person does them willingly and cheerfully, and from a humble and sanctified heart.

Summary below

Part 6 Summary

BTE13 Summary — Good Works (ESV Edition)

Part 6: Worship, Works, and the Heart God Accepts

■ Definition

Worship without obedience, justice, mercy, and humility is an abomination to God. True worship must be joined to good works that reflect God's holiness, compassion, and sovereignty. Outward religious acts — prayers, praise, fasting, sacrifices — are utterly unacceptable when performed from a sinful, proud, or hypocritical heart. God delights in worship that flows from a sanctified life, a sincere spirit, and practical love toward our neighbour. Good works must arise from a pure, humble, and obedient heart if they are to honour God and receive His approval.

■ Key Truths

1. **Worship without obedience is an abomination** — God rejects religious acts divorced from justice, mercy, and humility.
2. **God requires justice** — fairness and righteousness in all dealings reflect His holy character.
3. **God requires mercy** — compassion toward the needy mirrors His steadfast love (Ps. 103:8).
4. **God requires humility** — pride and conceit contradict His majesty and sovereignty (Mal. 1:14).
5. **God is holy** — worship must reflect His holiness (Ps. 99:5, 9).
6. **God is compassionate** — His mercy toward His people must shape their mercy toward others (Ps. 103:13).
7. **Religious acts without obedience are worthless** — sacrifices cannot compensate for disobedience (Mic. 6:6–7).
8. **Hypocritical service is an abomination** — outward piety cannot hide an unsanctified heart.
9. **God sees the heart** — no outward show of religion can deceive Him.
10. **Insincere fasting is rejected** — religious exercises done from sinful motives are unacceptable (Isa. 58:4).
11. **God delights in practical righteousness** — freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless (Isa. 58:6–7).
12. **True service brings God's favour** — sincere obedience results in God's guidance and blessing (Isa. 58:9–11).
13. **Pure religion cares for the vulnerable** — visiting orphans and widows is central to godly living (Jas. 1:27).
14. **True religion requires a bridled tongue** — speech reveals the condition of the heart (Jas. 1:26).
15. **Good works must be done cheerfully** — God delights in willing obedience.

16. **Good works must arise from a sanctified heart** — only then are they glorifying to God and worthy of reward.

Biblical Foundations

God's Holiness and Worthy Worship

1. **Psalm 99:5** — worship at His footstool; holy is He.
2. **Psalm 99:9** — exalt the Lord; He is holy.

God's Mercy and Compassion

3. **Psalm 103:6–12** — God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.
4. **Psalm 103:13–18** — God shows compassion to His children and remembers their frailty.

God's Sovereignty

5. **Malachi 1:14** — the Lord is a great King whose name is to be feared.

Hypocritical Worship Condemned

6. **Isaiah 58:4** — insincere fasting is rejected.
7. **Micah 6:6–7** — sacrifices without obedience are unacceptable.

What God Requires

8. **Micah 6:8** — do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God.

True Worship and Service

9. **Isaiah 58:6–7** — loose the bonds of wickedness; care for the hungry and homeless.
10. **Isaiah 58:9–11** — sincere obedience brings God's blessing and guidance.

Pure Religion Defined

11. **James 1:26–27** — pure religion cares for orphans and widows and keeps oneself unstained from the world.

Practical Implications

1. **Join worship with obedience** — honour God through justice, mercy, and humility.
2. **Reject empty religious ritual** — sacrifices without obedience are worthless.
3. **Let God's holiness shape your worship** — approach Him with reverence and purity.
4. **Imitate God's compassion** — show mercy to the oppressed, needy, and vulnerable.

5. **Serve practically** — feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless.
6. **Guard against hypocrisy** — outward religion cannot hide inward rebellion.
7. **Confess sin honestly** — concealed sin makes worship unacceptable.
8. **Bidle your tongue** — speech reveals the heart's condition.
9. **Seek God's delight** — practise the works He approves: justice, kindness, humility.
10. **Serve cheerfully** — God delights in willing obedience.
11. **Walk humbly** — pride leads to spiritual ruin.
12. **Let your worship be matched by your works** — true religion is active, compassionate, and pure.

■ Summary Sentence

Worship without obedience is an abomination, for God delights in justice, mercy, humility, and sincere service; **only good works arising from a pure, humble, and sanctified heart are acceptable to Him**, while hypocritical worship and outward religion without practical righteousness are utterly rejected.

PART 7

Works of Spiritual Instruction

The Work of Preaching and Teaching

Concerning those who would aspire to teach others in the doctrine and principles, James says:

James 3:1

¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (See v.2)

It should go without saying that no-one can possibly be qualified to teach God's Word unless they have had a personal saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The teaching of God's Word ought never to be undertaken by unregenerate individuals—no matter how highly gifted, talented or qualified. Whatever their gifts or qualifications, those living in spiritual darkness cannot teach the way of light.

Importance of Teaching Sound Doctrine

The work of preaching and teaching is an important and necessary work. It is also a very demanding and time-occupying work. A person ought not to undertake this work lightly, or without due and careful preparation. The work of teaching, and the accuracy of our teaching, will exert a powerful influence—either for good or for bad, for better or for worse—on the minds and lives of others. Thus we must ensure that we know the Word of God thoroughly ourselves, before we ever presume to teach that Word to others.

Those who engage in the work of teaching must be aware of the greater responsibilities that they are under, and the greater strictness by which the Lord will judge them. This applies to anyone who teaches God's Word—whether he be a pastor, Bible class teacher, Sunday School teacher, youth leader, elder, deacon, missionary or any other form of Christian teacher. He must ensure that he teaches God's Word correctly; and strictly according to sound doctrine.

In addition, those only should engage in public preaching and teaching whom God has gifted with the appropriate spiritual gifts, and who are thereby equipped and qualified for this honourable task. Again, in certain categories of public ministry (e.g. pastor or missionary), the person concerned ought never to undertake this spiritual ministry unless explicitly called and equipped by God for this specific task. Any person thus called to service by the Lord should then be ordained, commended or appointed to this office by their local church leadership.

Inadequate Knowledge Leads to Errors of Faith and Practice

Failure to know and to understand the whole of God's Word will inevitably lead to errors of teaching. Errors in teaching will result, in turn, in corresponding errors in belief and practice within the church. A 'minor' mistake, misinterpretation, or misunderstanding in one area of God's Word, may later result

in greater and more serious mistakes, misinterpretations, or misunderstandings. Unless recognised and corrected, these mistakes may culminate in some serious doctrinal and practical errors.

If we are to be faithful in teaching the truths of God's Word to others, we dare not neglect the careful study of that Word, or the secret place of prayer and meditation. If our study, preparation, and prayer periods are inadequate or rushed, then we are in danger of misleading other people with our mistaken interpretations, or by our incorrect views of a particular doctrine or principle.

Proclaiming the Whole Will of God

Not only is it essential to know, understand, and adhere steadfastly to sound doctrine, but it is also essential to proclaim *the whole will* (or counsel) *of God*. (Acts 20:27.) Every subject covered by the Word of God, and of relevance to the Christian faith and life, should be covered—and covered adequately—by those who engage in preaching and teaching. This not only includes everything of a *spiritual* nature contained in the Word of God, but it also includes everything of a *moral* nature. It includes not only what we must *believe*, but also what we must continually *practise* in our daily lives.

Each Man's Work Will be Judged

It is because of the influence that our teaching will have on other people's lives that the Lord will judge us more strictly. Among other criteria, the Lord will judge us according to how well we ourselves have learned the Word of God, and how well we have taught that Word to other people.

In this regard, each one of us will receive a reward according to the degree of our faithfulness to Christ and to his Word. If, in this respect, we have proved consistently unfaithful to the Lord, then we could lose part or all of our reward (although not our salvation). This degree of faithfulness includes the diligence we have employed, or have failed to employ, in making the Word of God known to others. We will suffer loss of reward if we have not been diligent in presenting the Word of God faithfully. On the other hand, we will gain the commendation of Christ, and an eternal reward in heaven, if we have diligently endeavoured always to present the Word of God faithfully. We must do this, however, in love, in humility, without compromise, and according to sound doctrine.

Judgment by Fire

Concerning the strict judgment that the Lord will apply to those who have taught God's Word—or rather, that he will apply to the quality of their teaching—the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (*cf.* 1 Pet. 4:11).

¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (*cf.* Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 2:20).

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the

foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (See vv.1-23)

The judgment by fire or 'revelation with fire' (v.13) pertains to the strict or searching judgment of teachers of God's Word, and of the quality of their teaching. The sure and immovable foundation has already been laid, and that foundation is the Rock of our faith: the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Preachers and teachers of God's Word are responsible for building upon that foundation, and upon that foundation alone. However, the Lord will assess and judge the quality of the material they use—i.e. the quality of their teaching—and he will reward them accordingly. If they have used worthless material—if their teaching was of little substance or value in the sight of God—then they will suffer loss of reward. They themselves will be saved, *but only as one escaping through the flames* (v.15 NIV).

Thus, it is the believer's duty and responsibility to be faithful in his service for the Master. In respect of our service for him, the Lord will judge each one of us according to our works. We will be rewarded, or will forfeit our reward (although not our salvation), according to the diligence we have employed in exercising the particular gifts that God has given us. If we have failed to serve others in their need, then we have failed to serve Christ. If we have been careful to serve others, and have ministered to their needs, then we have served the Lord of Glory and ministered to him.

Summary below

Part 7 Summary

BTE13 Summary — Good Works (ESV Edition)

Part 7: Works of Spiritual Instruction

■ Definition

Works of Spiritual Instruction include the preaching and teaching of God's Word. **This ministry is a good work of the highest importance, requiring regeneration, sound doctrine, careful preparation, and a life marked by holiness.** Those who teach Scripture bear greater responsibility and will be judged with greater strictness. **Their teaching must be faithful, accurate, complete, and grounded in the whole counsel of God.** The quality of their work will be tested by God, and they will either receive reward or suffer loss according to their diligence and faithfulness.

■ Key Truths

1. **Teaching God's Word is a serious calling** — teachers will be judged more strictly (Jas. 3:1).
2. **Only regenerate people may teach Scriptures** — spiritual darkness cannot instruct in the light.
3. **Teaching requires careful preparation** — doctrine must be understood thoroughly before it is taught.
4. **Teaching influences lives deeply** — errors in teaching produce errors in belief and practice.
5. **Teachers must adhere to sound doctrine** — accuracy is essential for faithful ministry.
6. **Only those gifted by God should teach publicly** — preaching requires spiritual gifting and divine calling.
7. **Certain ministries require explicit calling** — pastors and missionaries must be appointed by church leadership.
8. **Inadequate study leads to doctrinal error** — small mistakes can grow into serious false teaching.
9. **Teaching requires prayer and meditation** — rushed preparation endangers the flock.
10. **Teachers must proclaim the whole counsel of God** — both spiritual and moral truths (Acts 20:27).
11. **Teaching includes doctrine and practice** — what Christians must believe and how they must live.
12. **Each teacher's work will be judged** — God evaluates both learning and teaching.
13. **Rewards depend on faithfulness** — diligence in teaching brings Christ's commendation.
14. **Unfaithfulness results in loss of reward** — though salvation is not forfeited.
15. **Teaching will be tested 'by fire'** — God examines the quality of doctrine and ministry (1 Cor. 3:13).
16. **Serving others is serving Christ** — ministry to people is ministry to the Lord Himself.

■ Biblical Foundations

The Seriousness of Teaching

1. **James 3:1** — teachers are judged with greater strictness.

The Whole Counsel of God

2. **Acts 20:27** — proclaim the whole will of God.

Judgment of Teaching

3. **1 Corinthians 3:10–15** — each person's work will be revealed by fire; faithful work receives reward, unfaithful work suffers loss.

■ Practical Implications

1. **Approach teaching with reverence** — it is a high and weighty calling.
2. **Ensure regeneration before teaching** — only the spiritually renewed can instruct others.
3. **Study Scripture diligently** — thorough knowledge prevents doctrinal error.
4. **Prepare carefully** — rushed teaching misleads God's people.
5. **Teach sound doctrine** — accuracy protects the church from falsehood.
6. **Proclaim all of God's Word** — avoid selective or incomplete teaching.
7. **Recognise the influence of teaching** — doctrine shapes lives and destinies.
8. **Seek God's gifting** — only those equipped by the Spirit should preach publicly.
9. **Submit to proper appointment** — pastors and missionaries must be recognised by the church.
10. **Guard against doctrinal drift** — small errors can grow into serious deviations.
11. **Teach with humility and love** — ministry must reflect Christ's character.
12. **Remember future judgment** — God will test the quality of your teaching.
13. **Serve others faithfully** — ministry to people is ministry to Christ.
14. **Strive for eternal reward** — diligent teaching brings Christ's commendation.
15. **Reject compromise** — faithfulness to Scripture is essential.
16. **Use your gifts for God's glory** — teaching is a sacred stewardship.

■ Summary Sentence

Works of spiritual instruction are among the most serious and influential good works, requiring regeneration, sound doctrine, diligent study, and faithful proclamation of the whole counsel of God; teachers will be judged with greater strictness, their work tested by fire, and their reward determined by the quality and faithfulness of their ministry.

Final Summary of entire study follows below

Final Summary

Good Works

1. Purpose of the Doctrine

The doctrine of **Good Works** explains the place, nature, and necessity of works in the Christian life. It clarifies that while good works contribute nothing to a sinner's justification or to the preservation of salvation, they are essential as the fruit of regeneration, the evidence of living faith, and the practical expression of sanctification. This doctrine shows how God's grace produces obedience, compassion, holiness, and service in the lives of His redeemed people.

2. Key Biblical Foundations

Scripture teaches that justification is **not by works** (Rom. 9:31–33; Gal. 2:16), for no one can keep God's law perfectly (Jas. 2:10). Works performed by the unregenerate cannot please God because they arise from a heart alienated from Him (Rom. 8:7–8). Yet believers are **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, prepared beforehand by God (Eph. 2:10). Jesus Himself modelled a life of continual good works (Acts 10:38), and Scripture commands practical righteousness, mercy, and compassion toward our neighbour (Mic. 6:8; Luke 10:29–37). Faith without works is dead, for true faith always produces obedience (Jas. 2:14–26).

3. How the Parts Fit Together

The study begins by establishing that good works cannot justify, since fallen humanity cannot fulfil God's law. It then distinguishes between civil goodness, imperfect works corrupted by motive, and true good works produced by the Spirit. The doctrine shows how Christ's example defines the pattern of good works, and how fruitfulness reveals genuine regeneration. It explains that worship without obedience is an abomination, and that hypocritical service is rejected by God. Further sections highlight works of spiritual instruction, emphasising the seriousness of teaching and the strict judgment applied to those who handle God's Word. The doctrine concludes by showing that believers are saved unto good works, that these works contribute to eternal reward, and that God prepared them beforehand for His people to walk in.

Together these Parts form a coherent doctrinal flow: **no salvific merit in works → necessity of regeneration → nature of true good works → Christ's example → fruit and judgment → worship and sincerity → teaching and accountability → reward for faithful obedience.**

4. Doctrinal Conclusion

Good Works are the Spirit-wrought actions that arise from a regenerated and sanctified heart. They do not and cannot contribute to justification, yet they are indispensable as the evidence of true faith, the fruit of sanctification, and the believer's obedience to God's revealed will. True good works honour God, bless our neighbour, imitate Christ, and conform to Scripture. Works performed from pride, hypocrisy, or an unregenerate heart are unacceptable to God. Believers are saved by grace, kept by grace, and called by grace to walk in the good works God prepared

for them from eternity, knowing that their works will be evaluated by Christ and rewarded according to faithfulness.

5. Practical Implications

This doctrine calls believers to pursue good works with diligence, humility, and joy, knowing they arise from God's renewing grace. It encourages practical love toward our neighbour, cheerful generosity, compassionate service, and faithful obedience. It warns against hypocrisy, pride, and empty religious ritual, reminding believers that worship must be joined to justice, mercy, and humility. It strengthens perseverance by assuring believers that their labour in the Lord is not in vain, and it fuels hope by promising that God will reward every Spirit-produced work done in faith, love, and obedience to Christ.

END

