

The Good Works of Jesus

John 10:31-42

Are good works necessary for salvation? That's always a good question to ask, but it's also a trick question. The answer has to be "no," if you mean, are good works necessary to earn salvation? Are good works necessary to merit salvation? Are good works necessary as the ground upon which you are saved, or the means by which you are saved? Well, in a word, "No." The Bible is clear and plain.

Eph. 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Or, as our Confession of Faith expresses it, "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification."

Faith is the alone instrument, the only means. We are saved by grace through faith. Not of works. So, no, works are not necessary for salvation.

But, in another sense, yes they are. Works are the clear and necessary evidence of faith. Works are necessary as the consequence of saving faith, demonstrating the reality of such faith. And again, the Bible is clear and plain.

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

So faith is shown by works, faith is made evident by works. Faith is shown to be a living faith by the evidence of works. So that we read,

James 2:14 "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone

says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?...17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

James 2:26 "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Faith without works is dead! It is no faith at all. And so again, our Confession of Faith, after defining that faith is the alone instrument of justification, continues with these words, "yet is [faith] not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love."

This morning we come to study a passage about those good works. In this case, however, the reference is to the good works of Jesus! So the question becomes, were good works necessary for Jesus? And while we have to say, "No," in the sense that although Jesus didn't become God by performing good works, he did demonstrate his deity and he did make himself known as God by the performance of those good works. And for Jesus, those good works were supernatural works, miraculous works.

So in that sense, "yes," Jesus' good works were necessary to prove his identity, his divine identity. In other words, the supernatural "good works" of Jesus are the irrefutable evidence that he is, indeed, God. Those miracles validate Jesus' claim to be God, for,

I. JESUS MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN AS GOD BY HIS SUPERNATURAL POWER.

And he doesn't hide that reality at all.

v.32

When John finishes writing this gospel, he tells us clearly why these signs were given.

John 20:30 “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

So I will preach today with that same purpose, that same attitude. The good works of Jesus are made known to you so that you might believe that he is the son of God. And by believing, that you might have eternal life. So the very essence of the gospel is at stake, and the core message of evangelism is built into this revelation of the supernatural power of Jesus, power made known by miraculous signs and wonders, what John is labeling “good works.” “Many good works I have shown you from My Father.”

Notice what is obvious there.

A. Jesus’ supernatural power originates with God the Father.

We’ve seen this before, haven’t we?

John 5:36 “But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. 37 And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.”

But there is more than merely a reference to origin. Jesus’ supernatural power not only originates with God, but they define him to be God.

B. Jesus’ supernatural power unites him with God the Father.

Remember what we studied last week. The bald and bold

declaration,

v.30

Not two gods. Not an original god and an additional created being to be his helper. No, one God, in absolute and eternal essence.

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

That’s your assurance. That’s your confidence. That the father and the son are one, one God. And there is one purpose. One work of God for the salvation of one people. And that doctrine of the trinity, the unity of the father and the son, is embedded in this great declaration that proves so clearly that those whom God saves, those whom he calls to salvation, those whom he justifies, those same sheep, every one them, without exception, every one who is justified by grace through in Jesus Christ shall enter the glory of heaven.

So Jesus shows forth his divine power by performing miraculous signs immediately connected to his relationship with his father. “Many good works I have shown you from My Father.” And Jesus makes it plain just how important all of this is, how essential his supernatural power is.

v.37

That’s not the end of the thought, however. The point is made and made clearly in,

v.38

Jesus makes himself known, he makes himself known as God, so that you and I would believe! And I declare to you the

trinity for that very same reason, that by believing, you might have life. Believe in the Father. Believe in the son. Believe that the Father is in the Son. Believe that the Son is in the Father. Believe that they are inseparably connected as one God, united together, such that by believing in that one, you will find life.

John 20:31 "...but these [good works] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Many did believe, to be sure.
v40-42

But not everyone believes, do they? Not then. Not now. Actually,

II. JESUS IS REJECTED BECAUSE OF HIS SUPERNATURAL POWER.

By exercising supernatural power, Jesus is clearly claiming to be God. And for those who will not believe, such a claim is nothing but blasphemy.

A. Jesus' claim to be God is judged to be blasphemy. v.33

You have to give those Jews credit for being consistent. And for understanding Jesus' claim. He was claiming to be God. He was claiming divine power. He was exercising the power that only God possesses. And they knew what Jesus was claiming. They knew, verse 33, that "You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

In their disbelief, however, they could have only one possible reaction. Because they believed him to be a man only, not God, they judged him to be guilty of blasphemy.

They were, of course, half right. They believed Jesus was claiming to be God, and they were right. How foolishly inconsistent are people today who wish to preserve some part of Jesus person and life, without acknowledging any supernatural power. He was a man, a good man, a great teacher, a marvelous example. But still, nonetheless a man, who had only the power of a man.

That's the basic mantra of liberalism, isn't it? The idea that you can be religious, without believing in the presence of the supernatural power of God in the person of Jesus. Jesus is, therefore, reduced to the historical Jesus. Sort of like Napoleon, or Alexander the Great. Historically real, to be sure, but only a man. Great man, but still just a man. And for Jesus, any claim to be more than a man would be judged harshly.

v.33

So it is today that those who will not believe that Jesus is God consider these words blasphemous as well. They consider Jesus but a mere man, but not the son of God. A good prophet even, perhaps, but not the son of God. A worthy example, or a worthwhile moral instructor, but not the son of God. But true faith, saving faith, must be much more.

1 John 5:9 "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. 10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. 11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal

life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

Rom. 10:9 “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

So many won't be saved, will they? Many will not profess that Jesus is Lord, they will not believe him to be the son of God. Instead, as we see so clearly here,

B. Jesus' claim to be God provokes violent opposition.

Not just disbelief, but violent disbelief. Deadly violence.

v.31

Their purpose was clear. They wanted to kill him! Yet because Jesus was God, because he remained in control of his own life and would lay down his life only when the appointed time had arrived, they failed. But not for lack of trying.

v.39

All of that being said, let's look back on the verses we have skipped so far,

v.34-36

Here,

III. Jesus defends his identity as God.

He takes the time and makes the effort to defend himself, and his divine nature and origin. He was accused of making a false claim to be God,

v.33

And he responds with a very clear argument,

A. An argument from Scripture.

v.34

Now, where is that written? Jesus knew they claimed to believe in the law, which is a reference to the Old Testament. So Jesus quotes an Old Testament verse, from Psalm 82, to silence their objection to himself being called God.

Ps. 82:1 “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. 2 How long will you judge unjustly, And show partiality to the wicked? Selah 3 Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4 Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked. 5 They do not know, nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are unstable. 6 I said, “You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High. 7 But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes.”

In Psalm 82, Asaph is speaking rulers and princes of the people, whose responsibility and authority among was so great as to be given the description “gods,” with a little “g”. It is actually not at all a title of deity in Psalm 82, but rather that the Hebrew expression “gods” is applied to the judges of Israel in the exercise of their high and God-given office.

And Jesus says, arguing from the lessor to the greater, if those Old Testament judges could be called “gods”, as you agree they are called in your law, then why can't I use that name for myself.

Indeed, Jesus says of himself,

v.36

Why is it blasphemy, Jesus asks, if the Old Testament refers to the rulers of the people as gods, because they are God's

ministers to govern the world. Now, Jesus is obviously pointing out their inconsistency. Their own self-contradictions.

But notice the force of his argument, the strength of his argument. It is in a parenthesis. It isn't even the main point. Jesus makes a startling claim.

B. A declaration from Scripture.

v.35

“The Scripture cannot be broken.”

That's Jesus argument. A single word of Scripture cannot be broken. And the Greek word broken means to break or set aside, or nullify.

Not a single word in Scripture can be set aside! That's what Jesus is saying here. His whole point hinges on the divine authority of a single word. And by arguing that way, by using that defense, Jesus is obviously, obviously teaching the doctrine of infallibility. The Bible cannot be set aside. What the Bible says cannot be nullified.

Every single word. Jesus' whole argument hinges on one single word. We call that plenary verbal inspiration. In other words inspiration of the words, verbal. Not just the ideas. Not just the doctrines or thoughts that you think are contained in the words. But the words. And all the words, every single one. Plenary.

There is no other definition of truth! There is not other form of truth, except that which is truth. In other words, if the Bible teaches something, it is true! Every single word of it! Scripture cannot be broken.

That's a verse that you need to use when you talk to unbelievers who are claiming to search for truth. Simply declare to them that the Bible is truth, every single word of it. And once you start at that point, then you can begin to answer some of their specific questions.

That is a verse you need to remember whenever you interpret hard-to-understand Bible verses. The Bible interprets itself, consistently, so can't explain or understand one verse in the Bible in such a way as to contradict or eliminate another verse. Scripture cannot be broken.

Scripture cannot be contradicted. It cannot be laid aside. It cannot be disregarded. It cannot be broken.

2 Tim. 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

There is good reason for this view of Scripture, tied with that idea of inspiration. God-breathed. God breathed out the words of Scripture, so that the words that are found in Scripture are the words of God.

2 Peter 1:19 “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

So Scripture cannot be broken! That's such a simple, and profound declaration. Every scripture, every word that is written, was spoken out by God to be written by men. And when it was written, when it was completed, God's revelation was completed.

God was finished the work of revealing his word, a word that became flesh in the person of his son Jesus.

And that word is truth!

Do you remember what Jesus prayed for his disciples in, John 17:15 “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”

Your word is truth. The very definition of truth. Scripture cannot be broken.

Everything else can be broken. My words certainly can be. What I say might be true after all. I could be wrong. My words might need to be broken, if and when they contradict the word of God. But the Word of God, that which is written, the Scripture? It cannot be broken. It must stand, the whole of it. For it is the word of God. It is truth,

And that is the foundation of our faith. Indeed, our Confession has this very insightful description of true, saving faith. “By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein.”

That must be your faith. That you believe “to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word.”

So, do you? Do you believe to be true whatsoever you read in the Bible? And believing it to be true, to have eternal life. Do you believe this? Do you believe that the Scripture cannot be broken.

If you are a communicant member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, then this is the uniform vow that you have taken when you were first invested with the rights and responsibilities of that membership, “Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God...?”

Do you? Only by means of such faith is there life to be found. Only with such faith to believe that Scripture cannot be broken can you gain any assurance of your salvation. But with such faith, you can begin to unlock all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God which God himself has revealed to us in Scripture.

John 20:30 “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

In that context, and with all the earnestness I can possibly express, please leave today with this sense of truth deeply embedded into your mind and soul. If Scripture speaks, then God is speaking. If you read it in Scripture, then you believe it to be true. For “Scripture cannot be broken.”