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The Canadian *Lord's Day* Association
Advanced Bible Correspondence Course
Lesson 24: Justification

LORD'S DAY 24

Q.62. BUT WHY CANNOT OUR GOOD WORKS BE THE WHOLE OR PART OF OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD?

ANSWER: BECAUSE, THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH CAN BE APPROVED OF BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF GOD, MUST BE ABSOLUTELY PERFECT, AND IN ALL RESPECTS CONFORMABLE TO THE DIVINE LAW (A); AND ALSO, THAT OUR BEST WORKS IN THIS LIFE ARE ALL IMPERFECT AND DEFILED WITH SIN (B).

(A) GALATIANS 3:10, DEUTERONOMY 27:26; (B) ISAIAH 64:6

Not by good works

Cannot a person be saved by doing good works? This would only be possible if we could produce a righteousness that could stand before God's judgment seat. What must I do to be saved? Many people want to offer the Lord something. But the Lord will require perfection from us in His judgment. He requires a perfect righteousness. We cannot satisfy the Lord with our faulty and defiled good works. God requires a perfect sacrifice. This sacrifice has been brought by only *One*, namely Jesus Christ. Christ has merited this perfect righteousness on Calvary. As the Surety He bore the entire punishment for sin. He completely fulfilled the law. He performed all good works. It is Him only Whom we need. It is and remains: Christ alone, by grace alone, by faith alone. Our good works cannot be a supplement to the work of Christ, because our works are not perfect and cannot bear the test of God's judgment. By nature, we live under God's curse. Moses spoke to the people of Israel: *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of the law to do them*" (Deuteronomy 27:26).

Can man therefore merit heaven by doing good works? No! Some teach that the obedience of Christ must be supplemented by good works. So God must do something and man must do something. However, that idea is unbiblical. Paul said: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8&9).

Thus our good works cannot be a part of the righteousness which can exist before God. God requires a perfect righteousness. No person possesses this, unless we are enabled to flee to Christ by faith as a condemned sinner. Then we receive His righteousness.

Q.63. WHAT! DO NOT OUR GOOD WORKS MERIT, WHICH YET GOD WILL REWARD IN THIS AND IN A FUTURE LIFE?

ANSWER: THIS REWARD IS NOT OF MERIT, BUT OF GRACE (A).

(A)LUKE 17:10

The rewarding of good works

Does not the Bible speak about a reward? We read *“And in keeping of them (i.e. God’s commandments) there is great reward” (Psalm 19:11)*; and: *“For your work shall be rewarded” (II Chronicles 15:7)*. Where there is a reward, must there not be some merit? Indeed, God is willing to reward good works.

However, this rewarding does not take place because of merit, but of grace. The Lord has promised to reward the good works of His people for Christ’s sake. Also in this temporal life. Of Jehoshaphat it is written: *“Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance” (II Chronicles 17:5)*.

We always think of reward according to accomplishment. One good turn deserves another. What is in it for me? The Lord, however, uses a totally different measuring-stick. He does not give wages as an obligatory recompense for services rendered. He grants the reward out of grace. The accomplishment of God’s children is so minute and the reward so great. Christ said in a parable: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23)*.

God’s children receive eternal life as a reward purely of grace, as Paul testified: *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5)*. The Holy Ghost Himself is the prime mover of all good works in the believer. The Lord does not crown their work, but His own work, out of grace.

Good works will be done to the honour of God. They come of their own accord. Faith and works belong together.

Q.64. BUT DOTH NOT THIS DOCTRINE MAKE MAN CARELESS AND PROFANE?

ANSWER: BY NO MEANS: FOR IT IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT THOSE, WHO ARE IMPLANTED INTO CHRIST BY A TRUE FAITH, SHOULD NOT BRING FORTH FRUITS OF THANKFULNESS (A).

(A)MATTHEW 7:18, JOHN 15:5

No faith without good works

Christ says: *“I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

In the parable of the true vine and the branches, we read that the fruits grow of their own accord. It is only by faith, united with Christ, that fruits appear in our lives. These fruits grow gradually. However, these fruits cannot remain hidden. Other people will notice them. The fruits are for the Husbandman, for the Lord. The life of God’s children must be to the honour of God.

It is impossible that a redeemed person should not love God. A Christian who finds his joy in sin is an impossibility. Hence it is impossible that God’s children should not do good works. They share, after all, in all the gifts of grace of the Lord Jesus. The Surety is not only given to their justification, but also to their sanctification. Paul said of Him: *“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (I Corinthians 1:30&31). The Holy Ghost sanctifies God’s children. He works good works in them, throughout their entire lives.

The biblical doctrine of justification does not make careless and profane people. That is impossible! Justifying faith, which always turns to Christ alone, by His grace always brings forth fruits of thankfulness.

Questions:

1. *What is a “perfect sacrifice”?*

2. *What do we live under by nature? Read Deuteronomy 27:26.*

3. *What is meant by the expression: “God must do something and man must do something”?*

4. *In what way does the reward of good works take place?*

5. *What is that reward?*

6. *Who is the prime mover of good works?*

7. Read John 15:15-17. What does the Lord Jesus say about the elect in these verses?

8. Good works are performed to the honour of God. These are fruits of

Evaluator: _____

Meditation: *That no flesh should glory in his presence – He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. I Corinthians 1:29, 31*

Humble, self-abased souls, who drink deep into self-knowledge, whose eye of faith is to Christ, are as jealous of the pride of the flesh as they are of its sinfulness. This is a safe state. Flesh is proud, and prone to glory, even in the presence of God. But faith in Jesus cuts off all glorying in the flesh, as viewing all salvation in Him. This is the very essence of the faith of God's elect. Yet, while in the flesh we are daily exposed to the workings of pride, which darken the view of Jesus, and tend to self-exalting and self-glorying. What pains doth the loving Spirit take to humble us! He testifies of Jesus. He shows us, by line upon line and precept upon precept, by prophets and apostles, that in Jesus all His children are "justified, and shall glory." (Isaiah 45:25)

Am I made wise unto salvation? Glory to Jesus. He is my wisdom. Am I righteous in the sight of God? Glory to Jesus. He is my righteousness; not obtained by my works, but by God's free gift. Am I sanctified? Glory to Jesus. It is through the faith of Him, by the Spirit, that I have any drops from the fountain of Jesus' blood to wash away my guilt and to cleanse my soul. Have I faith, and hope of complete redemption from all misery to all happiness? Glory to Jesus. He is my redemption, He hath bought me, He hath conquered for me. In whom then should I glory, but in Jesus alone? In Him all my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption centre. "It pleased the Father, that in Him all fullness should dwell." It pleases the Spirit to bear witness of and to glorify Jesus only.

Shall we glory in the fruits of the Spirit, as the foundation of hope and the cause of our acceptance with God? That were to deceive ourselves. The Holy Spirit produceth no fruits in us to this end. This is contrary to His office, inverts the economy of the covenant, makes faith void, and turns the eye of the soul to something within us, instead of Christ crucified for us. But by the Spirit, we glory in Christ alone. By faith in precious promises, we pray to be filled with "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ." To what end? That we should glory in the flesh because of these? No, but "to the glory and praise of God." Philippians 1:11.