

The Purpose of Works

Introduction

Many churches in Ghana teach that one must do good works in order to go to Heaven. Although pastors of such churches may word this doctrine differently, what they teach could be summed up as “Do good works, and you will go to Heaven; don’t do good works, and you will go to Hell.” Our church does not teach this. As you have seen in previous lessons, the Bible does not teach this either.

Obviously, our church believes strongly in good works. But if good works cannot save you, then what is the purpose of works? Why are so many of the faithful members of this church actively involved in doing good works?

Let’s look at what the Bible clearly teaches about works. Below are the questions our study will answer.

- I. Can our works save us?
- II. What is the purpose of works?

I. Can our works save us?

1. Isaiah 64:6

How does God view our good works? Our righteousnesses—our goodness or our good works—are as f _ _ _ _ _ r _ _ _ _ .

2. Galatians 2:16-21

According to verse 16, what justifies us (before God)? Faith or works? _____

If doing good works DID save you, what does that tell us about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? It was in v _____. The word vain here means without a cause or for nothing. In other words if your good works could save you, then Christ died for no reason.

What does trusting your good works frustrate? The g _____ of G _____. The word frustrate means to set aside, or to reject. In other words this verse is saying that if we reject the truth that salvation is by grace without works, then Christ died for nothing.

3. Ephesians 2:8, 9

This is an important passage about works. We will come back to verse 10 later, but answer these questions:

- a. According to verse 8 we are saved by grace through what? _____
- b. According to verse 9, salvation is NOT OF _____.

4. Titus 3:5

Fill in the blanks: “Not by _____ of righteousness which
__ have done but according to his mercy __ saved us...”

Salvation is not by **WORKS!** See Titus 3:4. **We** cannot be our own savior. **He** is the Saviour.

5. Romans 4:2-6

According to this passage, was Abraham justified by his faith or by his works? _____

Clearly, Abraham is NOT justified by his _____ before God. (Verse 2.) Instead, verse 5 teaches us that by our _____ we are counted righteous before God—not by our works!

6. James 2:18-26

Read James 2:18-26.

Check this box after you have read the verses.

These verses are verses that people often ask questions about because they teach that we are justified by works. So let’s study these verses.

In James 2:24, James says that we are justified “not by works only.” In other words, we are justified by faith AND we are justified by our works. Now we have learned previously that salvation or justification comes only by faith.

Notice the following verses that all teach that justification is not by works or deeds. Fill in the blanks of the missing words.

Galatians 2:16, “Knowing that a man is _____ justified by the _____ of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be _____ by the faith of Christ, and _____ by the _____ of the law: for by the _____ of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Romans 3:20, “Therefore by the _____ of the law there shall _____ flesh be _____ in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:28, “Therefore we conclude that a man is _____ by faith _____ the _____ of the law.

So why does James 2:18-26 teach that we are justified by works? Is this a contradiction in the Scriptures? Is this a mistake in our Bibles?

We will answer those questions for you, so pay close attention.

These verses use Abraham as an example. According to the passage, Abraham was justified by his faith and his works.

Verse 24 says that “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

Now, let's look at some other Scriptures that talk about the justification of Abraham.

Romans 4:2-3, “*For if Abraham were _____ by _____, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham _____ God, and it was _____ unto him for _____.*”

It is important to note here that to “*count someone righteous*” is the same as to “*justify*” someone.

So Romans 4:2-3 clearly teach that Abraham was not justified by his works but by his faith.

Romans 4 and James 2 are seen by some as contradictory; however, these passages actually blend beautifully together.

In Romans 4:2, we find the words, “not before God.” Paul teaches that our works do not justify us **before God**.

Notice that both passages quote Genesis 15:6, “*And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*” (Romans 4:3 and James 2:23) So both Paul and James agree that we ARE justified by our faith.

Now to understand the verses in James, look at James 2:18. The key words are “a man may say.”

Question: Who is having a conversation in verse 18? James and who? Is it James and God or James and another man?

Answer: The conversation is between James and another man. The conversation is between two men.

Also in verse 18, notice the words, “shew me thy faith” and “shew thee my faith.” James is speaking of one man proving his faith to another. One man proves his faith to another man only by his works. Thus, James is teaching that a man is justified by his works **before other men!**

So, we see that James 2:18-26 and Romans 4 do not contradict one another. The truth is that you are justified before God by faith, and you are justified before men by works.

Remember the Scripture in **1Samuel 16:7** which says, “*But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*”

A man can only justify or prove his faith to other men through his works because man cannot see the heart. Yet, God sees the heart, so God knows whether or not we believe.

In conclusion, our good _____ are not sufficient to save. Our good _____ are not good enough. Trusting one’s good _____ frustrates the grace of God. Christ’s death on the cross proves that our good _____ do not save. Our works justify us before _____, but not before God.

II. What is the purpose of works?

These verses will answer this question fairly simply.

1. John 14:15

We obey Christ and do good works because we l _ _ _ Him.

2. I Corinthians 10:31

Our good works will bring g _ _ _ _ to God.

3. Matthew 5:16

We do good works so that OTHERS will g _ _ _ _ _ God.

God saves us for a purpose. He wants us to bring Him glory. He wants us to shine as lights in a world filled with sin and darkness. It is so important for believers to do good works so that the lost will be drawn to believe on Christ and bring God glory! Again, good works do not save you from the consequence of sin which is death. However, if we fail to do good works, then others may never want to hear the message of salvation.

How sad it is when someone who has believed on Christ for salvation refuses to do good works to bring God glory and help bring the lost to Christ! It is an insult to God when a person receives the salvation God freely offers him and then lives a life that brings shame and disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ.

Are you living a life characterized by good works that will help others to glorify God? Sure, you will never live perfectly, but you can live in such a way that others think highly of you and desire to know your God.

4. James 2:18-26

We ARE justified by our works. However, our works do not justify us before ___ —He already sees our heart. Instead our works justify us before ___. As stated in I Samuel 16:7b, *“for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”*

God sees our heart. Man judges by our outward appearance—our works!

Illustration:

Perhaps a church member would like to have a position of leadership in the church. Maybe a lady would like to teach a Sunday school class of young children. She says she has trusted Christ. However, before the pastor gives her the opportunity to teach, she must prove herself. It would be unwise of the church to simply take her at her word that she is a godly, sincere Christian. Her works must justify her before the leadership of the church. Did she get baptized? Has she become a soul winner? Is she faithful to the services? Does she dress modestly now? Does she tithe?

See I Timothy 5:22a, *“Lay hands suddenly on no man.”* In other words, don’t be too quick to appoint someone to a

position. Make sure he has already been justified by his works.

Works are a DEMONSTRATION of our faith. Are you showing your faith to anyone by your works?

5. Ephesians 2:10

This verse teaches us that before we were born (or born again), God o _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (“planned out” or “chose”) certain good works for us to do. One of the purposes of works is so that we can fulfill our purpose for being here on God’s earth! If we do the good works God intended for us to do, then we are fulfilling the purpose for which God created us.

6. I Corinthians 3:11-15

Verse 13 tells us that every man’s work will be made _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ . This means it will be declared openly or made known. Our works will be revealed or tried by _ _ _ _ _ .

The fire here represents judgment. Our works will be judged to see if they are worthy of rewards.

In verse 14 we find that if any man’s work abides through the fire, he shall receive a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ .

In verse 15 we find that if any man’s work is burned he shall suffer _ _ _ _ _ . He himself will still be _ _ _ _ _ , but he will suffer loss because he did no works of lasting value. He will suffer the loss of the rewards he could have received. He will not suffer the loss of his soul.

Revelation 22:12 also speaks of rewards being given out. Who will be the One giving out the rewards for our work? _ _ _ _ _ (See also Revelation 22:13&16)

We should do good works because God will reward those who do the works He wants them to do. God's rewards are so much greater and wonderful than any reward a man can give you on this earth! They will also last a lot longer! Are you doing any works of eternal value? Are you helping to further the kingdom of God on this earth? Are you laying up any treasure in Heaven?

In conclusion, according to these verses:

1. We SHOULD do good works—but not to earn Heaven. We do good works out of love for the One who saved us.
2. We do good works to bring glory to God.
3. We do good works so that others will glorify God.
4. We do good works to demonstrate our faith.
5. We do good works in order to fulfill the purpose God has for us.
6. We do good works because God rewards those who do the works He wants them to do.

REVIEW – The Purpose of Works

I. Can our works save us?

- A. According to Galatians 2:16-21, what justifies man in the sight of God? _____
- B. Ephesians 2:8, 9 teach that we are saved by grace through faith, not of _____.
- C. We are saved by the mercy of God and not by the works of _____ that we have done, according to Titus 3:5.
- D. Was Abraham justified in the sight of God by his works or his faith, according to Romans 4:2-6?

- E. In James 2:18-26 it says that Abraham was justified by his faith and his works. Explain how this is possible.

- F. Our works justify us before man, but not before_____.

II. What is the purpose of works?

- A. We obey God and do good works because we _____ Him. (John 14:15)
- B. We bring glory to _____ by doing good works.
- C. We are justified in man's sight by our _____.

D. Our works are a _____ of our faith.

E. God has ordained (chosen) certain good works for us to do. When we do these good works, we are fulfilling God's _____ for our lives.

F. God will _____ those who do the works He wants them to do.

Assignment: Choose at least 2 of the following verses, memorize them, and say them to your teacher.

- Matthew 5:16
- Galatians 2:16
- Ephesians 2:10
- Revelation 22:12

Application: What will you do based on the truth you learned in this lesson?

Your name: _____

Name of teacher: _____

Signature of teacher: _____

Date completed: _____