

Chapter 3 - Patient Continuance in Doing Good

3.1 Introduction

We are exploring the broad concept that Christians, who are called of Jesus Christ, should walk worthy of their calling. We are looking at the ways we should walk which please God, and in the previous chapter we looked at the concept of living fruitful lives as we strive to serve and please God. In this chapter we look at the concept of “good work”, which the key verse we have been examining relates to being fruitful:

Col 1:9b,10 ... *that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may **walk worthy** of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, **being fruitful in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

Notice that fruitfulness and good works are always intertwined. We have looked at the virtues of the fruit of the Spirit - *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. These virtues should govern and control our interactions with others. And the natural outcome of exercising these virtues will always be good work. **Good work is the outward expression of the inward possession of the fruit of the Spirit.**

3.2 Salvation is by Grace through Faith, and not by Works

In this chapter, we are stressing the importance of good works in the life of a Christian. But let's first be clear that **salvation** is not by works. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. It is by God's grace alone, through the finished work of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross for our sins.

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

So works play no role in our salvation. But once we are saved, once we are Christians, fruitfulness and good works are expected of us by God.

3.3 The Imperative of Good Works in the Life of a Christian

Throughout this series, our focus is on the teachings of the Bible. As Christians, we know that the Bible is God's Word. We want the Holy Spirit to speak to us through the Word. So what does the Bible have to say about us doing good work?

Matt 5:16 *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works** and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

- Eph 2:10** *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should **walk** in them.*
- 1 Tim 6:18** *Let them **do good**, that they be rich in **good works**, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*
- Tit 2:7** *... in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of **good works**; ...*
- Tit 2:13,14** *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself **His own special people, zealous for good works**.*
- Heb 10:24** *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and **good works** ...*
- Jas 2:17** *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have **works**, is dead.*

So there can be no doubt that God expects good works in the lives of Christians. If you *love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself* (Lk 10:27), and God has filled your heart, mind and soul with the fruit of the Spirit, then good work will inevitably flow from your life.

3.4 God Rewards Christians according to their Works

- Matt 16:27** *“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”*
- Rev 22:12** *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*
- Matt 25:31-40** *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”

This passage sheds some light on the type of actions which may be classified as “good works”. It also indicates that our striving to do good should be focussed primarily on those whom Christ describes as “*My brethren*”. He was addressing the “*sheep*” – arguably, all the Christians.. The rest of the passage (vs 41-46) goes on to show that the “*goats*” will be punished for their lack of good works. Note that Christ does not describe the “*goats*” as “*My brethren*”. Based on this passage, it would appear that Christians should focus their efforts to do good primarily (but not exclusively) on the Church and the community of Christians.

3.5 Persistence and Endurance in Doing Good

A very helpful verse is Rom 2:7. The passage of Scripture in which this verse occurs is expounding God’s righteous judgement on all who do evil, *but glory, honour and peace to everyone who works what is good.* (vs 10) The passage states that God *will render to each according to his deeds ...*

Rom 2:7 *eternal life to those **who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour and immortality***

We want to stress here the importance of ***patient continuance in doing good***. Patient continuance means persistence and endurance. As Jesus taught in the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9; 18-23), a good start is not enough; we need to persist and endure. We need patience, because we are in a world that is dead against us. We are subject to the onslaughts of the world, and the flesh, and the devil. We will be tried and tested by things that happen to us directly, or things that happen in our families, in our workplaces or in the world. The devil does his utmost to get us down. What pleases God is ***patient continuance in doing good***.

The wording of the clause, *patient continuance in doing good*, indicates that the Christian should be on the constant lookout for opportunities for doing good. Even when our efforts to do good are rebuffed and rejected by the world, we need to exercise *patient continuance in doing good*. We are looking at a Christian mind-set. Our minds should be set on fostering and cherishing the virtues of the fruit of the Spirit, and on exercising these virtues in good works. . To repeat an earlier statement, **good work is the outward expression of the inward possession of the fruit of the Spirit.**