

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

A PATTERN OF GOOD WORKS

In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Titus 2:7-8

One would be hard pressed to present an argument, from the Scriptures, against “good works”. Yet there is much confusion among many, who profess to be the followers of CHRIST, as to what exactly constitutes “good works”. Great teachers of the Law often present an argument for “good works”, more from the perspective of what men ought to abstain from than from what they are actually to do. The rich young ruler was satisfied that he had kept the law, by adhering to what he was taught not to do, (i.e.; thou shalt not, etc). The LORD corrected HIM in pointing out that the Law which he prided himself in keeping, actually demanded much more than an abstention from various modes of conduct and that if he was to be obedient to the Law in its jot and tittle, he must actively seek the benefit of his fellow man, even to his own hurt.

When the Pharisee's asked the LORD what was the great commandment, HE gave them an answer which confounded them with its simplicity and the destruction of their self-righteousness. “*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*” (Mat 22:36-40) It is impossible to speak of “good works” apart from these principles so clearly laid out by the LORD.

When once that is understood clearly, then those who are awakened by the SPIRIT of GOD to see their own innate corruption, must despair of producing “good works” in their own flesh, and flee to HIM who alone is the AUTHOR and FINISHER of all “good works.” This is set forth in Paul's exhortation to the Philippians, “*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” (Php 2:13) When we understand the SOURCE from which all “good works” flow, we can then more clearly see that the desire for “good works” must precede the actual performance of them.

There are two Greek words which are translated into English in the KJV as “good” when used in combination with “works”. One of those words has reference to being “beautiful and virtuous in appearance.” An example of this is seen here in our text and is that which the LORD spoke of when HE exhorted HIS disciples to “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*” (Mat 5:16) These are those “works” which cannot be hid, and are intended to be seen to the glory of HIM who called HIS people unto “good works.” “*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*” (2Pet 1:3) This is that to which the sons of GOD are predestined and for which they were created, “*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*” (Tit 2:14) This is the demonstration of the SPIRIT's work in the

sons of GOD, and any who are void of “good works” are void of HIS SPIRIT. *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Rom 8:9)*

The other Greek word which is translated as “good” in combination with “works” means that which is “intrinsically beautiful”. An example of this is seen in the description of Dorcas, *“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” (Act 9:36)* Another instance of this is *“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is **good**, and thou shalt have praise of the same.” (Rom 13:3)* This is that word which describes the “good works” to which the sons of GOD are ordained. *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10)*

As we compare and contrast these two terms I believe we can see that, while there is no conflict between them, yet they set forth two distinct descriptions of those “good works” and the purpose of them. All good works are given to the sons of GOD for the glory of HIM who gives them and calls HIS people to walk in them. There are those “good works” which are brought about for the instruction, and in the view of others. Then there are those “good works” which are simply enjoyed by the one to whom they are given.

The latter is specifically mentioned in the matter of almsgiving and prayer. *“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”(Mat 6:1-6)*

Paul exhorts Titus to demonstrate a “pattern of good works”. This exhortation is identical in many ways to what Peter wrote, *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” (1Pet 5:2-3)* We see much the same in his instruction to Timothy, *“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1Tim 4:12)* We see that Paul practiced what he preached, *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” (Php 4:9)*

This Greek word which is translated as “pattern” is an interesting one, since it literally means, “a stamp or scar, i.e.; that which is smitten.” The implication is that this “pattern” which Paul exhorts Titus to follow, is that which is “struck” or written on the conscience. A man cannot “learn” to follow this “pattern” but it must be written in the fleshy tables of his heart. This is that “pattern” which is forever demonstrated by HIM who is the fulfilment of the Law for HIS children, *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1Pet 2:21-25)* What greater PATTERN could be given to the sons of men than HE who walked among men without sin neither was guile found in HIS mouth? May HE who was “smitten for us”, smite us in heart and mind to follow HIS steps.