

if we are genuine with God, He will answer our prayers.

We are saved purely by the grace of God, through faith, not **of** any good works of our own because we don't have any, but **unto** good works, i.e. in order that we may begin to do good works, which we couldn't do otherwise:

Ephesians 2:8-10

*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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto** good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

This is reality. This is the true Christian faith.

But we see all sorts of problems throughout Christendom with this.

Protestants emphasise the fact that salvation is by grace alone through faith. They understand, quite rightly, that we can't help or save ourselves, so we must be saved by the sheer grace of the Lord. They understand, quite rightly, that no amount of good works can save our souls, because we are by nature sinful creatures, and none of us can be good enough for God. We must be changed by Him in order to begin to do any good works at all.

However, it is also true, sadly, that most Protestants so emphasise salvation by grace alone, that they tend to neglect good works altogether.

And this is the caricature all other churches in Christendom have of the Protestants. The other churches all emphasise the necessity of good works so much, that they dismiss Protestants altogether as not being Christian, because they don't. They argue that, if Protestants believe that they are saved by grace alone, then they can do what they like and still get to heaven. So there's no need to bother doing good works. They're not necessary. And they see Protestants not doing many good works but simply emphasising grace, and that just confirms them in this erroneous belief.

But the truth is not like this at all. Most Protestants and all the other churches have got it completely wrong about the true nature of our salvation.

All Christians should believe in doing good works. All Christians should believe that we are saved by grace alone. But this free salvation by grace is always **unto** good works. The two always go together. Good works are the end of our faith, not the beginning.

Every other church on the face of the earth believes that they need to do good works and then, maybe, just maybe, they have done enough to get themselves into heaven. In other words, they are trying to impress God all the time.

But God is not impressed with any of it. We must see our **need** of a Saviour before we can be saved to eternal life, and that means seeing the total inability we have within ourselves to impress God with anything. **Then** crying out to God for mercy:

Luke 18:13

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I feel sorry for monks and nuns, priests and bishops, and everybody else who tries to impress God or climb the ladder of their church hierarchy in some way or other in order to try and gain God's favour. None of us can do it. Rather, they need to see their sin and inability instead. The way they dress alone shows their pride. I'm sorry, but I'm not good enough to be a monk or nun or priest or bishop. I don't dress up to try to impress others of my piety. I cry to God for mercy. I'm a sinner. I'm nothing, and God is everything.

We all need to stop showing off how pious we are to all and sundry, because we're not pious at all, we're all sinners in need of a Saviour.

Filthy Rags

Isaiah 64:6

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Everybody who professes to be a Christian ought to be living a life of good works.

We are called to keep God's Law:

John 14:15

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 15:10

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

James 2:17

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

We are called to live a life worthy of our calling in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called

Colossians 1:10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God

1 Thessalonians 2:12

That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

We will be judged according to our works:

Psalm 62:12

Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Proverbs 24:12

If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Jeremiah 17:10

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Jeremiah 32:19

Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Matthew 16:27

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

John 5:28,29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Romans 2:6

Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

1 Peter 1:17

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

Revelation 2:3

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Revelation 20:12,13

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Revelation 22:12

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

So, it is particularly important for every one who professes to be a Christian to do good works, works pleasing to the Lord.

But none of us can do this by nature:

Romans 3:10-12

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Romans 8:8

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him....

So, what can we do about this?

The answer to that question is nothing. All mankind is in a fallen state. We are all born with a sinful nature. In order even to begin to do good works, works pleasing to God, we must be changed from within. And we need God to do this for us, because we can't do it ourselves.

We must be "born again" of the Spirit of God, and become a "new creature" in Christ to be able to even begin such a life:

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:7

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 6:15

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

The only way for this to happen, is for us, as individuals, to come to an end of ourselves and call upon God to change us and forgive our many sins through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.