

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because **we keep his commandments**, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (23) And **this is his commandment**, That we should **believe on** the name of his Son **Jesus Christ**, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

(1 John 3:22-23)

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? (29) Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the **work of God**, that ye **believe** on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28-29)

Keeping His Commandments - **FAITH** - as is clearly stated in 1 John 3:22-23, **God's commandment is believing in Jesus Christ!**

The Works of God - **FAITH** - Jesus answers the question of what are the works of God, by telling His audience that believing in Himself **is the work of God!**

FAITH in Jesus IS obedience to God!

Any self-effort works are offensive to God. Think about it, the Pharisees taught and advocated keeping God's commandments, and Jesus called them **children of the devil**.

Advocating obedience to the Law by man's definition is NOT what pleases God! **Faith in Jesus is!**

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### **Good Works - Who Does Them**

Now that we have understood how God defines "good works", it is vitally important to understand... "Who does these good works?"

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet **not I, but Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

This concept is not merely a pleasant thought or something cute to sing. It is (or ought to be) both a spiritual and increasingly practical reality in the life of the believer.

Faith in Jesus **IS** the Christian's good work! This faith includes trusting that Jesus is living in us and will Himself work through us (if we let Him).

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Good Works - Conclusion

So, how does this reality that it is **Christ and not me**, become an increasing reality in our lives?

DEATH TO SELF!

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself, and take up his cross daily**, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

No self-effort is needed! With self-effort, self gets the glory. With death to self, God gets the glory!

Dying to self was spiritually accomplished when we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. The practical out-working of this is increased through **daily taking up our cross**, denying what self wants, and realizing that self was crucified with Christ.

DEATH TO SELF! - NOT SELF-EFFORT!

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The Word of God has a great deal to say about the topic of "good works". The problem is how we attempt to accomplish these "good works". Will our works be through herculean **self-effort**? Or will they be via **death to self**?

This study will examine the Scriptures and what they teach regarding the believer and "good works".

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Good Works - Ordained By God

"For by grace are ye saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before **ordained** that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works**." (Titus 2:14)

Salvation is by God's grace through faith. Good works are a **result** of **already being saved**. They are not necessary to **earn**, **maintain**, or **prove** to God that one is saved!

If one is truly a believer (a person of true **faith**), their changed life will indeed produce good works. But how these works come about is critical to understand.

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### **Good Works - Faith Without Works**

# GOOD WORKS

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*"Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that **faith** apart from works is useless? (21) Was not Abraham our father **justified** by **works** when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? (22) You see that **faith** was active along with his **works**, and **faith** was completed by his **works**;"*  
(James 2:20-22)

James, in chapter two of his epistle, tells us that faith without works is dead (or "useless" as noted above). This passage says that belief with no works is useless faith. It tells us that Abraham was **justified by works!**

But the following verse states that Abraham was **not justified by works!**

*"For if Abraham were justified by **works**, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God."*  
(Romans 4:2)

So, which passage is correct? Was Abraham justified by works, or was he not justified by works?

**BOTH** are correct. The problem is that we need to read the full context. The legalistic approach to good works usually ignores James 2:23, which says:

*"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, **Abraham believed God**, and it was imputed unto him for **righteousness**: and he was called the Friend of God."* (James 2:23)

Note: the "good works" James mentions about Abraham was his willingness to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice! It was Abraham's **FAITH** in God that was revealed (not earned) by his obedience. Also, legalists will often reference this passage to uphold keeping the Law. However, James says it was the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice that was the "work" of Abraham. The passage says nothing about Abraham keeping the Law (which did not

even exist at the time of Abraham).  
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Good Works / Evil Works - Reveal If We Know God

*"They profess that they **know God**; but in **works they deny him**, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every **good work** reprobate."* (Titus 1:16)

The above verse should be a powerfully sobering concept to every believer. Christians claim to "**know God**", but do our works **betray** us?

This verse is not pointing to an absence of **good works** but is more explicitly calling out the presence of **evil works**.

Followers of Jesus should be doing the good works God ordained for us to do, and we must **not** do abominable evil works!

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## Good Works - Glorify God - Be Sure Yours Do

*"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your **good works**, which they shall behold, **glorify God** in the day of visitation."* (1 Peter 2:12)

*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and **glorify your Father** which is in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16)

If you tell people that you are a Christian, they will **scrutinize** your every move! Every mistake, each sin, any fault that is evident in your life will be used not only against you and your claims of faith, but they will be used to call God's integrity into question.

As believers, we must live in a manner that does not cause the integrity of God's ministry to be questioned.

*"**Giving no offence** in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:"* (2 Corinthians 6:3)  
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Good Works - Scriptural Equipping

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished unto all good works**."* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

A primary purpose of the Bible and sound doctrine is to equip people of God for "**all good works**".

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## Good Works - Maintain Them

*"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou **affirm constantly**, that they which have **believed in God** might be careful to **maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable unto men."* (Titus 3:8)

*"And let our's also **learn to maintain good works** for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."* (Titus 3:14)

God fully expects us to maintain good works. He desires that our lives be fruitful and profitable to those around us.

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Good Works - God's Definition

As we can see, "good works" are ordained, commanded, and expected by God. However, what is the proper definition of "good works"? Is it legalistically keeping the Law? Feeding the hungry? Preaching the Gospel?

Who gets to define obedience to God? Who determines what works are **God's works**?

God should be the One to decide what it means to "keep His commandments" and what are His works!