

The Theology of the Westminster Standards
WCF 16.3 – The Ability of Good Works

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10)

I. Review

A. The Definition of Good Works

Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention. (WCF 16.1)

B. The Place of Good Works in the Christian Life

These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life. (WCF 16.2)

1. **Titus 2:14** – “[Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”
2. **Matt 5:16** – “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
3. **1 Pet 2:12** – “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”
4. **Col 1:10** – “... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”
5. **2 Thess 2:16–17** – “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”
6. **Titus 3:1** – “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work ...”
7. **1 Tim 2:10** – “but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”
8. **1 Tim 6:18** – “They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share ...”
9. **Titus 2:7** – “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works ...”

II. The Ability to Do Good Works

Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will, and to do, of his good pleasure: yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them. (WCF 16.3)

- A. **John 15:4–5** – *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*
- B. Is it surprising to you that every good work you perform as a Christian requires “an actual influence of ... the Holy Spirit”? Why do you think God designed your life this way? What is a danger in thinking one-sidedly about this “influence”?
1. **Phil 2:12–13** – *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”*

“It is not a 50/ 50 undertaking (not even 99.9% God and 0.1% ourselves!). Involved here is, as it could be put, the “mysterious math” of God’s covenant, of the relationship, restored in Christ, between the creator and his image-bearing creature, whereby 100% + 100% = 100%. Sanctification is 100% the work of God and, just for that reason, is to engage the full, 100% activity of the believer.” – Dr. Richard Gaffin

2. **Jude 20–21** – *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”*
- C. The confession states that believers ought to be “diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.” What are some practical ways we can stir up the grace of God?