

An Exposition of the 2nd (1689) London Baptist Confession

Chapter 16.1-7: Of Good Works

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

^a James 2:18, 22 ^b Ps. 116:12–13 ^c 1 John 2:3, 5; 2 Pet. 1:5–11 ^d Matt. 5:16 ^e 1 Tim. 6:1; 1 Pet. 2:15; Phil. 1:11 ^f Eph. 2:10 ^g Rom 6:22

1. These good works...
 - a. Those done in obedience to God's commandments.
 - b. Are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith (James 2:17-18, 22).
2. By these good works believers...
 - a. Manifest their thankfulness (Psalm 116:12-13).
 - b. Strengthen their assurance (1 John 2:3-5; 2 Peter 1:5-11).
 - c. Edify their brethren (Ephesians 4:11-16).
 - d. Adorn the profession of the gospel (Matthew 5:16).
 - e. Stop the mouths of the adversaries (1 Timothy 6:1; 1 Peter 2:15).
 - f. Glorify God whose workmanship they are (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:11).
3. These good works produce the fruit of holiness which ends in eternal life (Romans 6:22).

16.3 Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ;^a and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is necessary an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them and to will and to do of his good pleasure;^b yet they are 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.^c

^a John 15:4–5 ^b 2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 2:13 ^c Phil. 2:12; Heb. 6:11–12; Isa. 64:7

1. Our ability to do good works is not of ourselves.
 - a. It is from the Spirit of Christ (John 15:4-5).
 - b. It is enabled by the graces received (2 Corinthians 3:5).
 - c. It is influenced by the same Spirit according to His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).
2. Our duty to perform good works is not a passive responsibility.
 - a. It requires diligence in stirring up the grace of God in ourselves (Isaiah 64:7; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 6:11-12).
 - b. It is not our duty only when there is a “special motion of the Spirit.”

16.4 They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate¹, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.^a

^a Job 9:2–3; Gal. 5:17; Luke 17:10

1. The Roman Catholic doctrine of *supererogation* and “the Treasury of the Church.”
2. No person can do more than God requires of him (Luke 17:10; Romans 3:23).

¹ Supererogate means “to do more than is required” and refers to the Roman Catholic teaching that good works that go beyond what is necessary for salvation could be stored up in “the Treasury of the Church” and transferred to others.