

But It Is a Good Work!

Eph 2:1-10

Introduction:

- A. Periodically you'll hear of people getting upset when someone talks about the teachings of the Salvation Army and pointing out they don't match the Scriptures. Rarely are these people worried about teachings, rather they think it shouldn't be an issue at all because "just look at the good work that they do."
- B. I agree they do nice things for people. But does the fact that people like what they do the only thing that defines what is good? This line of argument is common inside and outside the church.
- C. Facts take a backseat to the perceived benefits someone offers to people. In politics it is called buying votes. In religion is picking a church that offers me the most

II. *God And Good*

- A. Good is defined by God and not by man - Jas 1:17
 - 1. God doesn't lead people into sin - Jas 1:13
 - 2. There is no sin in God - 1 Jn 1:5
- B. We were created for good works - Eph 2:10
 - 1. Our good works don't originate with ourselves; they come from God.
 - 2. When we do good works, God gets the glory because it was God who told us to do them - Matt 5:16
 - 3. And those good works are defined in His Word - Jas 1:18; 2 Tim 3:16-17
- C. The Israelites spent a period when they lost God's word. They no longer knew what God wanted - 2 Kings 22:1-2, 10-17
 - 1. Ignorance is not an excuse. God's Word still stands
 - 2. Judgment is based on what we do in comparison to what God has instructed - Rom 2:6, 16
 - 3. In my past I have run across congregations where certain subjects are not taught.
 - a. Generally, the excuse is "It might cause a split"
 - b. What it means is that they are practicing things they aren't certain they can defend, so they don't want to talk about it.
 - c. But avoiding the issue doesn't make something right.
- D. Even apostles had limits to their authority - 2 Cor 10:17-18
 - 1. It doesn't matter if others agree with you.
 - 2. The only thing that matters is what God approves of.
- E. Men can easily stumble
 - 1. Things that look right to men, might be wrong - Prov 14:12
 - 2. Because of our limitations we can't pick our own way - Jer 10:23
- F. Instead, God has given us everything we need to know - 2 Pet 1:2-4

III. *Issues*

- A. Starting in the 1940's there was a push to get churches to get involved in good works. There were several similar issues that arose at the same time, but the one that was pushed hardest dealt with orphan's homes.
 - 1. There is a lot of emotion when orphans are involved.
 - 2. To be fair, let's define the issue precisely: Can a church use its funds to help operate an orphan's home?
 - a. It is not whether orphan's homes should exist, though in recent times this method of taking care of orphans has fallen out of favor.
 - b. It is not should orphans be cared for
 - c. You see when emotions run high, people tend to go to extremes and not consider the real issue.

3. What does God say?
 - a. James 1:27 is straight forward. Each Christian is responsible for the care of orphans and widows
4. The usual response is that the church is a collection of Christians so the church running an orphans' home is the same thing.
 - a. The problem is that God treats them as different
 - b. Individuals have primary responsibility for widows - 1 Tim 5:8
 - c. Churches have a narrow, limited responsibility - 1 Tim 5:9-12
 - d. The result is that the church and the individual's responsibilities are different - 1 Tim 5:16
 - e. Another example is in settling problems. The individual, groups of individuals, and the church are treated as three distinct sets - Matt 18:15-17
- B. A similar issue arose about the same time: churches financially supporting schools
 1. Again, it is not "Are schools right or wrong?" The question is whether a church can use its funds to support a school. Did God authorize it?
 2. God made parents responsible for their children's education - Eph 6:4
 3. Paul did teach in a school for a while - Acts 19:9-10
 4. But we don't find an example of a church financing a school. But the Bible contains all that is good.
 5. Today you can look at the contributors to many well-known schools and find that almost all accept funding from churches and actively solicit from churches. But where is their authority from God to do so?
- C. Teaching the gospel is a good work
 1. But people decided that leaving the matter to each congregation was too inefficient.
 - a. They pooled money under a separate board and created "missionary societies."
 - b. These organizations saw to it that preachers were paid reasonably and were doing their job
 - c. The problem is that people created an organization separate from the church to do a work of the church. There is no authorization for this.
 - d. It is the organization that decides who is worthy of support and thus ends up controlling what is taught.
 2. Some try to avoid this by having elders at a church be on the board. But this still is a separate organization.
 3. Another attempt is to have one congregation in charge of organizing the missions. But this puts this one congregation over the other congregations in at least one realm of the church's duties.
 4. The problem is that each is an alteration of what God taught in the name of doing a good work - Gal 1:6-10.

Conclusion:

- A. Good works is not an excuse for disobedience (Matt 7:21-23). Disobedience can never truly be a good work
- B. Let us honor God by doing His commandments - 1 Jn 5:1-3