

Am I Allowed to Show my Good Works?

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.

Matthew 5:16

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus is in the middle of the passages referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. He is explaining that those who believe in Him will show others who He is, through their good works. No one hides good things. We all put out the good china out when we have company over for dinner. We clean our desks the morning before the boss arrives for a visit, so he can see how organized we are. We all want to share the “good” things in life. Jesus tells us that this is exactly how we are going to show others the Kingdom of God.

Then we get sidetracked in this age of information, forgetting to read God’s word before listening to man’s opinion. With valid reason, many pastor’s today become fixated on not showing your good works. All too often, we hear proclamations of “I am a good person, and therefore I will see you in heaven.” Too many people miss the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in that “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” Ephesians 2:8-9. No one can be saved through good works. No one can earn their way to heaven. Many people cannot fathom how a “good person” could go to hell. But scripture is clear that we are saved through faith, not good works.

So where do good works fit into our lives as Christians? Well, we must, again, look to scripture for our answer to this question. James, Jesus’ brother, addresses an audience of Christians with regard to living out one’s faith. He is speaking to the disparities between those who have and those who have not. He is very clear in James 2:14-18:



What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Our works complement our faith. Without using our faith, we are not glorifying God in any way. Our walk with Christ is active, using our faith to glorify God in all that we do. But, many will quote out of context Matthew 6:3 exclaiming, “But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”. So,

how are we to “in the same way, let [our] light shine before others, so that they may see [our] good works and give glory to [our] Father who is in heaven,” (Matt 5:16) if even our right hand is not supposed to see what our left hand accomplishes? They seem so counter-intuitive, until you read Matthew 6:3 in context.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-4

Did you catch that – do not perform works “in order to be seen” or “that [you] may be praised by others”. Our motivation for doing the works is part of our faith. Are we doing good deeds to be seen as “holy” by others, or are we doing good deeds to give glory to God which is where we find our hope? It is the works that show others how wondrous our Heavenly Father is. Remember, “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” 2 Tim 3:16-17. God wants us to do good works in order to show others His love. He equips us for those good works. Since He is the one who equips us, we shine a light on our Heavenly Father when we do good works, giving Him all of the glory.



Doing good works shows others who our heart is turned toward – the one True God. Who do you put at center stage – yourself, receiving accolades for good deeds, or God, who equipped you for those good works? We must always remember to turn the spot light on God, giving Him the glory in anything we are able to accomplish.

References

- **English Standard Version (ESV)**
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