

The Third Part

OUR THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 32

86. Q. Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace alone through Christ, without any merit of our own, why must we yet do good works?

A. Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit to be His image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves thankful to God for His benefits,¹ and He may be praised by us.² Further, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits,³ and that by our godly walk of life we may win our neighbours for Christ.⁴

1. **Romans 6:13** And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

1 Peter 2:5-10 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁶ Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."⁷ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"⁸ and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

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

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

3. **Matthew 7:17-18** Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

Galatians 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

2 Peter 1:10-11 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

4. **Matthew 5:14-16** You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Romans 14:17-19 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the

things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

1 Peter 2:12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 3:1-2 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

87. Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent walk of life?

A. By no means. Scripture says that no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, greedy person, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like shall inherit the kingdom of God.¹

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10** Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you

beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:5-6 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.



With this Lord's Day we begin the third section of the Catechism which deals with our thankfulness. We will deal with two things in this last section, namely, the **Ten Commandments** and the **Lord's Prayer**. From these two things we learn that the way whereby we show our thankfulness to God is through the things we do and the things we say. Our thankfulness concerns our **walk** and our **talk**.

Before the Catechism begins to explain what God requires of us in the Ten Commandments, it emphasises the reason why we keep the commandments. We do not keep God's law in order **to be saved**. No, we keep His law because we **have been**

saved. Our obedience is not the basis for our salvation. We learned in Lord's Day 23 that we are saved on the basis of Christ's obedience which He rendered for us in our place. This can be seen from Question 86, which reads, "**Since we have been delivered...**" and also from the answer, "**Because Christ, having delivered us...**"

The reason why the Catechism stresses this so strongly is because of the heresy of Rome. Rome taught that good works earn salvation. But that is altogether wrong! Good works do not earn salvation. We learned that already in Lord's Day 24. Our good works earn us nothing because they are imperfect, while God's justice demands perfection. That is why we must rely

upon Christ's obedience (righteousness). He alone obeyed God's commandments perfectly. It is on the basis of Christ's righteousness that we are saved (cf. LD 23).

The question which is asked, then, is a very logical one. If Christ has completely paid for our salvation without us contributing any merits of our own, why must we still do good works? If our good works earn us nothing, and if everything we need for salvation is freely given to us from Christ, why bother doing good works? Why not do those sinful things that we by nature like to do?

Indeed, Rome said that if our salvation is obtained apart from our good works, then there is no longer any incentive to do good works. The doctrine that salvation is by faith alone would lead to careless and wicked living.

The church of Rome did not correctly understand what it means to be saved. To be saved does not simply mean that we are released from the **punishment of sin** and the judgment of hell. That surely is included! In Lord's Day 26 of these notes, we learned that our salvation consists of two things: the cleansing of our **guilt** through the blood of Christ (our justification), and our cleansing from the **pollution of sin**, our depravity. Our corruption or depravity is removed through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit (our sanctification).

Christ does not leave His redeemed to wallow in the filth of sin. He does not leave them miserable creatures who bear the image of the evil one. He makes them new creatures. He restores them in the image of God. They are made new again so that they can produce good fruits to the honour and glory of God. This is what the Catechism means when it says that those whom Christ redeems by His blood, He also renews by His Spirit. Those whom Christ justifies He also sanctifies so that they will produce good works. Paul wrote in Titus 2:14 "[Christ] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Indeed, the ultimate goal of our redemption is the production of good works. In Ephesians 2:8-10 Paul wrote, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" Notice how Paul says that we have been saved, not **because** of good works but **for** good works. Good works are not the **basis** of our salvation, but the **goal** of our salvation. This, then, is the first reason why we do good works, because we have been saved for this very purpose.

The Catechism mentions still four other reasons.

1. Good works show thankfulness.

When giving the law to Israel, the LORD taught His people that they must show love and thankfulness to God for His grace by keeping His commandments, which means the same as doing good works. In the second commandment God promised to show "...*mercy to thousands, to those who love [Him] and keep [His] commandments*" (Exodus 20:6). Christ said the same, "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.*" (John 14:21 cf. also 14:15, 15:10).

2. **Good works praise God.** If the good works which we do were our own accomplishment, we would receive the praise for doing them. But they are not, therefore we do not receive the glory. The good works which we do are works that God has prepared for us to walk in (cf. Ephesians 2:10). It is God the Holy Spirit who is at work in us both to will and to work for God's good pleasure (cf. Philippians 2:13). Therefore we glorify God for the good that we can do.

Furthermore, when we do good works we bear the image of God. For those works are regarded as good which reflect God. When we show faithfulness, kindness, mercy in our daily work, we reflect the image of God. Thus God is glorified by others through the good

works which we do. Christ said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). However, God’s name is abused by our evil when we fail to live in accordance with God’s commandments. Paul said, *“You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written”* (Romans 2:23-24).

3. Good works assure us of our faith.

How do we know that we are delivered? We do not hear a voice from heaven or so. We hear of God’s grace in the Bible, and His grace is confirmed in the sacraments. But still sometimes we doubt. How can we be sure? Scripture says that a tree may be known by its fruits (cf. Matthew 7:16-18). If we produce good works, then that can only mean that God has renewed us. For we know that we ourselves could never bear these fruits (John 15:4-5). The fact that we bear good fruit means that we have been grafted into Christ, the vine. In Him, we who were dead branches are made alive. From Him we receive the ability to bear good fruit.

4. Good works may serve to win our neighbour for Christ.

This is related to the second purpose. The good works which we do reflect that goodness of God. When we render good works, our neighbours see that there is something different about us, something which they respect and admire. We become a living testimony of the gospel, or as Christ says, we become lights on a hill (cf. Matthew 5:14-16). Some who see the light of the gospel reflected in the way we live may be drawn to the light, which is Jesus Christ.

answer of the Catechism is a resounding *“No!”* Good works are not necessary *for* salvation, but they are a necessary *fruit of* salvation.

Does God redeem us from the guilt of our sin, and not redeem us from the corruption of sin? Does God justify, and not sanctify? Can we be in Christ, and not have Christ in us? To each of these the answer is *“No!”* Those who are delivered from the guilt of sin are also delivered from the corruption of sin. Those who are justified are also sanctified. Those who by faith are grafted into Christ will find that Christ comes to dwell in them.

Those whom God redeems He also renews, so that they will certainly and unfailingly bear good fruit. There can be no faith without fruit, for faith is living.

Now, if there is no fruit, there is no faith. And if there is no faith, there is no salvation. Therefore Scripture says, *“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”* (Matthew 7:19) *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). Also read the parable in Luke 13:6-9 of the owner of the vineyard and the non-productive vine, or the description of those who are admitted into the new Jerusalem (Revelation 22:14-15, cf. Ephesians 5:5).

No man is saved because of good works, but no man is saved without good works.



Questions:

1. With what does this third and last section of the Catechism deal? What two things are dealt with in this third section of the Catechism? What does this show us about the way we show our thankfulness?
2. What is a wrong motive for keeping the commandments of God? What is the basis for our salvation?
3. What did Rome teach with respect to good works? Why is this wrong?
4. From what two things are we released when we are saved by Christ? Will we ever be delivered from the one and not from the other? Why not?
5. According to Paul, for what purpose did Christ redeem us (cf. Titus 2:14 and Ephesians 2:10)?
6. Fill in the blanks: We are not saved _____ good works, but _____ good works. Good works are not the _____ of our salvation, but rather, they are the _____ of our salvation.
7. For what four reasons do we do good works?
8. What did Christ say in John 14:21? What, then, motivates us to do good works?
9. When we do good works, who should receive the glory for them? Why?
10. How do our good works glorify God?
11. How do good works assure us of our faith?
12. How can our good works win our neighbour for Christ?
13. Fill in the blanks: Good works are not necessary _____ salvation, but they are a necessary _____ of salvation. Explain what this means.
14. Fill in the blanks: No man is saved _____ good works; but no man is saved _____ good works.
15. What did Christ say in Matthew 7:19? Retell the parable of Luke 13:6-9.