

Name: _____



**Advanced Bible Correspondence Course
Lesson 32: The Life of Thankfulness**

LORD'S DAYS 32-52, QUESTIONS 86-129, ARE THE THIRD PART OF THE CATECHISM. THIS PART DEALS WITH THE LIFE OF THE CONVERTED ONE AS A LIFE OF THANKFULNESS.

Do you still remember question 2 about the three things which we must know that we may live in comfort and die happily? You will be able to trace this back in the epistle to the Romans. The Heidelberg Catechism, following in the footsteps of this epistle, has been divided accordingly.

Part One portrays the lost state of man, who lies totally condemned before God. Part Two describes the glorious deliverance which God has revealed in His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Part Three shows us what thankfulness for such a deliverance means in practice: a life in conformity with God's Commandments.

LORD'S DAY 32

Q.86. SINCE THEN, WE ARE DELIVERED FROM OUR MISERY, MERELY OF GRACE, THROUGH CHRIST, WITHOUT ANY MERIT OF OURS, WHY MUST WE STILL DO GOOD WORKS?

ANSWER: BECAUSE CHRIST, HAVING REDEEMED AND DELIVERED US BY HIS BLOOD, ALSO RENEWS US BY HIS HOLY SPIRIT AFTER HIS OWN IMAGE; THAT SO WE MAY TESTIFY, BY THE WHOLE OF OUR CONDUCT, OUR GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR HIS BLESSINGS (A); AND THAT HE MAY BE PRAISED BY US (B); ALSO, THAT EVERYONE MAY BE ASSURED IN HIMSELF OF HIS FAITH BY THE FRUITS THEREOF (C); AND THAT BY OUR GODLY CONVERSATION OTHERS MAY BE GAINED TO CHRIST (D).

(A) ROMANS 6:13, 12:1-2, 1 PETER 2:5, 9, 1 CORINTHIANS 6:20;

(B) MATTHEW 5:16, 1 PETER 2:12; (C) 2 PETER 1:10, MATTHEW 7:17, GALATIANS 5:6, 22; (D) 1 PETER 3: 1-2, ROMANS 14:19.

Why must we still do good works?

The question is understandable. If salvation is a matter of mere grace, why then must we still do good works? Do we not confess that it is all the work of God, from the beginning to the end? Christ draws a person out of the bottomless pit of misery. Man himself does not contribute anything to it. Neither does he deserve to be drawn out of that pit. In opposition to other religions, we have confessed that good works put no weight in the balances regarding deliverance. Do we then not contradict ourselves when we again bring up good works?

The answer is surprisingly simple: Christ redeemed His children with His blood. He also actually delivered them from the power of Satan. The debt is forgiven. However, the Lord does more. Man is also thoroughly polluted with the filthiness of sin. Therefore he must be changed, indeed, be renewed, as we already have seen in question and answer 6. He must again resemble God, as Adam did before the fall. God's image must be restored in him. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul said: "*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son*" (Romans 8:29)

This is no small thing: to be delivered from hell, from the slavery of Satan, to be made a child of God from being a child of the devil. What an honour! And what a glorious future: to live forever in heaven with the Lord, restored in God's image and in the likeness of the Lord Jesus. Should that not cause a person to be thankful? Of course, thankfulness will be expressed, in words and deeds. These then are those good works.

A four-fold function

Good works have a four-fold function.

1. They prove that a man has been saved.
2. They glorify God. The life of a child of God in the tender fear of the Lord commands respect. Think only of Joseph. He said to Potiphar's wife, who wanted to seduce him: *How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Genesis 39:9).
3. God approves of such a life in the fear of the Lord. It gives peace in one's heart and contributes to the assurance of the person concerned that he is a child of God. If a child of God lives carelessly and the devil attacks him about this and sows doubt in his heart, that person has nothing to say in defence. "Are *you* a child of God? Your conduct would certainly be different!" When a person lives close to the Lord, such attacks of Satan have less effect.

The apostle Peter wrote: *Wherefore the rather, give diligence to make your calling and election sure*" (2 Peter 1:10). This cannot be done without good works as fruits of that new life.

4. One who has learned to know the Lord as his God, desires it also for others. How can he win other people for the service of the Lord? Is it by speaking about

it? That is also true, of course, we read of Paul: *So the faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:17). But it is especially by living up to it, by a godly walk, by living to the honour of God, by speaking through your deeds, and by preaching with your life. These things leave impressions and cause slanderers to be silenced. It can cause questions to be asked, to which answers can be given. That can lead to the conversion of others. Therefore Christ commands: *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

Q. 87. CANNOT THEY THEN BE SAVED, WHO, CONTINUING IN THEIR WICKED AND UNGRATEFUL LIVES, ARE NOT CONVERTED TO GOD?

ANSWER: BY NO MEANS; FOR THE HOLY SCRIPTURE DECLARES THAT NO UNCHASTE PERSON, IDOLATER, ADULTERER, THIEF, COVETOUS MAN, DRUNKARD, SLANDERER, ROBBER, OR ANY SUCH LIKE, SHALL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD (A).

(A) 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10, EPHESIANS 5:5-6, 1 JOHN 3:14.

Will unrepentant, ungodly persons be saved?

Paul wrote: *"Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"* (1Corinthians 6:9-10). The previous answer indicates why a redeemed sinner ought to show his thankfulness in a godly life. However, if this does not happen and he lives in all kinds of sins, can he then expect to be saved? Here the answer is very clear: In no wise.

Antinomians

There have always been people who made good works a ground upon which they expect their salvation. They want to earn heaven. But there have also been people who turned the other way. We call them antinomians: people who are against (*anti*) a new life in accordance with the law (*nomos*). They continue living in many sins. They try to justify this. They reason: "This would make grace much greater." But that is impossible. If we say that we possess grace, we cannot continue living in sin. God's Word is very clear in this, as we read in the text quoted above from 1 Corinthians 6. Christ not only delivers from guilt, but also renews by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the person who may be joined to Christ through faith hates sin with everything that is in him. If a Christian falls into one of the sins mentioned, he cannot continue living in it, for then he has no rest until he has taken refuge to the blood of Christ and has received forgiveness. Therefore, this cannot be lacking in sanctification.

Questions:

1. What “three things” are necessary for man to know that he may live and die happily?

2. What fourfold aim do good works have?

3. What loss does God’s child experience when he trifles with good works?

4. What future does a person have who lives his life completely in sin?

5. Is it possible to earn salvation by doing good works? See Ephesians 2

Meditation: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” –1 Corinthians 1:30.

Consider what heavenly blessings there are for those who have a living union with the Son of God. Everything is provided for them that shall be for their salvation and their sanctification: not a single blessing has God withheld that shall be for their eternal good. View them as foolish, ignorant, unable to see the way, puzzled and perplexed by a thousand difficulties, harassed by sin, tempted by Satan, far off upon the sea. How shall they reach the heavenly shore? God, by an infinite act of sovereign love has made his dear Son to be their “wisdom” so that none shall err so as to err fatally; none shall miss the road for want of heavenly direction to find it or walk in it. Their glorious Head, who is in heaven, is made of God unto them wisdom on earth to bring them to their heavenly inheritance. He opens up his word to the heart; he sends down a ray of light into their bosom, illuminating the sacred page and guiding their feet into the way of truth and peace. If they wander, he brings them back; if they stumble, he raises them up; and whatever be the difficulties that beset their path, sooner or later some kind direction or heavenly admonition comes from his gracious Majesty. Thus the wayfaring man, though a fool, does not err in the way of life, for his gracious Lord being his “wisdom”

leads him safely along through every difficulty until he sets him before his face in glory.

Taken from: "Harvested Sheaves" by J.C. Philpot