

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 32: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA'S 86-87

Question 86: SINCE, THEN, WE ARE REDEEMED FROM OUR MISERY BY GRACE THROUGH CHRIST, WITHOUT ANY MERIT OF OURS, WHY MUST WE DO GOOD WORKS? **Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Spirit after His own image, that with our whole life we show ourselves thankful to God for His blessing, and that He be glorified through us; then also, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by the fruits thereof; and by our godly walk win also others to Christ.**

Having now considered the greatness of our sin and misery (Q&A 3-11), and how we believers have been redeemed from our sin and misery (Q&A 12-85), we will now learn how we are to show ourselves thankful for our redemption (Q&A 86-129).

We have already learned from Q&A 64 that “it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.” Good works are the fruit of redemption (Matt. 7:18; Mark 4:20; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14).

There are **five reasons why we must do good works:** (1) to show that Christ, having redeemed us (from the eternal penalty of sin) by His blood, is also sanctifying and renewing us by His Holy Spirit (Col. 3:9-10) so that we become more like Him, “who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). “He who says he abides in Christ ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6); (2) that with our whole life we show ourselves thankful to God for our redemption. “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psalm 34:1); (3) that God may be glorified through us. “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me” (Psalm 50:23). “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Psalm 50:15); “you were bought at a price; *therefore, glorify God* in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20; cf. Rom. 12:1); (4) that we may be assured of our faith, as we see the fruits of faith in our hearts and lives (Matt. 7:17; Gal. 5:6, 21-22; 2 Pet. 1:10). The first fruit of true faith is a confession of sins to God for forgiveness (1 John 1:9; Luke 18:13); (5) that by our godly walk we may bring others to Christ. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16; cf. 1 Peter 3:1; Prov. 11:30).

Question 87: CAN THEY, THEN, NOT BE SAVED WHO DO NOT TURN TO GOD FROM THEIR UNTHANKFUL, UNREPENTENT LIFE? **By no means, for, as Scripture says, no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like shall inherit the kingdom of God [1 Cor. 6:9-10].**

Because the unbeliever lives an unthankful and unrepentant life (Rom. 1:21), they do not do good works *at all* (Gen. 6:5; Rom. 3:12). Unlike the believer, they do not ask God to forgive their sins and to help them do good works. They are deceived if they think grace means it is not necessary to forsake their sins and obey God out of thankfulness. “Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such *were* some of you. But you *were* washed, but you *were* sanctified, but you *were* justified.” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 32 JOHN CALVIN RETURNS TO GENEVA

On September 13, 1541, Calvin returned to Geneva. “The following Sunday Calvin went up into the pulpit at Geneva, and simply began again to expound holy Scripture at the place where he had left off when he had been banished [*does anyone know exactly where he had left off?*]” (Cadier, *The Man God Mastered*, 107).

“Upon his return to Geneva, Calvin drew up a *Church Order*, a set of rules for the governing of the church.... It was based on the teaching of Scripture that Christ has ordained four offices in the Church: pastors, teachers or professors, elders, and deacons. The cornerstone of Calvin’s form of church government is the office of elder. Elders are chosen from among the members of the church. Together with the minister or pastor they form the consistory. The elders’ office is to watch over the purity of doctrine and life of the members of the church, of each other, and of the minister. To the consistory Calvin assigned the right of discipline of the members of the church to the point of excommunication.... For Calvin, the freedom of the Church was concentrated in the Church’s right of excommunication without outside interference.

“Upon one occasion, certain citizens of Geneva whom the consistory had excommunicated came into the church armed. Their plan was to force admission to the communion table. They threatened Calvin’s life if he should refuse to administer the sacrament to them. Protectingly, Calvin stretched out his hands over the bread and wine, and declared that they would be able to take of it only over his dead body. By sheer moral courage and strength, he made them desist from their attempt to gain admittance by force to the communion table.

“Bitter opposition often arose against the strict discipline of the Church over the moral life of the members. More than once it looked as if Calvin would be expelled a second time from Geneva. What in the end saved the day for Calvin was the influx into Geneva of refugees from other countries and the case of Servetus [which we will visit later]” (Kuiper, 197-198).

While Calvin was trying to make Geneva into a Christian city, back in Germany Martin Luther was dying. “Luther and Calvin never met, but they did exchange letters. In one letter [Jan. 21, 1545] Calvin wrote, ‘Would that I could fly to you, that I might even for a few hours enjoy the happiness of your society ... but seeing that it is not granted to us on earth, I hope that shortly it will come to pass in the kingdom of God.’” (Nichols, *Reformation*, 78).

“Catholics and Protestants awaited news of Luther’s death – the Catholics hoped for a terrible death (to prove that he was wrong) and the Protestants a triumphant one (to prove that he was right) [a crowd of people surrounded his death bed and tried to comfort him, as he kept repeating the words, ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son’] Martin Luther died in the early morning hours of February 18, 1546, only a few steps from the house in Eisleben where he was born sixty-two years earlier.” He “was buried in front of the pulpit in the Castle Church of Wittenberg ... an appropriate place. The pulpit was the place of his life’s work. He was a preacher of the Word of God. And faithful to the end” (*Legacy of Luther*, 73-74). Among his most famous words were, “I did nothing; the Word did everything.”

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