

Must We Still Do Good Works?

Heidelberg Catechism

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Bible Text: Titus 2
Preached on: Sunday, July 24, 2016

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In connection with that third section of the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 32, that asks about good works, we read the word of God in Titus 2. We'll begin reading at the very end of chapter 1 just to see the connection between the chapters. In verse 15 of Titus 1 we read,

15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.
16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

So there it's speaking of the unbeliever. Now in contrast to that Paul says to his young student, Titus, chapter 2. This is the word of God.

1 But speak thou the things which become [or are fitting with] sound doctrine: 2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. 3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. 6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. 7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part [that is, who is an opponent of you] may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. 9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again [that is, not talking back]; 10 Not purloining [stealing], but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who

gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. 15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

That's the reading of the holy Scripture.

It's on the basis of that passage and passages like it we have the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 32. We find that in the back of the Psalter on page 19. Lord's Day 32, Questions and Answers 86 and 87, and you notice that 32 is the beginning of the third part of the Catechism of thankfulness. We just finished the Catechism's teaching of how we are delivered from our misery of sin and bondage to sin, now it asks about thankfulness and it begins this way, Lord's Day 32, Question 86,

Q. 86. Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ without any merits of ours, why must we still do good works?

A. 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, and that he may be praised by us; also, that everyone may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ.

Q. 87. Cannot they then be saved, who continuing in their wicked and ungrateful lives, are not converted to God?

A. 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.

We must do good works. Maybe to you that's a truism, maybe to you that's easy, you knew that, that was obvious from your reading of the Scripture, but maybe it wasn't and for different reasons maybe it isn't. Maybe you say we aren't required to do good works and we aren't required to do good works because we're not saved by works, we're saved by grace without works. Without any merit of ours, Jesus died for us, without any works of ours, Jesus has promised to bring us to heaven, therefore, we don't do good works. But the Catechism is very clear on the basis of the Bible and in particular that chapter that we just read, we must do good works.

It doesn't ask us, the Catechism doesn't, must we do good works since we are delivered from our misery by grace through Christ without any merit of ours, it asks why must we do good works, that is, it assumes that we must, and we must assume that we must do good works too. There mustn't be any question in our minds that that is a requirement. There mustn't be any question in our minds whether the necessity of good works needs to be preached. And it certainly must not be a question in our minds whether we ought to do

good works or not. And yet that has been a danger down through the ages in the Christian church and even in Reformed churches. If you read the history of the Reformation, you know that both Luther and Calvin faced opponents, to use the language of the text that we read, those who were of the contrary part, that is, those who are hostile to them, those who were contrary to them, both Luther and Calvin faced opponents who said because we are saved by grace through faith without works, we don't need to do works. Luther faced that in Agricola, Calvin faced that in the group that were called the Libertines, and so we must not be surprised if we face that also. You might not face that if you're not in a Reformed church, in a church that perhaps inclines to works in such a way that they say it's by your works that you are saved, then of course you're going to hear the preaching of the necessity of good works, but even in a Reformed church and perhaps especially in a Reformed church, there may be this mistake made: we are saved not by works, therefore, we are not required to do good works.

Don't be surprised, people of God, if you hear from someone in this congregation that good works aren't necessary, that you mustn't emphasize good works, that you mustn't preach the necessity of good works, that if the preacher preaches about good works, then he's probably Arminian. Don't be surprised if you would hear that kind of objection. I've been a minister in the Protestant Reformed churches for over 30 years and in the course of that ministry it has happened more than a few times that people have objected to sermons that emphasized the need for good works. Don't be surprised if you hear that objection.

The Catechism makes very clear for us who are Reformed people what is the teaching of the Reformed faith, and it does that on the basis of the holy Scripture. If you don't study afterwards only Titus 2, then perhaps consider looking again at Galatians 5 because the apostle addresses this very problem in that chapter when he says, "brethren, ye have been called unto liberty," that is, you've been called to freedom, freedom, but don't use that freedom, Paul says in chapter 5 of Galatians, as "an occasion for your flesh," that is, to live in ungodliness as though grace denies the importance of works. But Titus makes that clear. Paul's letter to that young pastor makes very clear the importance, indeed the necessity, of good works.

So let's see that necessity of good works this morning and the theme of that question: why must we do good works? And then point out in three points, first of all, that they are necessary, good works are. That's most basic. They are useful, good works are, and that's important to see too. And third, that good works and the necessity of them and the usefulness of them, must be preached. Necessary, useful and preached.

Good works are necessary. Now, we need to see in the first place that they are necessary by looking at what salvation is. I think sometimes those who make the mistake that imagine good works aren't necessary, they make that mistake because they do not understand the very nature of salvation which is not only that Christ delivers us from something, but it's also that he delivers us unto something. Our salvation is not merely that Christ died on the cross to spare us from the condemnation that we deserved because of our sins, but our salvation is also that having died on the cross, having paid the price

for our sins, having ascended into heaven, he also renews us by his Holy Spirit so that we are able to do good works.

Now, see that in the Catechism. That's really what the Catechism is saying. We read it but I call your attention to that. Why must we do good works? The Catechism says because having redeemed and delivered us, he also renews us by his Holy Spirit, that is, there are two parts to salvation, and you mustn't imagine that you can have the one without the other, a renewal without the redemption, or the redemption without the renewal. They come as a package. A package. Those whom Christ redeemed by his blood on the cross, they also are renewed by his Holy Spirit.

That's such an important part of salvation that it can't be overestimated and overemphasized. Christ did something for us, now Christ does something also in us. What he did for us was justify us, what he does in us is sanctify us, and you mustn't pit one of those over against the other as though justification is the important part that we must emphasize, and sanctification, well, that's just for those people who like to talk about works. The Bible emphasizes both, Titus 2 emphasizes both. We'll look at that in just a moment, the importance of works there. Christ justifies us by paying for our sins, he also sanctifies us, that is, he makes us holy. He renews us. The language of the Catechism is that he renews us after his own image so that he gradually makes his own children more and more look like him. I can imagine you have that in your own experience once in a while if you have had children or growing up yourself, when you were very, very young some people perhaps said to you, "You look like your father or you look like your mother." Then the older you got, the more people said, "You look like your father."

That's how Christ works in us. He not only does something for us, he works something in us, that is, he makes us holy. That's another way of saying he sanctifies us. That work of sanctification begins by the implanting of the life of Christ in us. That's regeneration. What he did for us was done before we were born, was done 2,000 years ago. What he does in us begins perhaps when we are born, maybe even before we are born or some time in our life when we become a Christian. He takes hold of us and implants in us the very life of Christ and causes that life to grow and as that life grows, pretty soon and usually very quickly, there are fruits that are produced in that new life of Christ in us and those are the fruits of good works and that's what the Catechism is all about here. We must do good works and we must do good works because of the very nature of salvation itself.

Not to do good works would be like a fire not producing heat. Not to do good works would be like your blueberry plants not producing any fruit. It doesn't make sense. It's in the nature of a fire to produce heat and it's in the nature of a blueberry plant, if it's healthy, to produce blueberries so that you can make a living by selling them, and it's in the nature of being a Christian that we produce good works. If we don't produce good works, then there are big questions that need to be asked. It's as impossible for us not to produce good works as it would have been impossible for Christ not to do good works

because we are Christ's and he lives in us. We belong to him and the life we live, we live by the faith of the Son of God and so forth. That's what it means to be a Christian.

It's also what it means that the Bible says in the new covenant God writes his law upon our hearts. I think of that expression that comes up already in the Old Testament, the promise in Jeremiah that in the new covenant he's going to write that law upon our hearts, and what that means at the very least is that he works in us in such a way that that law is a part of us, and that law is a part of us so much so that we say, "It's in my disposition to obey that law. It's part of my nature to obey that law." In fact, we may say that's our second nature. And when others, non-Christians, hear that expression, second nature, they mean something different by that but you can use that as an analogy of what we mean here. According to our first nature, there is no desire in us to do good works, there is no interest in obeying the commandments and the law, but according to our second nature, the life of Christ that has been given to us as Christians, we not only do that law, we love that law. We are disposed to it and that's why we could sing as we did from Psalm 119, "Oh, how love I thy law, it's my meditation day and night."

So you understand where we are going this morning. What is the necessity of good works? The necessity of good works is very simply in the nature of salvation because whom Christ redeems, he also renews. There is not only a work for us, there is also a work in us. But now I need to make that more clear and even show the importance of that in a better way. God did that work for us in order that he would do this work in us, and that shows the connection between justification and sanctification. It shows the relationship between the redemption of us by the blood of Christ on the cross, and the renewal of us by the Spirit of the crucified but risen Lord Jesus, and the connection is this: he redeemed us so that he could renew us, give us life, and enable us to do good works in such a way that we love to do them. This is a result of that. This is because of that.

That emphasizes even more strongly the necessity of doing good works and really the foolishness of the error of those who say we don't need to. Christ's own response to the mistake that says we don't need to do good works is, "But it's good works that I redeemed you for. I bought you and paid for your sins in order that you would do good works." And I don't know that we understand that relationship clearly enough and see the connection strongly enough.

Turn in the Bible, if you would, to Titus 2 that we read, and on your way there, stop at Ephesians 1:4. Ephesians 1:4 says that God "chose us in Christ in order that we should be holy." Why did God elect a person, a man, a woman, a child? Why did he choose them? And that brings us even prior to Christ's redemption of us. We're looking at God's election of us. Why did God elect us? It says "in order that we should be holy," Ephesians 1:4. And then Ephesians 2:10, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," that is, we are created in Christ Jesus with a view to doing good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

But now turn to Titus 2. Look again at that chapter we read and see how clear the importance of good works comes out. Starting at verse 11 in Titus 2, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live," and there it talks about the Christian life, "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify," us, "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Now you recognize the language of the Catechism. The Catechism is answering the question: why must we do good works? And the answer at the beginning is: because Christ not only redeemed us, he also renews us. That answer comes from the Scripture and in particular this verse 14. Christ gave himself for us, that he might do two things: redeem us from all iniquity and purify us so that we would be zealous of good works.

So the importance of good works is because those whom Christ redeems, he also renews. It is in the second place because he redeemed us in order that he might renew us. And then to add the icing to the cake, as it were, everyone whom he redeems, he also renews. There is not one person whom Christ died for that Jesus does not also renew. If someone is not renewed, they have not been redeemed. We need to be that clear about it and that's why the apostle said in the book of Hebrews 12, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Without this work of renewal in us that shows itself in doing good works, a man won't see the Lord because he has not been redeemed and he hasn't been redeemed because God didn't choose him unto good works.

So put it altogether. What is the necessity of good works? It's in the nature of salvation itself, what is salvation. But now I need to be very careful and qualify that so that we don't misunderstand this and become fearful, perhaps, because we find in ourselves this renewal of Jesus Christ very weak and perhaps the amount of works very few. And what I say now by way of qualification and explanation isn't to justify weakness in the Christian life in a paltry number of good works, but it's to comfort those who are fearful because they see their sin. I said a moment ago that we have a second nature and that second nature is the life of Christ in us, but we also have a first nature and according to that first nature, which we got from our parents and they from theirs all the way back to Adam which is a corrupt nature, according to that first nature, there is nothing in us that's good and that shows itself in us. There is weakness. There is all kinds of weakness. That renewal that God gives to us, the life of Christ that's in us, is a small beginning. Reread the Catechism at the very important expression as it explains the tenth commandment, there is but a small beginning of new obedience in us.

The word of God makes clear that the good that we want to do, often we don't do, and the evil that we don't want to do, often we do, and then we call ourselves wretched men and women. And the explanation of that is that we are according to that first nature. And when I find that in myself, I must not conclude that I haven't been redeemed because my renewal is so faint and my works are so few. What I must do when I find the fewness of works in me and the weakness of the life of Christ in me is plead for mercy, forgiveness again for those sins, and look again at what Christ did for me when he renewed me.

Well, we'll come to that in a moment. We mustn't suppose that when that Catechism says that they can't be saved to continue in their wicked and ungrateful lives, are unconverted, they can't be saved, we mustn't suppose that that means that I must identify myself as a non-Christian. The Catechism is very clear and precise in its language. It asks: may they imagine themselves to be saved to continue in these evil works. The child of God doesn't continue in them. And even if the child of God experiences one of those melancholy falls that the Canons of Dort talks about where he falls deeply into sin, where he for a while is engaged in that sin, hiding that from everyone except God, this is how that man or woman identifies himself, he hates that sin. And if he's in that sin now and perhaps even addicted to that sin and says, "I can't get myself out of this sin," then this is what that Christian does: he doesn't wait another day, he makes a phone call to the elders or to the pastor or to some Christian friend to say, "Help. Help, because I am in one of these melancholy falls and I need help." So you see what I'm saying that if we find in ourselves sins, even grievous sins, even sometimes a sin that has overtaken us, we mustn't imagine that that means we aren't Christian. We aren't Christians. Nevertheless, the word of God says whom Christ redeems, he also renews.

Now, before we go on to the second point, I need to make this clear also, that we can feel that renewal. We can feel that we are renewed. Sometimes in Reformed churches, we don't talk very often about feelings, experiences. We react, perhaps, against the kind of preaching that only talks about feeling, the kind of preaching that tries to examine all of your experiences to test whether those experiences are genuine Christian experiences and probably says to you those aren't genuine and you mustn't assume that you are Christian. We overreact to that wrong preaching of feeling and experiences, and yet we mustn't overreact to anything. There is such a thing in the Bible as feelings and experiences, genuine Christian feelings, and that's what we're talking about today. We are talking about the renewing work of the Holy Spirit of Christ in us that gives us this feeling, "I want to obey the commandments. I desire to live a godly life. I'm committed to obeying all of the commandments of God and to living a life of prayer." Just to give you a little peek as to what is coming in the Catechism, next in the Catechism is all of the 10 Commandments explained, and then the Lord's prayer explained. What we feel when we have been redeemed and renewed is the law written on our hearts in such a way that says, "I hate my sin and I love it when God works in me the ability to do good works." I feel that and if you don't have any of that sense, that feeling and that experience, then you need to put a question mark behind whether you are really renewed. I feel this renewal as a grief for sin, it's a terrible shame that doesn't stay in that sin but even if necessary asks for help for deliverance from that sin and that experiences such a gladness that I have been redeemed that I say, "I want never again to sin in that way, and when I sin, I want to be quickly sorry."

You want to talk about feelings, true Christian feelings? These are true Christian feelings, the feelings of gratitude, feelings of sorrow for sin and shame for disobedience and the desire to do good works. That's what's going to motivate me. It does. That does motivate me. I am motivated. If you're not motivated to do good works, then don't count yourself to be a Christian. There are always members in the church who remain members for

various reasons but one thing is true of all of them, that when they are under the supervision of the elders or their parents or the other members of the church, they want to live uprightly, they want to conduct themselves in obedience to the commandments, but as soon they leave the oversight of the other people of God, they live ungodly. And then they come back to church on Sunday under the pretense of being Christian, and this is what the word of God says to them, "You mustn't suppose that you are going to be in glory after you die as Mr. C. is convinced he is going to be as his family testified. He has lived that kind of life. But you mustn't suppose that you're going to go to glory with the kind of peace that is in men and women like Mr. C. when they are dying because you haven't been producing these fruits of faith.

You are motivated. You Christians are motivated to live godly and sometimes those motivations are mixed. You want the praise of men and you realize that that's of first nature, or you want to earn something before God or you are afraid of God and that's our first nature, but according to your second nature, you are motivated to do these good works because you are thankful, and that motive of thankfulness has no peer. There is no motive that moves a man or a woman or a young person to live in obedience to these commandments even though obedience means suffering, there is no motive that moves us to live in obedience like the motive of thankfulness.

So there you are in the Heidelberg Catechism. The first part of the Catechism: how great is our sin and misery? It's so great that if I'm not renewed, regenerated, go back to Lord's Day 3 and look, I perish. The second part of the Catechism asks: how may I be delivered from that misery? And the answer is by faith in the Christ who gave himself for us. And now comes the third part of the Catechism: how may I show my gratitude for that great deliverance from such a misery? The answer is by doing good works. But I do those good works because I'm moved by thankfulness, for God's gracious deliverance of me.

The usefulness of good works is threefold. First of all, that God may be praised by us. Secondly, that we may be assured of our faith. And third, that we may be a blessing to our neighbors. God's praise, our assurance, and our neighbor's benefit. That's the usefulness of good works and that's how the Catechism spells it out too.

Now, the Catechism begins with the praise of God and it does on the basis of Scripture. Go back to Titus 2. The Catechism says that the purpose of doing good works is that we may testify our gratitude to God that he may be praised by us. Where does it get that? Well, among other passages, Titus 2:14, Jesus Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." What you might miss is that little prepositional phrase "unto himself." He purifies us with the view to himself, first of all. He redeems us for his glory. He renews and regenerates and produces good works in us for himself. For himself. Ephesians 2:10 and Ephesians 1:4 point that all the way back in eternity God determined to save us in order that we may be a people who are busy in good works for him, for God's own glory.

I forgot to point out when we were in the first point what chapter 3, verse 8, says about the importance of good works. Titus 3:8. Let me mention that a moment. You can look at

it this afternoon. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Be careful to maintain good works.

But the purpose of good works is not us, first of all, but God, and the purpose of these good works which are no idols, no images, no taking of God's name in vain, no violation of the Sabbath, no disobedience to your parents, and then the positive of all of them, the purpose of all of these good works is that God would be praised by us. I think sometimes we misunderstand how God is praised by us, that we imagine that we need to be always speaking, maybe saying, "Bless God or praise God," and though that is important, the praise of God comes by an ordinary walk of obedience to the commandments. The Catechism puts it negatively: no unchaste person, no idolater, no fornicator and the rest. Flip those around to what is positive. This is the life that gives praise to God: obedience to the commandments and a life of prayer.

Unto himself. That's first, the usefulness of good works. The second use of good works is our own assurance. Our own assurance. The Catechism says that the child of God is assured of his faith by the fruits of faith. Now, you who are adults and have heard the Catechism many times understand that, but now you children, listen for moment: how do you know that a tree is a certain kind of tree? Well, you may have your guesses about this kind of tree, you may even have some confidence about what this kind of tree is, but you aren't certain with absolute certainty until you see the fruit that comes on that tree, and when those blossoms become buds and the buds become little apples, you say, "That's an apple tree." Or if you live in this area of the country and you didn't know what a blueberry bush looked like, you'd look at a bush and say, "I wonder what kind of fruit that's going to produce?" until July comes and August and you see on those bushes those beautiful blueberry fruits and you say, "That's a blueberry plant." And like that, the child of God learns to identify himself by the fruits that he produces. Does he produce good fruit, fruits of obedience to the commandments, or does he produce evil fruits, disobedience to the commandments? And he may know whether he's a Christian by the fruits that he produces.

Now, it doesn't always go in a kind of mechanical way where you have a logical syllogism and at the end of every day you say, "All right, write down in a ledger the kind of good works I did and maybe balance that over against the evil works that I did and say, well, now I know I'm a Christian because I have done these good works." It doesn't usually go that way. Now, it might. It might and there are circumstances when perhaps it ought to go that way for yourself privately or if you're in such distress, your pastor or a good Christian friend, elder or otherwise, will come and speak with you. If perhaps you are doubting your salvation, you are down and low and fearful because perhaps you see all of the sins that you produce or for some other reason you are convinced that you aren't a Christian, then your pastor or someone else may say, "But look at what God has produced in you in your life." You'll have all kinds of objections to that kind of reasoning but that's not a bad method to use with someone who doubts his salvation. "Look at your fruit." It wouldn't have been there and even your fear of being a reprobate is a testimony

that God works in you. A reprobate wouldn't be afraid of being a reprobate if he were truly a reprobate. It's a Christian who has those fears, sorrows for sins and so forth.

So sometimes it may work that way that there is a process where consciously and deliberately we reason through, but it doesn't usually work that way. Usually it works subconsciously without even thinking about it. We live in good works and we are assured of our salvation. That's the Spirit's work, the Spirit that renews us, connects that renewal inseparably with the assurance of our faith so that it almost goes without thinking. Sometimes we take it for granted, then we need to go back to that deliberate process of asking, "Am I?" But usually the child of God that lives in good works and hates sin lives in such a way that he doesn't have any doubt that he is, indeed, a child of God.

Then you understand the flipside of that when the child of God lives in sin, isn't conscious in his efforts to do good works, doesn't hate his sins, isn't grieved by his own falls, he's going to wake up some morning pretty quick and say to himself, "I don't know that I am a child of God." God's going to withdraw that assurance by withdrawing that Spirit from him because this life that this man or woman has been living is a life that grieves the Spirit, and so when the Spirit withdraws, the assurance is gone and there is terror until, as the Canons say, he is renewed in a way of right repentance and obedience. Then comes again to him the assurance that he is a child of God.

But good works are useful. Good works are useful for the praise of God, good works are useful for our own assurance and good works are useful for the benefit of the neighbor. You could preach a whole sermon just on that, the benefit of the neighbor. I'm aware that the Catechism is emphasizing the benefit of the neighbor who isn't a member of the church, maybe the benefit of the neighbor who isn't a Christian. The Catechism emphasizes that by our good works others may be gained to Christ. But let's take a couple of minutes and emphasize the reality that good works benefit everyone around us. Our obedience to the commandments God uses in such a way that we are a blessing to our neighbors. Husbands are to their wives and wives to their husbands. Parents are to their children and even children to their parents. Elders in the congregation and deacons and ministers and all of the members, we all influence the others for good as the others see the good works that we perform.

Now, see how that comes out in Paul's letter to Titus. He addresses in the first place women, aged women. "Watch your conduct. Be in behavior," verse 2 says, "as befits holiness." Then some warnings. Then verse 4 says, "in order that you older women may teach the younger women to be sober." Those aren't two separate ideas that, first of all, the older women must conduct themselves in a godly way and after they do that, then they may teach the younger women. There is a connection between the godly conduct of the older women and the instruction of the younger women and it's this: the older women model the Christian life, they model sobriety, love for husband, love for children, discretion, chastity, and being keepers at home, good, obedient to the husbands, and so forth. The older women are a blessing to the younger women without saying one word by the works they perform.

That's why as the apostle goes on, he comes in verse 7, a little bit of an interlude, by addressing Titus. Titus, "In all things show yourself a pattern of good works, that is, live in such a way that the others see you and follow the example that you live in your life as an office bearer." The same thing for servants in verse 9, those servants may be a blessing to others around them. They are godly to their ungodly neighbors but the point is that the life we live influences others in the church.

But the Catechism emphasizes what the Scripture emphasizes and that is that our behavior is important with regard to our neighbor outside. Think Matthew 5: let your works so be seen by men that they may glorify God. Think of 1 Peter 3 in the conduct of the Christian wife with the non-Christian husband. Think of that. Or think of what Paul says to Titus in verse 8, that "he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed." Here's a pastor named Titus serving a congregation where there are Christians and mingled in those Christians are hypocrites who appear to be Christians but aren't, and maybe some of them begin opposing him, a congregation that has visitors at times and maybe those visitors hear the sermon and they say, "I don't like that word." They are contrary. They are opponents of Titus and Paul says to Titus, "Live in such a way, Titus, that those who are your opponents may be ashamed at their objections and come by your conduct to trust Christ and be a Christian."

Our works are instruments to gain others to Christ. Parents, works are instruments to gain their children to Christ. You can't deny that, that what the parents do the children do. You can't underestimate the importance of the example of the parents because you've seen the opposite. The opposite of all of this is true. The influence of our works in the congregation and the influence of our works outside of the congregation. God forbid it but how often doesn't it happen that you read in the bulletin that So-and-so left the church and you know behind the scenes they left the church not because they were rejecting what they hear preached from the pulpit, but they are rejecting what they have seen often in the conduct of their parents or the elders or other members of the church. I say God forbid that that ever be the case among us. Watch yourself, people of God, and let me watch myself as an office bearer in the church of Christ as to how I live because I know how I live has an influence on other members in the church.

Outside of the church too, how they are watching you. You might not be aware of that but they know who you are in your neighborhood. They know what church you go to in the vicinity that you live usually. Whether you have ever spoken to them or not, there is some way usually that they know you go to this church. You are a Christian. You are a Reformed Christian and they are watching. And every time you live in a way that is contrary to the commandments they say, "Ah, they say with their mouths that they love God but look at their life. Look at how they behave." They'll never set foot in this sanctuary and darken the door of a Reformed church because of what you or I have done in our lives.

So for the praise of God, the assurance of my own salvation, and the good of the neighbor, we must be doing good works. And we're going to preach that too. We are. Our time is up but let's just underline that for a moment, that you mustn't imagine that in the

preaching, warnings are unnecessary. You mustn't ever object to the ministers preaching the necessity of good works and say, "That sounds like conditional theology to me." You mustn't ever say, "That sounds Arminian to me. The minister says you must, you must, you must, and if you don't, you perish." That's the Bible. That's the simple truth of the Bible that comes out in the Catechism. If you are unconverted, you have no right to think that you have any entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Christ uses those warnings for our good to shake us out of our complacency, to jolt us out of that sin that we thought no one knew about except God, and we have been trying to ignore that. God uses a sermon like this this morning, I pray, for you or me who are living in a certain sin about which no one else knows and from which we can't extricate ourselves and say, "You continue in that sin, what right do you have to believe you are a Christian?"

Good works are necessary and God will use these exhortations and warnings and even threatenings, read the Canon, that's the Reformed faith, he will use them to bring us to faith so that, once again, or perhaps for the very first time, we may say, "I know who I am. I belong to my faithful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank thee for the word. Use it, we beseech thee, for the good of this people that are gathered here and not allow any of us to leave here in peace who are determined to go back to our sin but use that word to bring us to repentance and faith and the absolute certainty that we are thy people. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.