

**Sing before the service:** Psalm 40:8

Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Beloved, grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Psalm of praise 19:1

Prayer

Psalm 43:1, 4

Scripture reading: 2 Peter 1:1-15

Scripture text: Colossians 1:10; Lord's Day 32

**And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,**  
(Colossians 1:10 NIV-UK)

There are three inextricable concepts. They are:

- Misery
- Salvation
- Gratitude

*To live a godly life can only be the result of deep-felt gratitude for the salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. And gratitude is only possible if we realise the richness of God's mercy, because we are such miserable sinners.*

This is why a person, so sincerely conscious of his misery, does good works.

- He is not trying to gain a place in heaven by doing it.
- The Lord Jesus Christ already gained it for him.
- He is just trying to show his gratitude.
  - Hence he does good works, and
  - he tries hard to obey God's commandments.

We do good works because of the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for us.

- Just think about the misery from which Christ delivered us.
- It's very easy to say: He delivered us from all our sins.

But let's think again. It's not merely a matter of being delivered from our sins.

- We are completely condemnable before God.
- We dwell in sins, and if we get what we deserve, we will end up in hell.
- None of us deserve to be allowed in heaven.

Why would God allow us in heaven?

- Only He knows why, because He decided to love us.
- Hence He let his Son die for our sins so that we will be acquitted on Judgment Day.

Why then did Christ die for us? There are three reasons.

- First, God loves us.
  - We cannot explain it.
  - God, in his supreme wisdom, decided that He loved us and therefore Jesus died for us.
- The second reason is that God wants to preserve us.
  - The Lord wants to preserve us for eternity.
  - He does not want Satan to get hold of us, even though we deserve it.
- The third reason for our salvation is that God wants us to praise Him.
  - We are saved to be obedient.
  - Hence: to live in gratitude to glorify God.

Also, consider how Jesus saved us.

- He became poor to make us rich.
- The Prince who has power over life and death died to save us. God who lives in heaven descended to earth to be humiliated.
- It is inconceivable, because none of us would do anything like this.

We do not even like being abused, and Jesus Himself became a curse so that He could sanctify us!

- We should be shouting for joy every moment like the slaves in ancient times when they were released.
- Because we were slaves of Satan, but Jesus Christ redeemed us!

After all, we cannot fail to be moved by this.

- Somewhere the feeling of gratitude must have got stuck inside us to never leave us again.
- How can we then not live a life of gratitude?

Let's consider the matter more thoroughly.

- The Lord Jesus Christ not only did something FOR us.
- He also did something INSIDE us. He gave us a new heart and a new life.
- A new life in Christ!

The Holy Spirit of God dwells in us and works in us.

- He changes our attitude.
- He builds our faith.
- He admonishes us when we trespass.
- It simply means that the Holy Spirit teaches us to live gratefully, and to have genuine remorse when we have sinned.

This is a new life and new gratitude. Of course our Heavenly Father only wants to dwell in a pure heart and to have irreproachable believers as his children.

- The Spirit of God changes us into the image of God.
- He gives us insight and righteousness to experience the working of Christ and to put it into practice.
- This means that, spiritually, we are changed completely.

We no longer look like children who belong to Satan and who will not escape the judgment of hell.

- We now look like heavenly people.
- People filled with joy and happiness.

- People who know God, and therefore in their daily lives act according to the will of God.

Gratitude is also expressed as follows: We were created anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do good things (Eph. 2:10) – healthy trees who produce good fruit in gratitude of our Creator who has changed us into healthy trees.

Against this background we should examine ourselves again. Of course we know for sure that we would rather not appear before the Lord on Judgment Day, because we know that we will be punished severely.

But this does not mean that we should go through life worrying about what is to become of us. We have the absolute certainty.

Everybody knows for certain whether or not he is going to heaven.

- If God would ask you: For what reason should I allow you into my kingdom? What will your answer be?
- If you say you don't know, you admit that you have not repented (turned to God)!

A person who has returned to the Lord knows that he will go to heaven because of Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is not a shot in the dark. It is a sure knowledge:

- Christ has already opened the gates to heaven for me.
- He locked me up inside heaven.
- Nobody and nothing can ever pull me away from my redemption through Jesus Christ! This is true faith.

But then your life must reflect your true faith!

- Whoever says he is a chosen one and reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, but meanwhile lives like an angel of Satan, has every reason to be concerned.
- He must repent otherwise his life proves that he is not one saved.

One saved would not just say it.

- His gratitude cannot be measured and everybody notices it.
- He simply cannot do enough to praise and thank God for the fact that he has been saved from Satan and from hell.
- Hence he does good works.
- His entire life is a song of rejoicing – to express his gratitude.

Of course good works now have a totally different meaning.

- The value attached to it by the Roman Catholics, namely that one can be saved by one's good works, falls away completely.
- Gratitude is in direct contrast to merit!
- We are grateful because we receive salvation and eternal life from Christ.
- We are grateful because we have been saved from hell – therefore we do good works!

Good works are not a means by which we deserve or can deserve salvation, but this does not relieve us of all responsibility.

- Gratitude is also a responsibility!
- Gratitude is not a kind of label which you can only use when it suits you or when you feel like it.
- Gratitude is a duty by which you have to prove something of yourself to yourself!

- In our daily life it proves a good background.
- In our religious life it proves that we are chosen, and that we really are children of God.

Now carefully guard against the following:

- You cannot boast about your weakness in the sense that you lay the blame on it for your sins.
- In other words, you cannot say that you are not able to hold your own against the Satan and his onslaught and therefore you simply continue to sin!
- With such an argument you cannot appeal to Jesus Christ for your salvation!
- In fact, the salvation in Christ throws a greater responsibility on us to do good works.

Or we can put it like this – in simple terms: when a person continues to sin and will not return to God he is not a chosen one.

- He serves the devil because he is too slack to fight against evil.
- At the same time he dishonours the Lord Jesus Christ.

And also: we cannot argue that although we fight against evil we lose the battle time and again.

- We must fight hard enough to conquer.
- We often do not do good works because we resist evil only to such an extent to soothe our conscience.
- When we have made some progress in doing good works, we decide we've done enough and then joyfully indulge in sin! – Guard against this!

Rather give up all worldly pleasures like the Lord Jesus Christ, and live the kind of life God regards as perfect and good.

- In doing so you prove that you have eternal life with God – something to be envied by those people who do not do good works.
- Let your good works be a sermon to the world of your salvation and your gratitude!
- Let your good works be a sermon to guide others wherever you go.
  - Encourage those who have become weak in faith.
  - Do good works with great joy!
  - Encourage all to hold tightly to the hope of eternal life!
  - Guard against a sharp tongue – especially behind your neighbour's back.

Let your good works be a call that will attract those around you and lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Then your life will be beneficial to all;
- It will encourage all the believers; and,
- at the same time, put the unbelievers to shame.

Then you will be Christ's pride and a pride for the church of God.

Join me in reading 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] Rom. 6:13; 12:1, 2; I Pet. 2:5-10. [2] Matt. 5:16; I Cor. 6:19, 20. [3] Matt. 7:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-24; I Pet. 1:10, 11. [4] Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; I Pet. 2:12; 3:1, 2.

**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] I Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5, 6; I John 3:14.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer

Closing hymn: Psalm 31:1, 15

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

**Amen.**

Dr MJ du Plessis  
Reformed Church Bellville  
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