

Lesson Aim	To understand how the Christian is obligated to live a life of gratitude because of what Christ has done for her.
Steps to Learning	Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 32 and Romans 12:1-2 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>Christians are obligated to do good works as a part of gratitude for the Gospel. But what are good works?</p> <p>The Heidelberg Catechism, summarizing the Scriptures, says that good works are those only which proceed from true faith, and are done according to the Law of God, unto his glory, and not such as rest on our own opinion or the commandments of men.</p> <p>Why exactly are Christians to do good works?</p> <p>Essentially, we are to do good works because they are evidence that we are truly saved, that we've been justified by faith. As Jesus teaches, a healthy tree will bear good fruit. Another way to put this is that those who are justified will be sanctified. A justified person has been saved solely by what Christ has done for her; a person's works don't save her. Once a person is justified, she will be sanctified, that is, she will personally grow in her faith becoming more and more like Jesus Christ in her character.</p> <p>What are the four ends for which a Christian is sanctified?</p> <p><u>First</u>, a Christian is sanctified to demonstrate gratitude. Paul, in Romans 12:1-2, argues that demonstrating gratitude through a life of sacrifice for God, is a necessary consequence of being saved by grace through faith. A Christian doesn't live a sacrificial life for God to be saved and go to heaven. Rather, a Christian lives a sacrificial life because she is grateful for what Christ has done for her. <u>Second</u>, a Christian is sanctified and made more like Christ to glorify God. The Christian doesn't do good works to feel good about herself but to show forth the goodness of God. <u>Third</u>, a Christian is sanctified to be assured of her faith. Assurance of faith is first and foremost given by the objective channels of the preaching of the Word and the reception of the Sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. But good works are a support to those objective channels. This is Jesus' point about the illustration of the healthy tree bearing good fruit. Also, Paul in Galatians 5 argues that if we have certain qualities (e.g. love, joy, peace, etc.) then this is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit within us. <u>Fourth</u>, and finally, a Christian is sanctified so that by our godly walk we might win others to Christ. That is, when we live for Christ, other Christians are encouraged to do the same because they can see the rightness of that kind of life. Also, this has an effect on non-Christians to think about faith in Christ.</p>
Bible Reading	Matthew 1-7 (Reading through the Gospels)