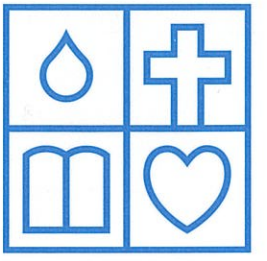
Question 33

Should those who have faith in Christ seek their salvation through their own works, or anywhere else?



Answer

No, everything necessary to salvation is found in Christ.

Big Idea
Salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone.

Aim
To help the children confidently know that Jesus's death and resurrection are sufficient for salvation.

Bible Passage
Galatians 2:15–21

Memory Verse
"Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified." (Gal. 2:16)

Virtue
Perseverance

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Leader's Notes

The doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith is essential to the gospel and Christian life. It is one of the defining doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, and it is vital to help children comprehend the implications of this doctrine for Christian life. This lesson will help the children grasp that Jesus's substitutionary and sacrificial death is entirely sufficient for salvation. The children should clearly understand that a works-based mentality is inconsistent with the gospel. This lesson aims to help children trust fully and completely in Christ for salvation.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- Children are often people-pleasers and will seek praise and reward through good behavior. They need to understand that their behavior will never be good enough to earn their relationship with God. Conversely, missing the mark will not cause them to fall out of the saving grace of God if they have repentant hearts.
- The children may need help understanding what is meant by the phrase "through their own works."
- Remember to mix and match the activities in the lesson to fit your time frame (see p. 12 for some sample outlines). You won't have time to do them all. Feel free to adapt each activity based on your class's strengths and weaknesses.

Leader's Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of faith. I praise you for revealing to me that faith and trust in Jesus is sufficient for my salvation. Please make me aware of the places in my life that I'm tempted to rely on works rather than grace. Grant understanding to the children who will hear this lesson. May they fully understand that salvation comes by grace alone through faith in Christ alone and be equipped to persevere in the faith. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Leader's Tool Kit

- Sticky notes
- Q33 Picture of Martin Luther (RB)
- Paper
- Markers

(10) Catechism Recap

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You will need one sticky note for each child. The notes should have numbers on them that fall between one and thirty-three.

Gather the children together and put a numbered sticky note on the back of each child. The children should not be told what their number is! Each number represents a catechism question. The task for the children is to figure out which catechism question they represent by asking other children to tell them something about their question. The children can ask as many questions as necessary to gather information about their question. By the end of the activity the children should be able to identify and say their question and answer.

(5) Introduction to Question 33

You will need Q33 Picture of Martin Luther (RB).

Introduce the children to Martin Luther. Explain that he was an important person in something called the Reformation. The Reformation was significant because many people read the Bible for themselves and rediscovered what true faith is.

Tell the children that Martin Luther made a huge personal discovery during his life. Martin Luther originally thought that he had to work his way to peace with God and that eternal life was earned by doing good things. Explain to the children that one day he was reading his Bible, and he read Romans 1:17: " For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

When Luther read, "The righteous shall live by faith," he realized that he had it all wrong! He didn't have to do anything to earn his salvation or work his way into God's favor, but he had to accept God's free gift of salvation.

Introduce the children to Question 33: "Should those who have faith in Christ seek their salvation through their own works, or anywhere else?" Explain to the children that this question will help them to understand why Martin Luther was right: salvation is by grace alone through faith! It is not necessary or even possible to seek salvation through works.

(10) Activity

Ask the children to stand in a line in the middle of the room and explain to them that they need to move to the left side of the room if they think the statement that you read out is wrong and to the right if they think that the statement is right. Remind the

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children as the activity begins that salvation means being saved by Jesus from God's judgment and punishment.

Is this statement right or wrong?

- Salvation is found through doing my homework on time.
- Salvation is found through trusting Christ alone.
- Salvation is found through trusting Christ alone and helping the elderly.
- Salvation is found through trusting Christ alone.
- Salvation is found through always obeying my mom and dad.
- Salvation is found through trusting Christ alone.
- Salvation is found through trusting Christ alone and giving money to church.
- Salvation is found through trusting Christ alone.
- Salvation is found through keeping the Ten Commandments.
- Salvation is found through trusting Christ alone.

The intentional movement from side to side should reinforce for the children that everything necessary for salvation is found in Christ. Explain that there is nothing wrong with doing the other things. Many of them are worth doing! But highlight that Jesus Christ is fully sufficient as Savior and Redeemer. Nothing but trusting him is required for salvation.

(15) Teaching Outline

Begin the teaching time by asking for God's help. Ask that the lesson would be taught faithfully and that the children might listen well.

Introduce the teaching time by telling the children that many people believe that they will get to heaven by living a good life and doing good things. Ask the children how they would respond to someone who said that.

Explain to the children that some people who believe in Jesus *still* think that to get to heaven they need to do good things!

Explain that Galatians 2:15–21 will help them understand that Jesus's work on the cross is enough.

Read Galatians 2:15–21. Provide Bibles for the children to read along.

Tell the children that we are going to look again at Paul's letter to the Galatians. Highlight that this letter is all about helping the Galatians to understand how important it is to believe that Jesus's work on the cross is enough. Faith does not need to be supplemented by good living or law keeping.

In fact, if we trust in those things, we are not trusting in Christ.

Ask the children to look at verse 16 and investigate whether Paul says a person can be justified by keeping the law. Paul says a person is not justified by keeping the law!

Ask the children to identify how Christians are justified. By faith in Jesus Christ!

Explain to the children that it's sometimes difficult to believe that salvation is God's free gift because it is uncommon to get free gifts in life. Most things in life have to be worked for. Ask the children if they can name some things that come as a result of hard work.

Emphasize again that Paul says the only way to be justified is to believe in Jesus Christ. Explain to the children that those who believe that good works are essential in order to have a relationship with God actually have a very low view of what Jesus achieved on the cross (and a high view of their own capabilities)!

The belief that we must add to what Christ has done says that Jesus's death on the cross is not enough. Ask the children whether they think that kind of thinking might be offensive to God. It is deeply insulting to God to give the impression that Jesus's sacrificial atoning death is not enough.

Also highlight for the children that humans frequently fail to live in a way that pleases God. Believing that living good lives will make them right with God is trusting in abilities that have proven to be untrustworthy. No one is able to fully keep the law of God and thus please God—except Jesus.

Explain to the children that the only way to know salvation is through Christ. Paul says in verse 20 that those who are in Christ have died to law-keeping. That means that Christians should fully trust in Jesus's death and resurrection and resist believing that there are other ways to seek salvation.

Conclude the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 33 and the answer to memory.

(These notes are just for guidance. Please expand or amend them to suit your own children and context. Write out your talk in your own words and include illustrations and applications that you know will connect with your children.)

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10 Activity

You will need pieces of paper and markers for every child.

Help the children to make signs that say "Jesus + Anything = NOTHING." Give the children paper and markers and invite them to creatively decorate their signs. As the children are drawing, remind them that the only way to salvation is through Jesus. To add anything to Jesus makes the gospel useless.

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(5) Discussion and Question Time

Some questions that might arise include:

? Does this mean that to trust Christ, I shouldn't keep the law?

> Explain to the children that no, this isn't what Paul is saying. The Bible teaches that people must not believe that they can find salvation through any means except faith in Christ. We will talk more next week about why, although we shouldn't *trust* obedience to save us, we should obey God.

Also use this opportunity to help the children to think about their own lives and how this question and answer affects them personally.

- Ask the children why some people don't like to hear that we can't be saved by good works.
- Ask the children how knowing Jesus's death and resurrection is sufficient affects their hearts.
- Ask the children how they might explain the concept of salvation by grace through faith to a school friend who thinks being a Christian is just living a good life.

(10) Virtue Vision

Perseverance

Ask the children if they know what the word *perseverance* means. Help them to understand that to persevere means to keep going no matter how difficult things get, even if you have to wait a long time to see any concrete results.

Ask the children what kinds of activities requires great perseverance.

- Running a marathon
- Trekking across a desert
- Flying into space

Tell the children that the book of Galatians was written to a group of people who needed to be reminded to persevere. They had started out believing that their salvation came by grace alone through faith, but then some people convinced them that they also had to keep the law to be saved. They needed to forsake this wrong teaching and persevere in the truth. Ask the children whether it will be easy or hard to persist in the Christian life trusting that salvation comes through faith alone.

10 Memory Activity

Divide the children into groups and invite them to act out the different clauses in the memory verse or catechism question and answer. Give them a while to practice, then let the groups take turns saying the verse or catechism question and answer with their motions.

5 Closing Prayer Time

Encourage the children to confess to God the things that they might be tempted to trust for their salvation, then thank God that Jesus's death and resurrection are sufficient to save.

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