

# Living in Light of Jesus' Sacrifice

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**Q.** What does God require of man?

**A.** God requires man to obey His revealed will.  
(Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A #39)

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:  
Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man's all.”  
(Ecclesiastes 12:13)

In 1948 the United States Department of Defense enacted a policy commonly known as the “*Sole Survivor Policy*”. The “*Sole Survivor Policy*” was a set of regulations that were put in place in order to protect members of a family from having to serve in combat if that family had already lost other family members while serving in military service. The creation of this policy was developed after World War II in response to an event that transpired with five U.S. Navy sailors (*known as the Sullivan brothers*) who served on the U.S. Naval Cruiser *USS Juneau*. These five brothers, along with 687 other men were killed during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1942 by Japanese torpedo bombers.

This policy (“*Sole Survivor Policy*”) may sound familiar to you, as it was the focus of the 1998 Academy Award winning film, “*Saving Private Ryan*”. In that film we are introduced to the Ryan family. The Ryan family is led by their mother who, in the first moments of the motion picture, receives word that three of her four sons have been killed on active duty at Normandy Beach. She is given word that only one of her sons remains alive (*Private Ryan*), but has been pronounced missing in action somewhere in Normandy. The rest of the almost three-hour epic follows the mission of Captain John H. Miller as he and a group of men set out to find and rescue the missing private Ryan and bring him home safely to his grieving mother. In an intense and emotional turn of events the movie ends with the majority of this six-man company, as well as Captain Miller himself, sacrificing their own lives to secure the freedom and safety of Private Ryan.

In the most emotionally charged scene of the film, an aged and elderly Private Ryan stands with his wife at a cemetery looking out over the tombstones of the men who sacrificed everything that they had in order that he might live. At one point he turns to his wife and while in tears asks her, “*Tell me I've lived a good life. Tell me I'm a good man...*”. You see, Private Ryan understood the depth of the sacrifice that had been paid by the soldiers to secure his freedom. With a heart full of gratitude and appreciation he was committed to living his life in light of that sacrifice.

As we come to Q&A #39 in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, we've reached a turning point in this great Reformed Confession. You see, for the first 38 questions and answers our catechism has been focused on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It has been focused on Jesus' person and work. For the past few months we have been meditating on all that Jesus has done for us, is doing for us, and will continue to do for us. But now, beginning in Q&A #39, we turn our focus away from what CHRIST has done, to what WE must do in response to this glorious Gospel. Our catechism asks, "*What does God require of man?*" and the response given by the Westminster Divines is, "*God requires man to obey His revealed will.*" Jesus has done so much for us. He has sacrificed more for us in His sinless life and atoning death than we could ever imagine or hope for. And because Christ has done so much for us, our response is to live a life of gratitude and obedience to Him. In fact, that is the outline of the entire Westminster Shorter Catechism. Our catechism begins by telling us what it is that we need to BELIEVE...and then it goes on to tell us what it is that we need to DO.

The reality is that it's far too easy for us to get this order reversed. Many believers wrongly assume that the Christian life begins by DOING something. We wrongly assume that we need to live our lives in such a way that we might merit or earn a right relationship with God. But that is not what the Bible teaches. The Scriptures teach us that the only way for us to be justified (*be made right with God*) is not by DOING anything...but by BELIEVING in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It's only when we place our faith in Jesus that He will impute (*transfer*) His perfect record to our account. The Christian life doesn't begin with DOING. The Christian life begins with BELIEVING. And only after that, only after we've placed our faith in Jesus do we proceed to live lives of obedience to Him. And why do we do that? Why do we do good works? We do good works as an act of gratitude for all that Jesus has done for us. We are called to live in light of the sacrifice that Christ has paid on our behalf.

## Dig Even Deeper into God's Word!

Micah 6:8

1 John 4:19

1 John 5:2-3