

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	10		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	I Corinthians 1:26-31		
Date:	October 19, 2014 a.m.		

The Mediator and His Work (Part III)

6. Lord's Day

Question 19. Whence knowest thou this?

Answer: From the holy gospel, which God himself first revealed in Paradise; (a) and afterwards published by the patriarchs (b) and prophets, (c) and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; (d) and lastly, has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son. (e)

(a) Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (b) Gen. 22:18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. Gen. 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Gen. 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Gen. 49:11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: (c) Isa. 53. Isa. 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. Isa. 42:2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. Isa. 42:3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. Isa. 42:4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. Isa. 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Isa. 49:5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. Isa. 49:22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. Isa. 49:23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me. Jer. 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. Jer. 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jer. 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: Jer. 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer. 32:39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: Jer. 32:40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put

my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Jer. 32:41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. Mic. 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. Mic. 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Mic. 7:20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old. Acts 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. Rom. 1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Heb. 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Acts 3:22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. Acts 3:23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Acts 3:24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Acts 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. John 5:46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. (d) Heb. 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and to the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. Heb. 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Col. 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. John 5:46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. (e) Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Gal. 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, Gal. 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal. 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Col. 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

The Apostle declared most emphatically, “no one seeks God” (Rom. 3:11 citing Ps. 14:2). The gospel is designed by its very nature to remove every occasion of glorifying the creature. Salvation is entirely of the Lord. The apostle Paul had been informed that the church in Corinth was full of strife (I Corinthians 1:11). There were two primary reasons: (1) The Corinthians had a distorted understanding of wisdom (1:18-2:16) and (2) they were equally confused over the true message of the cross (1:18-25) and in terms of God’s election (1:26-31). The gospel is addressed to *sinner*s who, because of sin, have their minds darkened (Rom. 1:21) and are in complete spiritual ignorance. We are all “under sin” (Romans 3:9). This means that sinners are under the *guilt, power, condemnation*, and eventual *doom* that sin brings. Sin *pollutes* and produces *misery*. Now since this is the condition of all mankind—who has grounds for boasting? Our text today demonstrates in a remarkable way that from beginning to end, salvation is all of grace, and therefore, no one can boast.

I. THE METHOD OF GRACE: GOD’S SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Three times in vv. 27, 28, Paul declares that it was God who “chose” (NIV). The word is *exelexato*. It expands the idea of “called” in v. 26.¹ Robert Reymond spells out the nature of this call and the theological consequences of its denial. “Because Paul recognized that the degree, however small, to which an individual is allowed to be the decisive factor in receiving and working out the subjective benefits of grace for his transformation detracts in the same proportion from the monergism of the divine grace and from the glory of God, he calls attention to God’s sovereign discrimination between man and man, to place proper emphasis upon truth, that *his grace alone* is the source of all spiritual good to be found in man. Which is just to say that if God chose the way He did, out of the infinite depth of the *riches of His wisdom and knowledge* (11:33), in order to be able to manifest His *grace* (9:11), *then He did not choose arbitrarily or capriciously*. In other

words, the condition governing the reason for His choosing the way He did does not need to lie in the creature. (Indeed, from the very nature of the case the condition could not lie in the creature. If it did, the creature would be the determining agent in salvation and become thereby, for all intents and purposes, God.) If there was a wise reason in Himself for choosing the way He did (and there was, namely, that He might make room for the exhibition of His grace as alone the source of all spiritual good in men), then He did not choose capriciously. Of course, there may be many other grounds [that is, reasons] for election, unknown and unknowable to us, it is true. But, as Vos reminds us, “this one reason we *do* know, and in knowing it we at the same time know that, whatever other reasons exist, they can have nothing to do with any meritorious ethical condition of the objects of God’s choice.”²

A. The Fountain of Salvific Blessing. “It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus” (v. 30). Not only does the Apostle use the solemn word for election repeatedly, he spells out exactly what election means.³ Note the context. Paul is addressing the boasting Corinthians—the gospel of grace removes all grounds of boasting, and, on the contrary, it produces humility. This is especially the case when we come to understand the sovereign grace of God. “For my own part,” declares George Whitefield, “I cannot see how true humbleness of mind can be attained without a knowledge of it.”⁴

B. The Channel of Salvific Blessing. All of God’s riches are in His Son. Apart from Christ, sinners have no hope of salvation from sin and judgment.

1. HE IS MADE UNTO WISDOM.

Our English (KJV) translation gives the impression that there are four distinct blessings listed in v. 30. But actually the Greek text reads something a bit different. There are two “ands” in this verse; the first one is the Greek word TE, the second one is the Greek word KAI, the common word for “and.” TE, however, in this context, does not convey the same thought as KAI. The NIV translation captures the actual thought here—that the terms “righteousness, sanctification and redemption” are subordinate to *wisdom* and explanatory of it.⁵ What Paul is doing here is *contrasting* the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. What is this wisdom?⁶ It has three aspects.⁷

a. *Christ Our Righteousness*

This refers *not* to ethical conduct, but is exclusively a forensic term—this righteousness is imputed or reckoned to the believer.

b. *Christ Our Sanctification*

This has reference not so much to the process of sanctification (which is an important aspect of sanctification) but with primary emphasis on its commencement. As such, it demonstrates very clearly that “righteousness” cannot be referring to our own righteousness, otherwise the Apostle would be repeating himself.⁸

c. *Christ Our Redemption*

The Greek word is *apolutrosis*. “This particular Greek word occurs in the New Testament ten times, and every time it refers to the future, and not to the past or the present.”⁹ The term underscores the believer’s *deliverance* (this has a direct bearing on the total redemption, i.e., the resurrection of the body cf. Romans 8:23) through the death of Christ on the cross, which thus furnishes the ground both of justification and sanctification.

CONCLUSION: *Christ* is the wisdom of God. This embraces justification, sanctification, and redemption—and note how Paul concludes this marvelous declaration. He quotes Jeremiah 9:25—the sinner cannot boast of his wisdom, power or distinction. The grace of God will *always* humble the high-minded. “Human wisdom,” says John MacArthur, “wants to devise a way of salvation where people get the credit. If they can’t have all the credit, they will settle for some of it. But in God’s design, no one who is saved has anything to boast about. That’s because God accomplishes everything on behalf of those He saves. They contribute nothing. He chooses them, calls them, draws them, and enables them to believe. His sovereign will—not human resolve or a human decision—even determines *who* will be saved. Everything is ‘by *His* doing.’ No aspect of salvation hinges on anything good in the believer.”¹⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ EXELEXATO, aorist middle indicative, from the verb EKLEGO, to pick out, to choose. The word involves three ideas: the stem of the word indicates ‘the telling over’; the preposition in compound indicates the rejection of some and the acceptance of others; and the middle voice indicates the “taking to (for) Himself.” J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* (Zondervan, 1957). The noted German N. T. Scholar, H.A.W. Meyer, concurs and says that the word “always has and must of logical necessity have a reference to others to whom the chosen would, with the EKLOGA still belong.” *Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament: Galatians and Ephesians* (Funk and Wagnalls, 1892), p. 313. Kenneth Wuest, ignoring this lexical meaning of the word (and having, I think, a theological bias on this point) says, “This (election) precludes the idea that those not selected are rejected or refused salvation.” *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Moody, 1953), p. 29.

² Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 371.

³ Despite the lexical and theological abundance for this doctrine, many Christians attempt to explain election away or define it (like Kenneth Wuest) so that its real meaning is lost.

⁴ Whitefield goes on to say, “and though I will not say, that everyone who denies election is a bad man, yet I will say, with that sweet singer, Mr. (Robert) Traill, it is a very bad sign: such a one, whoever he be, I think cannot truly know himself; for if we deny election, we must, partly at least, glory in ourselves; but our redemption is so ordered, that no flesh should glory in the Divine presence; and hence it is, that the pride of man opposes this doctrine.” *Select Sermons of George Whitefield* (Banner of Truth trust, 1985), p. 98.

⁵ Cf. remarks by Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians; Tyndale Series* (Eerdmans, 1979), p. 50.

⁶ Note the translation in the NIV “wisdom for us from God,” i.e., God made Him (Christ) wisdom on our behalf, cf. comments by Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (New International Commentary on the New Testament)* (Eerdmans, 1987), p. 85.

⁷ Note that the three terms are nouns, not verbs. They stand in apposition to the noun wisdom, cf. G. Fee, op. cit., p. 86.

⁸ Cf. the excellent article by Ronald Y. K. Fung, “Justification by Faith in 1 & 2 Corinthians,” in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce*, ed: D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris (Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 246-249.

⁹ G. Campbell-Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul: An Exposition of I and II Corinthians* (Revell, 1946), p. 39.

¹⁰ J. MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When The Church Becomes Like the World* (Crossway, 1993), p. 116.