

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism	Pastor/Teacher
Number:	11	Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	II Timothy 1:3-10	
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The Saving Christ

7. Lord's Day

Question 20. Are all men then, as they perished in Adam, saved by Christ?

Answer: No; (a) only those who are ingrafted into him, and, receive all his benefits, by a true faith.
(b)

(a) Matt. 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Matt. 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen. (b) Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. Isa. 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Ps. 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Rom. 11:17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Rom. 11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Rom. 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: Rom. 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: Heb. 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Heb. 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. Heb. 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Heb. 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

In Hamlet's famous soliloquy—you know, the one that begins with that well-known phrase, "To be, or not to be: that is the question"—Shakespeare captures humanity's innate fear of death: "To grunt and sweat under a weary life, But that the dread of something after death, The undiscover'd country from whose bourn No traveler returns, puzzles the will, And makes us rather bear those ills we have Than fly to others that we know not of? Thus conscience does make cowards of us all."¹ We are all by nature afraid of death. We may pretend otherwise, but deep down there is a very real fear of death. Why

is this so? In I Corinthians 15:56, Paul tells us plainly that *the sting of death is sin*—it is sin that brings death and it is sin that causes us to greatly fear death. This is Hamlet’s fear: “something *after* death.” Try as we might to dismiss this fear, to comfort ourselves with the insane belief that there is no God or the naïve belief that He is so genial there is no need to worry about sin and judgment—the haunting fear persists. Hebrews 9:7 plainly tells us that after death comes judgment. “But there is sin, and man has a feeling within him that death is not the end, and that he goes on to meet God in judgment. He knows he is guilty, so he is afraid. Even though he has not much knowledge of theology, instinctively he is afraid.”² Most of the time the lyrics in popular music are either overtly sentimental and expressly romantic or down right inane. However, occasionally some of them make profound statements about life. Frank Sinatra’s well-known song “My Way” (1969) captures in the minds of many an outlook on life that fails to see beyond the grave.

*“And now, the end is near / And so I face the final curtain
My friend, I’ll say it clear / I’ll state my case, of which I’m certain
I’ve lived a life that’s full / I traveled each and ev’ry highway
And more, much more than this, I did it my way*

*Regrets, I’ve had a few / But then again, too few to mention
I did what I had to do, I saw it through without exemption
I planned each charted course, each careful step along the highway
And more, much more than this, I did it my way*

*Yes, there were times, I’m sure you knew / When I bit off more than I could chew
And through it all, when there was doubt / I ate it up and spit it out
I faced it all and I stood tall and did it my way*

*I’ve loved, I’ve laughed and cried / I’ve had my fill, my share of losing
And now, as tears subside, I find it all so amusing / To think I did all that
And may I say, not in a shy way, / ‘Oh, no, oh, no, not me, I did it my way’*

*For what is a man, what has he got? / If not himself, then he has naught
The right to say the things he feels and not the words of one who kneels
The record shows I took the blows and did it my way!”*

Another song recorded that same year was Roy Clark’s “Yesterday When I Was Young.” It is far more self-reflective and even has a confessional ring to it.

*“Seems the love I’ve known has always been / The most destructive kind
Yes, that’s why now I feel so old / Before my time.*

*Yesterday when I was young / The taste of life was sweet as rain upon my tongue.
I teased at life as if it were a foolish game, / The way the evening breeze may tease a candle flame.
The thousand dreams I dreamed, the splendid things I planned
I’d always built to last on weak and shifting sand.
I lived by night and shunned the naked light of the day
And only now I see how the years ran away.*

*Yesterday when I was young / So many happy songs were waiting to be sung,
So many wild pleasures lay in store for me / And so much pain my dazzled eyes refused to see.
I ran so fast that time and youth at last ran out, / I never stopped to think what life was all about
And every conversation I can now recall / Concerned itself with me and nothing else at all.*

*Yesterday the moon was blue / And every crazy day brought something new to do.
I used my magic age as if it were a wand / And never saw the waste and emptiness beyond.
The game of love I played with arrogance and pride
And every flame I lit too quickly, quickly died.
The friends I made all seemed somehow to drift away
And only I am left on stage to end the play.*

*There are so many songs in me that won't be sung, / I feel the bitter taste of tears upon my tongue.
The time has come for me to pay for / Yesterday when I was young."*

Sinatra's song sounds heroic but it is actually an anthem of stoic defiance. Clark's song while more searching echoes a nihilistic tone that ends in despair. In neither song is there any hint of redemption or the need for salvation. The lostness of the human condition is the background of the Apostle Paul's theology of the cross. II Timothy is the Apostle Paul's last letter. It may well have been written within days of perhaps even hours of His execution. What was he thinking? His life's work seemed very much in jeopardy. Some of his closest friends had forsaken him (II Timothy 1:15; 4:9-11). What will Paul say to young Timothy as he faces his own impending death?

I. THE ADMONITION (1:8)

Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of me His prisoner. This is, as Warfield has noted, an echo of the language that Paul had employed in Romans 1:16.³

A. The Term. The word translated *ashamed* as EPAISCHYNOMAI (it is in the aorist passive subjective. When this is used with a negative it forms a prohibition, which is designed to prevent an action from beginning).⁴ The root meaning of this word originally referred to that which is ugly and disfigured. It came to be associated with fear of ridicule of embarrassment. It is closely associated with disgrace (cf. Acts 5:41). Jesus recognized the possibility that some would be ashamed of Him (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26).

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT (1:5-7)

The Apostle reminds Timothy of three specific things: (1) his hereditary faith, passed on to Timothy from his grandmother and mother; (2) his call to the ministry and the endowment of grace that he had received from Paul; and (3) finally and chiefly the power of the Gospel which he had experienced and was commissioned to preach.

III. THE EXHORTATION

Paul invites Timothy to join him in enduring hardship for the cause of the Gospel. Note how the Apostle seeks to encourage Timothy by directing his attention to three specific things.

A. The Grace of God. Look away from the trials and the difficult circumstances of life. You are in the hands of God Almighty and this relationship was not in the smallest degree dependent on something Timothy had done, is doing, or can do. In other words, Timothy's strength (and particularly his weakness) is not the issue. Rather, it is God's own *purpose* and *grace*. God's purpose will not be thwarted and His grace will not be ineffectual. Note how God's grace is described. It was *given* (not merely promised) finally and unequivocally *before the beginning of time*. This expression reaches back into eternity before time itself had any meaning.

B. Its Manifestation. Timothy is to fix his attention on Christ, the eternal Son of God. Paul is clearly teaching that the events of time, as worked out in human history, are (in a sense) but the shadows of eternal realities. As Warfield has poignantly pointed out, "the salvation wrought out on Calvary was but a corollary (so to speak) of the determining transaction in

heaven: the Apostle leads his pupil to attach less importance to the course of affairs on earth in comparison with the eternal things thus vividly pictured before his eyes.”⁵

C. Its Victory. Paul bids young Timothy to look *back* into eternity past to see salvation’s inception. But there is more. Our salvation in all its richness was accomplished by Christ Jesus who entered human history and by His death abolished death and brought to light life and immortality.⁶

1. THE DEATH OF DEATH. This addresses far more than what we usually think of when we hear the word “death.” We often restrict the word to the death of the body and the separation of the soul from the body. But it is far more than that. Death, in the biblical sense, signifies that awful punishment of sin, which is best, understood as the exact opposite of *eternal life*. “We are too ready to overlook the stupendous character of death as undertaken and undergone by our Lord. Death is abnormal, the wages of sin, and the contradiction of what Jesus was as holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. In and of itself death cannot be contemplated except with horror, dread, and recoil. It is God’s judgment upon sin, the expression of His holy wrath and vengeance. When thus considered, death takes on in Jesus’ case unique and incomparable meaning. It is bereft of nothing that belongs to it as God’s judgment upon sin. But in our Lord’s case it was not an event that overtook Him. Strictly speaking, it was not an infliction. It was an undertaking, a commitment assumed, an act to be effected by Himself, the exodus that He was to *accomplish* at Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:31). In the event He poured out His soul unto death, He laid down His own life, He dismissed His spirit, He rent asunder the bond uniting the constituents of His human nature. He wrought what was in reality the contradiction of what He was as spotlessly human.”⁷ Christ has *destroyed* (NIV) death. The NASB has *abolished* the verb KATARGEO, which, though often translated in our English versions as ‘destroy’, really falls short of that. It means rather to ‘make ineffective or inactive’, and is used of unproductive land and unfruitful trees. They are still there. They have not been destroyed. But they are barren. When this verb is applied to that devil, to our fallen nature and to death, Hebrews 2:14 (the devil); Romans 6:6 (the ‘flesh’ or fallen nature); II Timothy 1:10 (death), therefore, we know that they have not been completely ‘destroyed’. For the devil is still very active, our fallen nature continues to assert itself, and death will go on claiming us until Christ comes. It is not, then that they have ceased to exist, but that their power has been broken. They have not been abolished, but they have been broken. They have not been abolished, but they have been overthrown.⁸

CONCLUSION: The great Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), captured the essence of sinful humanity’s condition in a narrative where he imagines a man trying to run away from his own shadow; and ever and again he turns round, and it is still there, that black thing, dogging him; on and on, flinging himself wildly away from it—and round again, and it is still there; and he is panting now, and tired: “God, God, I can’t get away from it! I can’t!” Carlyle has depicted the awful reality of our sin, always with us and always, always reminding us of the horror that Hamlet dreaded—“something after death.” Christ has conquered death because He has conquered sin. What, then, should be the Christian’s attitude to death? It is still an enemy, unnatural, unpleasant, and undignified—in fact ‘the last enemy to be destroyed’. Yet, it is a defeated enemy. Because Christ has taken away our sins, death has lost its power to harm and therefore to terrify. Jesus summed it up in one of His greatest affirmations: ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die’ (I Corinthians 15:26; John 11:25, 26). That is, Jesus is the resurrection of believers who die, and the life of the believers who live. His promise to the

former is 'you will live', meaning not just that you will survive, but that you will be resurrected. His promise to the latter is 'you will never die', meaning not that you will escape death, but that death will prove to be a trivial episode, a transition to fullness of life.⁹

ENDNOTES

¹ Hamlet, Act III, Scene I in *The Works of William Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 688.

² D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *I Am Not Ashamed: Advice to Timothy* (Baker, 1986), p. 104.

³ B.B. Warfield, *Faith and Life* (rpt. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), p. 405. Warfield goes on to point out that when closely scrutinized, the two texts speak to two very different things. "In Romans we have an objective statement; in Second Timothy an intensely subjective one. In the one case the contrast is with the scorn of the world. Paul will not be deterred by that; he cannot be ashamed to preach a Gospel in which is enshrined the power of God to save. In the other case, the contrast is with the persecution of the world. Timothy is not to shrink back before the dangers that now hang over the proclamation of the Gospel."

⁴ J.H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek: Prolegomena* (T&T Clark, 1967), pp. 124-125.

⁵ Warfield, op. cit., p. 411.

⁶ It is somewhat surprising that the ESV and the NIV follow the KJV in rendering APHTHARSA "immortality." The word literally means "no corruption." It is used of God in Rom. 1:23 and of the resurrection of the body of Christians in I Cor. 15:42, 50, 52-54. The word that actually captures the sense of our English word "immortality" is ATHANASIA, which means "no death" or "incapable of death." While ATHANASIA reveals that the resurrected saints will never experience death, but exist for all eternity, APHTHARSIA reveals that this will not be a mere eternal existence but the fullest life of joy and satisfaction possible, because the resurrected saints cannot experience any degeneration in the functions of body or mind. No corruption will disrupt the bliss of the eternal state. Cf. the extended discussion in Robert Morey *Death and The Afterlife* (Bethany House, 1984), p. 95.

⁷ Murray II, p. 154.

⁸ J. R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (IVP, 1986), p. 240.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.