

# CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism	Pastor/Teacher
Number:	6	Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Romans 5:12-21; Ephesians 2:1-10	
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## Children of Wrath and The Grace of God

### THE FIRST PART – GUILT

#### 4. Lord's Day

**Question 9. Does not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in his law, that which he cannot perform?**

**Answer:** Not at all; (a) for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, (b) and his own willful disobedience, (c) deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts.

(a) Eph. 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eccl. 7:29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. (b) John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 2 Cor. 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Even through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Gen. 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: (c) Gen. 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. Rom. 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Gen. 3:13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. 1 Tim. 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 1 Tim. 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

**Question 10. Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?**

**Answer:** By no means; but is terribly displeased (a) with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment temporally and eternally, (b) as he has declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them." (c)

(a) Gen. 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Rom. 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (b) Ps. 5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Ps. 50:21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine

eyes. Nah. 1:2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Exod. 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; Exod. 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. Rom. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Eph. 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Heb. 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: (c) Deut. 27:26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of his law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen. Gal. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

### **Question 11. Is not God then also merciful?**

**Answer:** God is indeed merciful, (a) but also just: (b) therefore his justice requires, that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul.

(a) Exod. 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Exod. 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. Exod. 20:6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (b) Ps. 7:9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins. Exod. 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; Exod. 23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. Exod. 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. Ps. 5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Ps. 5:6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. Nah. 1:2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Nah. 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Paul traced the fall of man to the one act of Adam in the Garden of Eden, we learned in our last study. There, acting as our representative, Adam failed his probation, and as a result plunged the whole race, for whom he stood, into the guilt of sin. His sin was imputed to the race universally. Thus, Paul can say, "for all sinned" (Romans 5:12; I Corinthians 15:21-22). In fact, other things resulted. Not only was the first sin of Adam imputed to the race, but man has also inherited a corrupt nature, called by the older theologians PECCATUM ORIGINALIS, original sin.<sup>1</sup> In addition, he now has an inability to respond savingly to the Word of God (cf. Romans 8:7-8; I Corinthians 2:14), and eternal punishment is sure to come to him if there is no response to the gospel of Jesus Christ in faith. It is true to say, in the

figurative sense of idiom, that man is now “under foreign domination.” There is another point that Paul makes in the section we are to study that is interesting, as well as important. Adam is said to be a type of Christ, that is, an illustration of our Lord. Of course, as one studies the section, it becomes evident that Adam is a type of Christ largely by contrast, at least here. There are some other ways in which the first Adam illustrates the Last Adam, if the total biblical picture is considered. That we shall do when we come to the matter later in this study. We turn again now to consider the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity and some of the things that arise from it. We pointed out that sin, condemnation, and death came from the first Adam, while righteousness, justification, and life come from the Last Adam. The master-thought of the section that begins with verse twelve of Romans chapter five and concludes with verse twenty-one is the unity of the many in the one. Adam and his posterity are affected by his sin, while the Last Adam and His people are affected by His righteous act, that is, the victorious redeeming work of the cross.

*Whatever Became of Sin?* This was the intriguing title of a book written in 1973 by noted psychologist Karl Menninger. He complained that the loss of the sense of sin was undermining all sense of moral responsibility. The last two decades have demonstrated that Menninger’s concerns were well-founded. More recently Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. has perceptibly written that this same loss of the sinfulness of sin has permeated the church. Contrasting the older (and biblical) view of sin with the contemporary therapeutic one, he writes: “The newer language of Zion fudges: ‘Let us confess our problem with human relational adjustment dynamics, and especially our feebleness in networking.’ Or, ‘I’d just like to share that we just need to target holiness as a growth area.’ Where sin is concerned, people mumble now. Why should we speak up? Why retrieve the awareness of sin? Why restate the Christian *doctrine* of sin? The reason is that although traditional Christianity is true, its truth saws against the grain of much in contemporary culture and therefore needs constant sharpening. Christianity’s major doctrines need regular restatement so that people may believe them, or believe them anew. Its classic awarenesses need to be evoked so that people may have them, or have them again. Recalling and confessing our sin is like taking out the garbage: once is not enough. But anyone who tries to recover the knowledge of sin these days must overcome long odds. To put it mildly, modern consciousness does not encourage moral reproach; in particular, it does not encourage self-reproach. Preachers mumble about sin. The other traditional custodians of moral awareness often ignore, trivialize, or evade it.”<sup>2</sup>

## I. CONDITION OF MEN (Eph. 2:1)

Verse one opens with the conjunction KAI, translated “and.” It serves to connect this section with the preceding. The power that quickened Christ from the dead has quickened you who were likewise dead in the sphere of sin. NOTE: The words “hath he quickened” (as in the Kings James Version) are not in the Greek text at this point. The idea of “quickening” does not come into view until v. 5.

**A. The Fact - Dead** (NEKROS, dead, lifeless, without life). The death spoken of here is not physical death (it will lead to physical death). Men are said to be “dead” in sin. They are dead while they live, because they live in sin (cf. Colossians 2:13, 14). In Scripture the term “life” is often used to express union with God, while “death” expresses alienation from God with the accompanying conditions of corruption, misery and helplessness.

**B. The Sphere - Transgressions** (PARAPTŌMASIN) *and sins* (HAMARTIAIS). The words are closely related in meaning, but there is a distinction. *Transgressions* refer to “falling” and may refer to overt actions of disobedience, while *sins* (the classic term) “to miss the mark” and may designate the sins of heart and thought and the inclination of the will (cf. Psalm 29:13, 14 where both are used). Both terms are no doubt used to express the fullness of man’s rebellion against God.

Each word carries the definite article which declares the strong awareness of personal wrong doing.

## II. THE CONVERSATION OF MEN (v.2a)

I am resorting to the Old King James Version expression, “conversation,” to denote manner of life. Paul now describes more particularly the lifestyle of those who lived in transgressions and sins.

**A. The Manner** - *You followed* (Greek PERIEPATĒSATE, literally to walk about). It is used to denote a manner or course of life. That which characterizes a person’s behavior. Thus living and walking are synonymous. Unregenerate men literally are “death-walkers.”

**B. The Pattern** - *The ways of the world* (TON AIŌNA TOU KOSMOU, literally the age of this world). The expression is Hebraic and is often found in Rabbinic writings where it stands in contrast to the glorious age to come (i.e., the Messiah’s advent). It is a favorite expression of the Apostle Paul (cf. Romans 12:2; Galatians 1:4; I Corinthians 7:31), and is used to express the evil and transitory nature of the present world.

## III. THE CONTROLLER OF MEN (v.2b)

If things were not bad enough, what with man being dead in sin, we learn that the actual situation of man entails the active agency of the most wicked being in the entire universe: Satan.

**A. His Domain** - *The ruler of the power of the air* (TON ARCHONTA TĒS EXOUSIAS TOU AEROS). The picture presented here is that Satan is the ruler of the demons and other agencies of evil (cf. Colossians 1:13; Acts 26:18; Matthew 12:26; Mark 3:22; esp. Ephesians 6:12). Although not seen, Satan and his forces actively control and exert an evil influence on the lives of men, primarily in blinding men to the truth of the Word of God (cf. II Corinthians 4:4).

**B. His Function** - *He works* (ENERGOUNTOS, literally energizes) in the lives of men. “The phrase,” comments J.A. Robinson, “is carefully chosen so as to suggest that the world-power as a whole stands in sharp contrast to God. It is ‘a spirit,’ and it ‘worketh’ - the same forcible word which has been used twice already of the Divine working.”<sup>3</sup>

**C. His Subjects** - *The sons of disobedience* (TOIS HUIOIS TĒS APEITHEIAS). This also is a Hebraic expression indicating their chief characteristic. This disobedience is unbelief (cf. Hebrews 4:6, compare with II Thessalonians 2:3).

## IV. THE CONDEMNATION OF MEN (v.3)

Not only are men dead in sin and under the controlling influence of Satan, but they are subject to the wrath of a holy God.

**A. Man’s Habitation** - Paul declares that *all of us* (without exception) *lived* (ANESTRAPHĒMEN, literally to conduct one’s life). The word has special reference to man’s social behavior, whereas the word used in verse 2, PERIPATEŌ, is used more of personal conduct.

**B. Man’s Actions** - Men live in the sphere of the flesh. They are controlled by *cravings of the flesh* (TAIS EPITHUMIAIS TĒS SARKOS). Men live according to the dictates of their nature; they are “sons of disobedience” and behave as such. Furthermore, their sinful impulses are geared in accordance with the evil desires of *the mind* (TŌN DIANOIŌN). Man’s nature controls his thought patterns. An unregenerate person will only choose and think in harmony with his nature. He

will not do otherwise. To expect him to do so is like expecting a tiger to choose to become a vegetarian.

**C. Man's Dessert** - Men are *by nature children of wrath*. Paul declares that *all* are in this dilemma, elect as well as non-elect. It is only by grace that the elect are delivered from *wrath* (ORGĒS, a very strong word that declares God's just anger and judgment, compare with Romans 1:18ff) and only because another has taken their place in receiving God's wrath.

SUMMARY: Paul has set forth in 2:1-3 the terrible situation that all men, whether Jew or Gentile, are in by nature. Humanity is not on trial before God; the verdict is in, and the sentence has been passed – GUILTY, one and all. No one deserves salvation; all need it, but none deserves it, nor even seeks it! (cf. Romans 3:11). Our condition is such that we surely cannot earn salvation. Sinners, living in sin and being controlled by “the ruler of the kingdom of this age” (and willing subjects at that), were by nature (PHUSEI, lit. “innate disposition”, comp. Galatians 2:15; 4:8) “objects of God's wrath.” Sinners therefore need mercy. But if the standard by which mercy is given is merit, we are doomed.

#### **V. GOD'S MOTIVE (v.4)**

This verse begins with the Greek particle DE, “BUT” (compare with Romans 3:21). What men are and deserve is offset with God's abundant mercy. Notice the way God's love and mercy are described; GREAT LOVE and RICH MERCY. One cannot fail to notice, however, that God's love and mercy are *selective*. They are poured out on those who ARE MADE ALIVE WITH CHRIST. All are dead in sin, but all are not “made alive”. This is due to God's electing love and mercy (cf. 1:4, 11).

#### **VI. GOD'S MEANS (vv. 5, 6)**

When God's love is directed towards sinners, it is MERCY. The love of God is made known to the objects of His love (Romans 5:5-8). It is a love that will not fail (Romans 8:39). This text focuses the love of God upon the guilty and underserving; as such, it is controlled by and issues from GRACE. God's LOVE, MERCY and GRACE act; for by these He MADE US ALIVE (SUNEZŌOPOIĒSEN – “to make alive together with,” a synonym for the verb “to raise”; can also have the meaning “to keep or preserve alive”) WITH CHRIST when we were dead in sin. God does not set back and wait for “dead men” to act or respond – they can't! Notice how Paul quickly adds, lest there be hiding in the hearts of those to whom he was writing the yeast of Arminianism, IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED (SESŌSMENOI, perfect passive; the perfect tense points to the completed action with on-going results stressing the continual state). God acted in GRACE. The whole process of quickening the dead and raising them to life in Christ and seating them with Christ in the heavenly realm (note the parallel in 1:20) is the result of the power of God, a theme that Paul had begun in 1:19. Paul is still dealing with this theme, only now he is underscoring the motive and means for God's actions.

#### **VII. GOD'S MONUMENT (v.7)**

Verse seven begins with what is called a HINA purpose clause, usually translated “IN ORDER THAT” and used to declare a purpose; that is, why something was done. Why did God do this? To DISPLAY ENDEIXĒTAI, aorist middle subjunctive, lit. “show for Himself”) THE EXCEEDING (HUPERBALLON cf. 1:19) RICHES OF HIS GRACE (cf. 1:7) AS SEEN IN HIS KINDNESS (CHRĒSTOTĒTI, goodness, kindness toward another, used only by Paul, cf. Romans 2:4, 3:12, 11:22; Colossians 3:12; Titus 3:4) TO US IN CHRIST. Believers are quite literally “trophies of sovereign grace”.

### VIII. GOD'S MESSAGE (vv. 8, 9)

For it is by THE grace that you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Now some have contended that the gift of God refers only to GRACE and not to faith, which they say is our own doing and something that is the result of our free-will. What does the AND THIS IS NOT FROM YOURSELVES refer to? Many good theologians say it refers to the complete salvation being spoken of in the text. This is admissible, and is surely correct. But I am inclined to agree with Abraham Kuyper, who writes regarding the grammar of the Greek text, “The general rule is that the demonstrative agrees with its substantive in gender and number – but not always. The antecedent should be looked for in the immediate vicinity of the pronoun or adjective that refers to it.” Kuyper then cites a noted grammarian who says, “Very common is the use of a neuter demonstrative pronoun to indicate an antecedent substantive of masculine or of feminine gender, when the idea conveyed by that substantive is referred to in a general sense.<sup>4</sup> Now what this somewhat technical definition means is that FAITH (genitive, feminine, singular) is the antecedent of THIS (demonstrative, nominative, neuter) and that the Apostle is declaring that even faith is not from yourselves – something he expressly declares elsewhere as well (cf. Philippians 1:29). This is so NO one will boast or have any grounds for boasting. I do not see, if free-will is maintained, how men will not have grounds for boasting. THEY responded; all had an equal chance, but some used their free-wills and others did not. The ultimate reason they will be saved is not sovereign grace, but sovereign free-will – with which Paul will have no part. It is all of Grace – faith included.

### IX. GOD'S MAXIM (v. 10)

FOR HIS WORKMANSHIP (POIĒMA – only here and in Romans 1:20) ARE WE, so the Greek text reads. The pronoun HIS is emphatic. We are not saved BY good works, but UNTO good works. God has CREATED us in Christ Jesus (cf. II Corinthians 5:17). If Paul has not sufficiently dealt a death blow to all “merit-mongers,” he does so now with this “coup de grace.” Believers have been CREATED – they did not create themselves – FOR (EPI, aorist subjunctive, used in purpose clauses) GOOD WORKS, which are the fruits and evidences of faith. Believers are enabled to do good works not only by the power of God (Philippians 2:13) but also by the example of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:14, 15). These have been PREPARED BEFOREHAND by God, in order that we should WALK (PERIPATĒSŌMEN, cf. v. 3) in them. Note the contrast with v. 3. The doctrine of sovereign grace certainly does not encourage sloth; on the contrary, it is the great motivation for diligence in the Christian life and evidence of election (cf. II Peter 1:3-10).<sup>5</sup>

### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Original sin is not a substance or a positive attribute, but a defect in human nature caused by the fall and consisting in the loss and consequent absence of original righteousness, *iustitia originalis* and of the *imago Dei*. This *peccatum originalis* is (1) the *culpa haereditaria*, or hereditary guilt, which is imputed to all mankind because of the sin and guilt of Adam – in Reformed theology this imputation rests on the federal headship of Adam. It is also (2) the *corruption haereditaria*, or hereditary corruption, which, because of the guilt and corruption of Adam and Eve, is transmitted to all their descendants by generation. Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Baker, 1985), p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> C. Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Eerdmans, 1996), p. x.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Robinson, *Commentary On Ephesians, Exposition of the Greek Text* (rpt. Kregel, 1979), p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> A. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (rpt. Eerdmans, 1973), p. 412.

<sup>5</sup> “The most absurd conclusion that can ever be drawn from this truth is that it gives you the right to sit still. The opposite is true. In its deepest grounding this truth comes down to the fact that you are completely powerless, that you are wholly dependent upon God, that in yourself you are irretrievably lost. To what must such an awesome thought lead you? To continue sleeping calmly on the dregs of idleness? Or, with holy trembling, to call upon that God from whom alone your help can come?” G. Vos, *Grace and Glory* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1994), p. 231.