

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	7		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Galatians 4:1-7; Psalm 130:3		
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Our Deliverance

5. Lord's Day

Question 12. Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, is there no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favour?

Answer: God will have his justice satisfied: (a) and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another. (b)

(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. 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. Ezek. 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Matt. 5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. 2 Thess. 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; Luke 16:2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. (b) Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: Rom. 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Question 13. Can we ourselves then make this satisfaction?

Answer: By no means; but on the contrary we daily increase our debt. (a)

(a) Job 9:2 I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? Job 9:3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. Job 15:15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. Job 15:16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? Job 4:18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: Job 4:19 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? Ps. 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Matt. 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Matt. 18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. Matt. 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Question 14. Can there be found anywhere, one, who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us?

Answer: None; for, first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man has committed; (a) and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it. (b)

(a) Ezek. 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Gen. 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Heb. 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb. 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Heb. 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Heb. 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. (b) Nah. 1:6 Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. Ps. 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Question 15. What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?

Answer: For one who is very man, and perfectly (a) righteous; (b) and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God. (c)

(a) 1 Cor. 15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. Jer. 33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. Isa. 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 2 Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (b) Heb. 7:26 For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Heb. 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. (c) Isa. 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isa. 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. 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. Luke 11:22 But when a stronger than he (a strong man armed) shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

“The atonement,” wrote John Murray, “as a completed work of Christ, must always be viewed in the light of the *inter-Trinitarian economy of salvation*.”¹ Herman Bavinck has explained it this way: “Father, Son, and Spirit share one and the same Divine nature and characteristics. They are one being. Nevertheless, each has His own name, His own particular characteristic, by which He is distinguished from the others. The Father alone has fatherhood, the Son alone has generation, and the Spirit alone possesses the quality of proceeding from both. To that order of existence in the Divine Being the order of the three persons in all Divine work corresponds. The Father is He *from* whom, the Son is He *through* whom, and the Spirit is He *in* whom all things are. All things in the creation, and in redemption, or re-creation, come from the Father, through the Son and the Spirit. And in the Spirit and through the Son they are come back to Him. It is to the Father that we are particularly indebted, therefore, for His electing love, to the Son for His

redeeming grace, and to the Spirit for His regenerative and renewing power.”² The passage in Galatians that is before us is laden with references to the Trinitarian outworking of redemption.

I. THE MISSION OF THE SON

Paul has been arguing that the Law acted as a preparatory instrument. I want you to notice how the Apostle develops his case in light of God’s program. It has design and purpose. The expression “when the time had fully come” (verse 4, NIV) indicates that the divine program of the ages is ultimately under the sovereign oversight of God the Father. He *determines* the exact time and circumstances under which the Son shall enter human history to accomplish the Father’s will.

A. He was Sent by Divine Commission

The majestic statement “*God sent forth His son*” is filled with doctrinal content. The verb *sent forth* (EXAPESTEILEN) suggests the fact the Lord Jesus came out from God Himself and must, “in view of the apostle’s belief in the pre-existence of Jesus, as set forth in I Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 2:6ff; Colossians 1:15, 16 and of the parallelism of verse 6, be interpreted as having reference to the sending of the Son from his pre-existent state into the world.”³ Notice that He is called God’s Son (not His child); He was sent as *the Son* (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1).

B. The Manner in Which He Came

He was *made* (KJV) or *born* (ESV) of a woman. He possessed true humanity. In this one passage we therefore have a clear reference to the uniqueness of Christ. We have the pre-existent Son sent forth from God, assuming true humanity in order to make redemption.

C. The Condition in Which He Came

He was born under the Law. This relates Him to the Law of Moses (Luke 2:21, 22, 27; Matthew 3:15, 5:17). This pertains to Christ’s *active* obedience to the Law. He perfectly fulfilled all that the Law required. “The obedience of Christ,” wrote John Flavel, “hath a double relation, *relatio legalis justitiae*, the relation of a legal righteousness, and adequate and exactly proportioned price. And it hath also in it *ratio superlegalis meriti*, the relation of a merit over and beyond the law.”⁴

D. The Purpose of His Coming

There are two stated purposes of His coming (note the two HINA purpose clauses).

1. REDEMPTION. He came to redeem (EXAGORAZŌ, to buy back). Note that Paul does *not* speak of this in terms of *conditionality*. Christ did not come merely to make redemption a possibility, but He actually redeemed. Paul’s language is that of *certainty*, (cf. Galatians 1:4; 3:13).

2. ADOPTION. Christ does more than just rescue slaves—He makes them sons! The verb *receive* in verse 5 (APOLABŌMEN, literally *to get from*) is an intensive one and describes the receiving in full of the status of sonship.

II. THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT

God confirms or attests that the adoption is genuine by sending forth His Spirit. How is the Spirit’s presence made evident?

A. He works in the heart. In distinction from the Law, which is solely an *external* authority and cannot by itself change the heart (cf. Jeremiah 31:33), God sends the Spirit into our innermost being (John 7:37 - 39).

B. He is the Spirit of Christ. (cf. Romans 8:9; John 16:13, 14) Note how the inter-Trinitarian activities of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are highlighted.

C. His manifestation. How do you know you have the Spirit? He prompts the sons to cry *Abba Father*. Abba is Aramaic for father. The term is one of deep affection and is very personal.⁵ Jesus used the word in Mark 14:36 and now believers have the same privilege.

CONCLUSION: Ursinus in his masterful commentary on *The Heidelberg* notes that, “The exclusive particle *mere* is added in Q. 14, that the negative answer may be true; for it was necessary that a creature should make satisfaction for the creature’s sin, but not such an one as was merely or only a creature, because such an one could not make the satisfaction which was required, as will appear in the remarks which we shall now make.

“We must, therefore, since satisfaction must be made through another, enquire, whether this other person may be any creature besides man; and whether he may be a mere creature. We deny both propositions. Our reason for denying *the first* is, because God will not punish the sin which man has committed in any other creature. This is in accordance with the order of his justice, which does not permit one to sin and another to bear the punishment. ‘The soul that sinneth, it shall die.’ (Ez. 18:20). This reason proves that no creature, except man could satisfy for man: yea, God could not be satisfied for the sin of man by the eternal destruction of heaven and earth, and of the angels themselves, and all other creatures. Our reasons for denying the *second proposition* are these: 1. Because no creature possesses such power as to be able to sustain a finite punishment, equivalent to that which is infinite, for the purpose of making satisfaction for the infinite guilt of man. A mere creature would be consumed and reduced to nothing, before satisfaction could be made to God in this way: ‘For God is a consuming fire.’ ‘If thou shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?’ ‘For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.’ &c. (Deut. 4:24. Ps. 130:3. Rom. 8:3). This reason proves that no creature in the whole universe was able to make satisfaction to God for man’s sin, by punishment, so as to come forth from the same, which escape was necessary in order to our deliverance. There could, therefore, in this way, on account of the weakness of the creature, be no just proportion between sin and its punishment. 2. Because the punishment of a mere creature could not be a price of sufficient dignity and value for our redemption. 3. Because a mere creature could not have renewed and sanctified our nature, nor could such an one have brought it to pass that we should no longer sin, all of which it was necessary for our deliverer to accomplish.”⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ *The Collected Writings of John Murray II* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), p. 143.

² Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, translated by H. Zylstra (rpt. Baker Book House, 1977), p. 159.

³ E. DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (T&T Clark, 1977), p. 217.

⁴ *The Works of John Flavel I* (rpt. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), p. 189.

⁵ Joachim Jeremias has shown that Abba was exclusively a family word. A neighbor might ask a child if his father is home, and the child would respond, “Yes, my Abba is home”—but the neighbor would never say, “Is your Abba home?” Only the children could call their fathers “Abba.” cf. *The Prayers of Jesus* (Fortress, 1978), p. 95.

⁶ Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on The Heidelberg Catechism* (rpt. P & R, 1972), p. 84.