

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 57.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #57. *What benefits has Christ procured by his mediation?*

A. Christ, by his mediation, has procured redemption,¹ with all other benefits of the covenant of grace.²

Question 1—*What is the chief thing Christ has procured by his mediation?*

Answer—The chief benefit procured by Christ by his mediation is redemption, Heb. 9:12. This redemption is a ransom, or purchase, represented in the Scriptures as *vicarious*, or *substitutionary*, Matt. 20:28. This redemption is a vicarious satisfaction of the justice of God, Rom. 3:26. The satisfaction of justice intended and accomplished by it is for others, not for himself, Luke 22:19.

The vicarious nature of the atonement and its redemption is clearly held forth in those Scriptures wherein Christ's speaks of the purpose of his death, Luke 22:20; John 6:51. This intention is announced as that demanded by his love for his friends, John 15:13. This vicarious, or substitutionary, nature of the redemption wrought is confirmed by the teaching of the apostle Paul, Rom. 5:6-8. In this redemption, Christ has taken upon himself the sin of his people, 2 Cor. 5:21. In so doing, he assumed the curse that was due for that sin on behalf of the sinner, Gal. 3:13. Thus, his redemption is said to be an offering and sacrifice to God on behalf of his church, Eph. 5:2, 25. Of his church and people alone it can be said he gave himself a ransom for all, which shall appear in due time, 1 Tim. 2:5, 6. For those for whom he has made this substitution, Christ may be said to have tasted death, Heb. 2:9. Of these, Peter explains, there was a vicarious suffering, 1 Pet. 3:18. In this, we must note the difference between personal atonement, which is made by the sinner, and vicarious atonement, which is made by the offended party, God, Tit. 2:13. Personal atonement is given by the offender, not received by him, Rom. 5:11. However, vicarious atonement, and the redemption that it brings, in the Christian system, is made by the party offended who atones for the sins committed against himself, 1 John 4:10.

Scripture regards the entire work of Christ, as Prophet, Priest and King, as a fulfillment of God's law, Ps. 40:8; and a satisfaction of his demand, Heb. 10:7-10. It is of the essence of atonement that there be suffering, therefore, the atoning bullock or ram was made to bleed, agonize and die before being consumed with fire, Lev. 16:27. In harmony with this, Jesus lays stress upon his own suffering as the essential element in his atonement, Luke 9:22. This was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies and types concerning Messiah, Acts 3:18. This atonement, in turn, results in the forgiveness, or non-infliction of suffering, upon the transgressor, 1 Pet. 2:24. Thus, the suffering of the substituted bullock or ram had the effect of covering the guilt of the offender in the eyes of God, Ps. 51:19; Isa. 38:17. The death of the righteous on behalf of the unrighteous as the means of atonement with God was understood and taught by the Jews, 2 Sam. 21:14. In Christ, this atonement

¹ Heb. 9:12.

² 2 Cor. 1:20.

brings a full redemption which includes both a forgiveness of sins and eternal life, those who believe have no condemnation and have come into eternal life, John 3:16, 18. These two kinds of benefits, though they always come together, are often mentioned separately side by side, John 3:36; Acts 26:18.

This redemption has an objective nature as the atonement procured propitiates, or covers, the holy displeasure of God, 1 John 2:2; 4:10. This propitiation leads to a reconciliation of God toward the subject, Rom. 5:10, 11; which is nothing less than the removal of the wrath of God, Rom. 3:25. Thus, the reconciliation of God to man is referred to the atoning death of Christ, Col. 1:21; Eph. 2:16. Therefore, by means of this atonement, Christ has ransomed, or purchased, his church, Acts 20:28.

This redemption also has a subjective nature, producing in those who subjectively appropriate this vicarious atonement an influence upon the conscience by pacifying man's moral sense, Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:13, 14. A second subjective appropriation is an unselfish godly sorrow for sin shown by a willingness to suffer personally for sin, Lev. 26:41, 43; which is displayed by the penitent thief, Luke 23:41. The first impulse of the truly repentant sinner is to make a personal atonement, which is what distinguishes penitence from remorse, the godly sorrow from the sorrow of the world, 2 Cor. 7:10.

Finally, we must note that the sufferings of Christ were penal—his death was a matter of penal substitution, Rom. 4:25. Retributive justice, or the *lex talionis*, is expressed in the law, Ex. 21:24. It is not the function of the individual, it belongs to God, Rom. 12:19; and to civil governments as delegated by God, Rom. 13:4. The sufferings of Christ the Mediator were vicariously penal, or atoning, for his elect people, Gal. 3:13. Scripture teaches that our Lord's sufferings were vicariously retributive, endured for the purpose of satisfying justice in place of the actual transgressor, Isa. 53:5. Hence, the declaration of John the Baptist upon seeing Jesus Christ, John 1:29. The intention of the Father and the Son was to satisfy for the sin of man, Rom. 8:32. Penalty in the case of Christ was vicarious, unlike that of the fallen angels whose penalty was personal, 2 Pet. 2:4.

So, Christ by his mediation has procured a redemption for his people that was achieved vicariously and satisfied the penal sanctions against them, Isa. 53:5, 6, 10.

Question 2—*What should be understood by all the other benefits of the covenant of grace?*

Answer—Together with that redemption, Christ by his mediation has purchased all of the other benefits which pertain to the covenant of grace, 2 Cor. 1:20. The covenant of grace is the foundation of all the blessings which we enjoy, or hope for, Luke 1:68-74. Although redemption is included among the benefits of the covenant of grace, we should understand these other benefits as consequents of our redemption, Ps. 84:11. These things differ in this respect, that redemption is said to be wrought *for us* by Christ in his own Person, Rom. 6:23; while these other things are said to be wrought *in us*, Heb. 13:21. Among these things must be included:

First, effectual calling, whereby those whom he has predestinated are called to salvation in Christ, Rom. 8:30. By this effectual calling, those who have been redeemed by Christ are called from a state of spiritual death to new life in Christ, Eph. 2:1-5.

Second, sanctification, whereby those redeemed grow in grace as God works in and through them by his Holy Spirit, creating in them a will to do his good pleasure, Phil. 2:12, 13. It is a process wherein Christians become increasingly Christ-like, 2 Cor. 3:18.

Third, repentance unto life, whereby the sinner is able to apprehend both their true misery and their need of the mercy of God in Christ, Acts 11:18.