

God's Promised Mediator

Heidelberg Catechism

By Pastor Cory Griess

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30

Preached on: Sunday, January 24, 2010

Calvary Protestant Reformed Church

2011 2nd St.

Hull, IA 51239

Website: www.calvaryprc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/calvaryprc

Let's turn in God's word this morning to John 14. The text is verse 6 of this chapter and also the text is 1 Corinthians 1:30 which is quoted in Lord's Day 6 so we don't have to turn there to read that, but let's read John 14, the first 14 verses. The text will be in verse 6 here.

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

We read the word of God that far. The text is verse 6,

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Let's turn now to the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 6. On the back of your Psalter, I have page 5 here.

Q. 16 . Why must He be very man, and also perfectly righteous?

A. Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin; and one, who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others.

Q. 17. Why must He in one person be also very God?

A. That He might, by the power of His Godhead, sustain in His human nature the burden of God's wrath; and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life.

Q. 18. Who then is that Mediator, who is in one person both very God and a real righteous man?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ: [and now the Catechism quotes 1 Corinthians 1:30] "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Q. 19. Whence knoweth thou this?

A. From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son.

Congregation of Jesus Christ, Lord's Day 6 is the second Lord's Day in the second section of the Heidelberg Catechism on our deliverance. Remember that the Catechism has brought us now to a biblical understanding of our lost and hopeless condition. We discovered from the law that we are prone by nature to hate God and our neighbor and we are prone by nature to self love. We found that we were sinners and that God in his justice absolutely must punish sinners and that, therefore, if left to ourselves, we are doomed to be punished. Last time, however, we discovered with the Catechism, at least there was the possibility of salvation. The Catechism told us that although there are strict qualifications, almost impossible qualifications, there is the possibility that someone could be our Savior and has told us that this one has to be very God, very man, and also perfectly righteous, and has told us that this one who is going to be able to be Savior from sin must be able to accomplish that twofold satisfaction: perfect love for God and satisfy the justice of God for our sins in trying to rob God of his glory.

Now, finally, thankfully, the Catechisms sets our Deliverer before us, Jesus the Christ, and though we don't know everything about him yet, the Catechism will go on to tell us more about him, who he is and what he does. We know enough at this point to know that

it is very very good to see him. The hope of the Gospel is set before us this morning, beloved. Jesus Christ himself, though Jesus personally given to us by God is set before us, the human and the divine together, the one promised to Adam, promised to Abraham, promised to all the saints of old, represented in the ceremonies, prophesied by the prophets and now fulfilled in these last days, this Jesus Christ himself is set before us. We don't know everything about him yet but we know this: he is everything that we are not and he is God's man sent to accomplish our deliverance.

The theme this morning is "God's Promised Mediator." God's Promised Mediator. Let's notice first who he is, second, how we know him. Who he is and how we know him. The promised Mediator is Jesus himself, the Christ. This Jesus is God's answer to our sin, weakness and inevitable destruction. 1 Corinthians 1:30 emphasizes this. The text, that text that's quoted in Answer 18 of the Catechism says that he is, "of God, made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." He is of God for us. He is God's answer when we have no answer. When the Catechism, therefore, calls Jesus Christ the Mediator and the rest of Scripture calls him the Mediator, understand that he is a Mediator sent by God to capture us, to recover us who were lost.

Normally the idea of a mediator is someone that is a neutral party that brings two together, helps them compromise to get back together. If you have a marriage difficulty, you go to the pastor, perhaps there is a third party and he mediates. He tries to bring the two sides back together. But this Mediator, Jesus Christ sent by God, is not quite like that. He does not come out of nowhere as a third party to reconcile two parties that are not sure if they want to be together. He's sent from God's side; he is sent by God to recover us. When we go our own way, when we leave, he is God's man sent to recover us. It's not as though God says to us when we go our own way, "Well, if you make some steps toward recovery and if you kind of work your way back toward me, then I will also compromise a bit and we can meet in the middle and work things out." It's not like that, but rather to keep the idea, the metaphor of a marriage, we have left and in Adam we have personally all left, gone our own way, we are sleeping around with others and God sends his man to come and recover us for himself. He is sent from God's side to bring us powerfully back to himself to reconcile us to God.

This Jesus Christ is perfectly qualified to accomplish that work. He is perfectly qualified to be our Deliverer and our Mediator. His resume is perfect, perfectly fitted to the position of Mediator as only his as only his can be. The Catechism has told us that if someone is going to be Savior from sin, he must be very man, perfectly righteous and very God, and that's exactly what this Mediator sent by God is.

He is fully man, he partakes of humanity completely. Many places in Scripture prove this but Romans 9:5 is a particular place. Romans 9:5 says this, "To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." To them, that is to the Jews or to the Israelites, belong the patriarchs and from their very race according to the flesh, the Christ. The Apostle Paul is saying in the context here that he wishes himself to be accursed for his brothers in Israel, the Jews. He says that because these are the people of God historically. They have been

given the revelation of the word of God. They have been given the covenant as a people. And not only that, they have been given from their very race according to the flesh, the Christ. Jesus has been born out of their loins. Jesus is a real man born of the flesh, the Apostle Paul is saying, out of their line. He can trace his lineage back. He is a real human being.

And he must be, he has to be. He can't just look like us. He can't have a special human nature that's not really ours that is created just for him. Some people taught that in the early church. They were deemed heretics by the early church. They taught that Jesus Christ simply looked like man. They said that it would be to bring down the honor of God to say that God was united to a real human being. They said it can't be. That ends God's dignity to be brought down to humanity in the flesh. But the early church fathers said, "No, he has to be," and the Scriptures tell us that he is from the very loins of Adam, man himself fully. He must be that humanity that was created at the very beginning, Adam's flesh and blood because the guilty party must pay for sin. Just as we sin with our human soul, our human heart, just as our human will goes against God, just as we sin with our human body, our human eyes, our human hands, so this Savior must be perfectly righteous with that same human soul, that same human heart, that same will, that same body, those same eyes and those same hands, those same ears. He must be us. He must be righteous as he is us otherwise there is no salvation.

He must come, therefore, out of Adam's loins. He must trace his lineage back to the first Adam and he must do that without being polluted with Adam's sin and Adam's guilt. He must be perfect. He must be a spotless sacrifice, therefore, he must also be perfectly God. He must be God and man together. He is also completely perfectly God according to the Scriptures. Interestingly, in Romans 9:5, the same verse proves this as well. "To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." In the very same verse, the Apostle Paul recognizes both the humanity and the divinity of this Savior, Jesus Christ. He is not just like God but he is God, God over all, the Apostle Paul confesses. He is not just a man that seems like God, he's not just the most God-like man that the earth has ever come across, but he is God himself as he is also man.

He has to be. He has to be otherwise as Question and Answer 17 says he cannot sustain in his human nature God's eternal wrath. Read that with me again and let's notice that. "Why must He in one person be also very God? That He might, by the power of His Godhead, sustain in His human nature the burden of God's wrath; and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life." Notice what the Catechism is saying here: he must be divine so that he can sustain in his human nature God's eternal wrath. He has to be divine so that the human nature can sustain God's eternal wrath. The human nature cannot of its own sustain the eternal wrath of God for our sins, yet it must be that human nature that suffers that eternal wrath, it must be us, our flesh that suffers for sin. Therefore Jesus' human nature must itself bear the eternal wrath of God but it can't. On its own, it cannot. It would be obliterated if it was on its own. And the divine nature cannot itself bear the wrath of God because that would not atone for sin for us, it must be in human flesh that atones for sin. Therefore the church has said following the Scriptures, "He must be divine

and human together in one person." What happened on the cross of Jesus Christ, beloved, in those six hours of darkness when the eternal wrath of God was pummeling his Son, Jesus Christ, was that the divine nature was upholding the human nature so that that human nature could bear the eternal wrath of God. Human nature bore it but the divine nature communicated to that human nature properties necessary to be able to sustain eternal wrath for our sins. Only in that way could he accomplish redemption in one person, he must be God and man.

Do you see, therefore, that the intent of the Catechism this morning is to set before you the uniqueness and the glory of Jesus, the Christ? No one but him. How it must infuriate Jehovah of Hosts when people speak of Jesus and Buddha and Mohammed and Joseph Smith in the same breath as though they are all legitimate ways to be brought back to God. Jehovah, the Triune God, sent forth his own Son into human flesh to be united to this weakness and to bear the eternal wrath of God. What great lengths the Godhead went to to send a Savior from sin. What great lengths the second person of the Trinity went to as we discovered on Christmas Day, remember, to be born of a woman, to endure our shame all his life long and to suffer eternal wrath. What a slap in the face to the God of heaven and earth to even suggest that an enlightened prince or that an Arabian warlord or that an ex-Mason, none of whom came back from the dead, could do anything to provide a way back to the Father. It's a wonder that the God of heaven and earth stays his hand when men speak any other Savior, and this Savior, his unique Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

It is not pride, beloved, it is Jesus' due to speak the way he speaks in John 14:6 when he says, "I am the way, the truth and the life; and no one comes to the Father but by me." How it must infuriate Jehovah of Hosts when theologians and preachers that claim to speak on God's behalf compromise the uniqueness of his dear Son. How it must infuriate Jehovah of Hosts when theologians and preachers teach that his unique Son is not able to save on his own. How it must rankle the God of heaven and earth when his own adopted sons and daughters who know his unique Son, who have been redeemed by him, yet do not live for him in the world. How it must irk Jehovah of Hosts when those who are redeemed by his unique Son and know his Son are ashamed to speak of him to others, as though God in human flesh is something to keep quiet about.

He is the unique Son of God set before us this morning, the only Savior from sin. This Jesus, beloved, this unique Savior, is personally our Savior from sin. I cannot emphasize this enough and perhaps you will become sick of me emphasizing it over the years. I don't know. It is the person that is the human and the divine together that is our hope, beloved. The idea of Jesus is not our hope, the logical conclusion that Jesus is necessary is not our hope, he, himself, is our hope. Both of the texts emphasize this. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that he "is made to us righteousness, redemption, sanctification." He is personally made this to us as a person. John 14:6, Jesus does not say, "I know the way, the truth and the life, or I have the secret knowledge of the way, the truth and the life that I can share with you," but, "I am in my person the way, the truth and the life as I stand here before you alive. I am personally your hope." It is him, himself, that person, Jesus

Christ, who is our hope, beloved, with his human and divine nature wrapped into one being.

This is perhaps kind of a far out illustration but maybe it's helpful. If there was an epidemic and it was spreading across the world and people were sick and dying and there was no antidote for this epidemic left except that one person had that antidote to cure this disease, but that one person did not have the antidote in his hand in a syringe but it was injected into his bloodstream so that the only antidote for this epidemic that was crossing the face of the earth was found in this person in his blood, then that person himself would become the only way of saving men's lives upon the earth. In a much more profound way, beloved, this Jesus Christ in himself, in his person, is our hope. As he stands incarnated, God in man, he brings man and God as close together as possible in himself. As he stands as a person before us this morning having lived a perfect life, having suffered personally for our sins in himself, having risen personally from the dead, ascended personally into heaven so that now he sits as a person at the right hand of God, our hope is contained in him.

Let me put it this way: if we combine our two texts this morning John 14:6, 1 Corinthians 1:30, perhaps we can see this a bit. It is because it is true as Jesus confesses in John 14:6 that he is the life, it is possible that 1 Corinthians 1:30 can say that he is therefore made our redemption. He himself satisfied the justice of God, redeemed us from destruction, and he himself legally communicates his own righteousness to us. He is made our righteousness himself personally. It is because in John 14:6, it is true when Jesus says, "I am the truth personally," it's because that's true that 1 Corinthians 1:30 can say that he is therefore made to us wisdom personally. We grope around in darkness. He is the light that opens our eyes when he comes personally to us and shows us the life. It is because Jesus can say truthfully in John 14:6 that he is "the way," that 1 Corinthians 1:30 can say that he is therefore "made to us sanctification." He regenerates our hearts, sets us on the path of godliness. He personally communicates his own righteousness to us. Our holiness is a result of himself giving us himself, the righteousness that is contained in him.

Beloved congregation, I will spend my life teaching dogmatics, systematic theology. I will spend myself for that because it is through that that we know Jesus Christ, but let us be clear this morning: it is not a dogmatics textbook that was incarnated God into human flesh and it was not systematic theology that was nailed to a cross for you and for me. I will give myself to my dying breath for the church of Jesus Christ because I believe that Christ is found in his church, but let us be clear this morning, beloved: it is not the church that arose again the third day but Jesus Christ himself personally. Jesus does not hold wisdom, righteousness and sanctification in his hands but he is wisdom, righteousness and sanctification. Grace, forgiveness, salvation is not a thing that he hands over to us, but grace, forgiveness, salvation is in himself and he communicates himself to us. Hope for you and for me, beloved, is not a principle but a person. It's not an idea but a man. It's not a powerful story but it is God himself in human flesh. Our need ultimately, beloved, is not only for sermons about Jesus Christ, but it is for through sermons about Jesus Christ to have Jesus Christ himself in his person, to possess him, because to possess him is to have life.

And to possess him, you must know him, and we know him in the holy Gospel. Question and Answer 19 says this, "Whence knowest thou this? From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise," and here it traces the revelation of that Gospel through history. "From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son." We know him in the holy Gospel. When the Catechism refers to the Gospel here, beloved, the Catechism is not revealing or referring to the Bible, per se. It's referring, rather, to the Gospel that is contained in the Bible. When it talks about the Gospel, it is talking about the Gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ who was promised in the Old Testament has come and there is the atoning work found in his blood; that through repentance and faith in him there is forgiveness in life. That is the Gospel and that Gospel is now found for us in the Bible.

The Gospel was not always found for God's people in the Bible. The Gospel throughout most of human history was communicated to people verbally, orally. In fact, the very first proclamation of the Gospel was proclaimed orally by God to Adam and Eve in Paradise. That proclamation itself was not written down until 2,000 years later when Moses came along and wrote the book of Genesis. The entire Bible itself was not completed until after Jesus Christ, and even then, it was only made available to everyone through the printing press at the time of the Reformation. The fact that we can pick up a Bible and have the Gospel contained in it is a very recent development in the history of the church.

For the majority of redemptive history, therefore, people heard the Gospel, they did not read it, but that does not mean that they didn't have the Gospel or that they didn't have Christ contained in the Gospel. That's what the Catechism's point is here. When Adam and Eve saw the sacrifice that God made for them after their fall into sin, and when they heard God declare to them Genesis 3:15, they had the Gospel. They had Christ in promised form in the Old Testament. When Jacob promised to his son, Judah, in what is recorded now in Genesis 49:10 that "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," they had the Gospel. They had the promise of the Shiloh that would come, Jesus Christ. When the priests made their sacrifices and laid their hands on the heads of the sheep, the people of God had the Gospel; in promised form they had Jesus Christ. When Isaiah prophesied in chapter 53 and all throughout his prophecy the glorious words of the coming suffering servant, and when the other prophets proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, they had the Gospel, the promise of his coming, Jesus Christ. And lastly, when all this was fulfilled and is now recorded in the Scriptures for us, the church had and now has the Gospel. Jesus Christ, not now in promised form but in fulfilled form. Jesus Christ, the good news that he has come to redeem from sin.

All throughout redemptive history then as now, God's people believed this Gospel and they believed that Gospel in contrast to law because the Gospel is never a law but Gospel. The Gospel is Gospel and the law is law. We must carefully distinguish between the two and understand what we are doing when we do that this morning. We have to be careful

because a lot of times when the word "law" is used, it's not only used of the commands or the 10 Commandments. There is an example of that in Answer 19. When the Question and Answer says, "and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law," it's not referring to the commandments, it's referring to the administration of the Gospel and the law that was found at Sinai and thereafter. That whole time period is called the ceremony of the law. During that time period was given both law and Gospel. The 10 Commandments and the other Commandments came down from Mount Sinai but also the sacrifices were commanded so that both law and Gospel were there in the Old Testament. The two were not to be confused for them nor for us. The law was to be a schoolmaster to lead them to the blood seen in those sacrifices in the Old Testament and therefore it is to be that way for us as well.

The Catechism makes this distinction, a very very important distinction here. It does that by correlating Answer 19 with Answer 3. If you have your Psalter out, follow me here. The Catechism makes an important point when it correlates Question and Answer 19 with Question and Answer 3. Remember that Question and Answer 3 asks this, "Whence knowest thou thy misery?" And the Answer was, "Out of the law of God." Question 19 now asks, "Whence knowest thou this? Or whence knowest thy deliverance?" Answer, "from the holy Gospel." Whence knowest thou thy misery? Out of the law of God. Whence knowest thou thy deliverance? Out of the Gospel. Both contained in the Scriptures. The point is the law condemns and the Gospel liberates.

If we do not make this distinction, we have no Gospel and this often happens in the church world and in preaching today, that the Gospel simply becomes another law and therefore it provides no real freedom. The Gospel simply becomes more commands to do this and to do this; it is always a step or steps to do something better, or if you only do this, then you'll be a better Christian. Finally if one takes this message seriously, he falls down so downtrodden, so downcast that he says, "I can't do this anymore." And that's why the Gospel must be the Gospel and the law must be the law. The Gospel, beloved, is the declaration of something that has been done, something that is finished.

After the first part of this Catechism where we have been confronted with the law of God and we have been shown that we cannot keep the law of God perfectly, what we don't need is another message about what more we must do. Therefore the Catechism sets before us Jesus Christ who stands before us this morning and says, "I have done it." The Gospel is a proclamation, an enunciation of something that has been done by this person, Jesus Christ. It is not WWJD, what would Jesus do, but is WHJD, what has Jesus done. When we get that straight, when we know that the Gospel is a proclamation of something that is finished, then we can say what would Jesus do and live a life of gratitude for what he has accomplished.

This Gospel, this proclamation of Jesus Christ personally our Savior, is contained now for us in the Scriptures. It's that same Gospel delivered to the saints of old all throughout the history of redemption now contained in the word that was proclaimed to all God's people all throughout human history that you now expect to be proclaimed from this

pulpit from the Scriptures Sunday after Sunday. This means that though the Gospel is not the Scriptures, the two cannot be separated. The Gospel is contained in the Scriptures and only in Scriptures. We do not find this Jesus personally in his finished work anywhere else than in this book, the Scriptures inspired by God. It means, beloved, that you don't need to have some kind of mystical experience in order to find Jesus Christ. You don't need to have some time of specific enlightenment in order to have Jesus Christ. You need to have him in the word, trust him and grow in trusting him in the Scriptures. In this book, you have Jesus personally.

Do you realize what that means? It is a good biography that you pick up that when you finish reading it you say, "I really feel like I know the character. I feel like I have met him." This book, beloved, does one better. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and by faith, not only does this book give you to know Jesus Christ but allows you by faith to have Jesus Christ, to actually possess him, to be united to him personally by faith. Through this book and through the power of the Holy Spirit who works faith in us, Christ personally who now lives is alive right now, is bound to us so that not only do we know him, we have him.

This is the miracle of the word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. You have this Jesus Christ set before you this morning. Read the book. Have Jesus. Hear the book expounded, proclaimed. Have Jesus. Here is your hope, beloved, set before you this morning personally: Jesus Christ, the righteous one. Be therefore, people of the book. Love him, know him and find him as God has promised, Mediator and Deliverer. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, unite thy Son to us that we might know him and have him, and having him have life eternal. In Jesus' name. Amen.