

The Blessing of Christ Seated at the Right hand of God

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Heidelberg Catechism - 2021

By Gerald R. Procee

Bible Text: Psalm 110
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Ebenezer Free Reformed Church

253 Weirs Lane
Dundas ON, L9H 5E1
Canada

Website: www.frcna.org/congregations/item/21-dundas-frc
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/frcdundas_

The scripture reading this afternoon is Psalm 110. We will read God's word from Psalm 110.

1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. 5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. 7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

So far the reading of God's word.

This afternoon, congregation, we wish to study Lord's Day 19, and we consider the first two questions, 50 and 51. Lord's Day 19, question and answer 50 and 51 and there we confess,

Q. 50. Why is it added, "and sitteth at the right hand of God"?

A. Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might appear as Head of His church, by whom the Father governs all things.

Q. 51. What profit is this glory of Christ, our Head, unto us?

A. First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members; and then that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.

So far.

Beloved congregation, there can be at times great contrasts in the lives of God's children. You all know, boys and girls, what happened to Moses, that he had to flee from Egypt, and then he became a shepherd. What he had to do for 40 years was taking care of some goats or sheep and finally when he was 80, we would expect his life to be done, then the Lord came into his life to make him the one who would lead Israel out of bondage. And we know of Joseph, that he was in prison. He was for years in prison while he had done nothing wrong. He only had served the Lord and obeyed God's commandments, and yet he ended up in prison, and then in one day the Lord made him Prime Minister of the greatest empire in those days, the land of Egypt. There can be contrasts also in spiritual life, that a person can go through struggles and afflictions, and everything appears gloomy, that he is convicted by his sin and doesn't know where to go, and it seems as if the heavens are shut. He cries out to the living God. There seems to be no response. And then suddenly things can completely change, and then light floods the soul, and then a certain text of scripture sets a person in liberty, that light is shed upon the Savior, and he tastes forgiveness. It is as if he is completely changed. He becomes a new person. There can be contrasts.

Well, the Lord Jesus went through the greatest contrast, didn't he? He was mocked, he was scourged, and Pilate looked at him with that mockery cloak that the Lord Jesus had on, and the crown of thorns he was wearing, and there he stood with a broken reed in his hand and Pilate asked him, "Are you a king?" How much the Lord Jesus was in derision that the worst was still to come, not only crucifixion, but then having to descend into the bottomless pit, into the abyss. He descended into hell. But then the contrast. He arose from the dead, angels opened up the grave, and he came out as the conquering Prince of Peace. And after forty days he ascended into heaven, and there he was received with jubilation by the angels for if the angels rejoice in heaven when on earth is one sinner who repents to God, how should the jubilation have been when the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, returned, having conquered every enemy, sin, death, hell, the devil, the grave, and was seated at the right hand of God.

That's a glorious reality today. Today still, the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God. He will not be there for long though, because he, as it were, is already standing up and summoning his angels, because he's going to come back with the clouds of heaven. The trumpet shall sound, and the Lord will descend with a shout, that's the cry of triumph. It's going to happen. But now he is still on his throne, and that spells for you and me salvation, for he is there the mediator for you and me and he is from heaven able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him.

It's so beautiful that the Catechism goes through all the various aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ. We come across that in scripture, but in scripture it can be when you preach certain series that for years, vital aspects of the work of Christ is not preached on. But with the Catechism, we have every year again, we go through these vital truths, and that

has proven to be of great benefit for the Reformed churches throughout the centuries. Godly ministers have said on their deathbed, "Hold on to the Heidelberg Catechism."

Well, we may now look at question and answer 50, which says, "Why is it added, 'and sitteth at the right hand of God'?" That's what the apostolic confession says. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God. Why is that recorded there? "Because," the answer says, "Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might appear as Head of His church,¹ by whom the Father governs all things." So the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God.

Well, what is the right hand of God? What does that actually mean? You may have heard that in other sermons but it is the place of honor. And you will know that example, that King Solomon placed his mother Bathsheba at his right hand when she came to ask a favor of her son, King Solomon. That's a place of honor. And now the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of his Father and that's why we read Psalm 110, because there it said, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This was the favorite Psalm of the New Testament Church, Psalm 110. It's the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. That was the joy of the early Christian church, that their Savior, their Lord was at the right hand of God and they could observe the outworkings of that all around them. We find the same matter also in Psalm 2, verse 6, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." That's another way of formulating that the Lord Jesus has all power. And then the Lord's asked in verse 8 of Psalm 2, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

It's an honorable place. It's also the place of power. A place of power. The Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God is governing all things. God's right hand is exalted. He does all that is pleasing to him. The right hand of the Lord is strong. That's where the Lord Jesus is. He is strong. He is exalted. He is almighty. And the right hand of the Lord is a place of sitting, of rest, seated. That's important. He's not standing there, he is seated. A king who is in control, he is seated and he moves his fingers and he tells his servants what to do. They watch his movements. He is seated. He's in control. The Lord Jesus is seated. He rules all things. He governs everything. He entered into his rest. Nothing bypasses his power.

The Lord Jesus rejoices in this rest. We can think of how God created heaven and earth in six days, and on the seventh day he rested. Was God tired? No. God is almighty. He cannot be tired. Why did God rest? Because he rejoiced in the works of his hands. And now the Lord Jesus is resting. He entered into his rest. He is at the right hand of God, seated there. He rejoices in the works of his hands.

And what are the works of his hands? His church, his people. Oh, he upholds everything, but especially his church. He's focused upon it.

And the right hand is also the place of blessing. The place of blessing. From his glorified position, the Lord Jesus Christ blesses sinners with his salvation and now God the Father hears the prayers of a poor publican, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" God the Father

hears the prayers of a jailer who had treated his prisoners cruelly and then falls down before them, "Dear sirs, what must I do to be saved?" God the Father hears them through his Son because blessings are spread abroad through his Son and now peace will be given to that publican who left reconciled to God, and peace was given to this Philippian jailer. Blessings flow forth.

The right hand is a place of blessing. You remember when Jacob wanted to bless the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. His right hand was the richest blessing upon the head of Ephraim. Right hand is blessing, and so the Lord Jesus blesses his church from the right hand of God and there he is, the mediator. John 1:18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He declares him.

He is at the right hand of God the Father as the mediator to display God's will to us and we need to be instructed by him, instructed in heavenly matters, and he instructs through his Spirit. You know, we can have all kinds of opinions about church and about religion, we can have our own views and things we think are important, but the issue is not to have all kinds of opinions about religion. That can all be external. But that's not the point. The point is that we learn to know God through Jesus Christ. He's the mediator, that we are reconciled to God, that we learn to live for and unto God.

When the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, you remember a cloud withdrew him from the sight of his disciples so that there is, as it were, we could say, a cloud between us and God but Christ is now at the right hand of God and now that cloud, there's an opening in the cloud and we can lift up our hearts unto heaven and contemplate upon God who is there and who has all power, who is blessing, ready to receive sinners, ready to instruct, ready to invigorate, that office bearers who have to do their tasks faithfully, they can do that because Christ is at the right hand of God. He blesses. And you in the upbringing of your children, or you in your special calling in life, he can bless you because he is at the right hand of God.

He is there to the advantage of his church. He is the head of his church and he controls all the members of his church. They can be downcast, they can be concerned, they can be afflicted, but he controls them all. He has all power. Every individual child of God, the Lord Jesus watches him or her. His church on earth, they form a body with various members while Christ is the head and the head controls the body. That's with us the case and that's with the Lord Jesus and his church as well. He does that from heaven, from the right hand of God.

The Lord Jesus is highly exalted. His people are so lowly but he watches over them. He is close to sinners who cry out to him. He is moved with compassion towards them. He is with them. He cares for all those who flee unto him. He never rejected a sinner on earth and he does not reject a sinner now. When he was on earth, he never sent anyone away. They left him, but he never sent them away. He welcomed them. He is still the same. He is even more doing that work than happened while he was on earth.

The Lord Jesus is building his kingdom all around us. It seems as if nothing happens. You don't read about his kingdom in the newspapers. There seems to be hardly anyone who asks for him, and yet the Lord is at work establishing his church here upon earth. His kingdom is coming everywhere. If you look carefully, you can realize how many languages the Lord has had his word translated into. Many African languages. In Uganda there are many former Muslim believers and the Bible is being translated into various tribal languages in Uganda. Many do not even have a Bible there. The church in the Middle East has never been so large as it is now since the dominance of Islam. The church is growing every day again.

Last week my wife and I were in southern Florida in a small church and we were delighted at their Sunday school. They spoke about unconditional election, as the Lord's Day before they had spoken about total depravity. And in the sermon there was a clear emphasis upon the sovereignty of God in saving sinners. It was encouraging to see that. Spanish-speaking people, the service was in English, but it's comforting to see that. We didn't know that church. We just were able to find it out.

And so the Lord is at work in many, many places in surprising ways. To use an example, you may have seen those pictures from outer space, from satellites of our world globe at night and what you see then, you see lights, flickering lights, North America, many lights. And you move further, you see in Africa there are not so many lights, there are black spaces. But everywhere you see those little lights. And that's how you can compare the church of the Lord Jesus, that everywhere the Lord has his people, they are like lights shining and those lights are under opposition, under affliction. There are worldly enticements. There is complacency and lukewarmness, which is dangerous to the church. And there are oppressions, sometimes violent oppressions, imprisonments. Terrible things are happening, but the Lord sees it all and the Lord upholds his people. He has chosen some of his people to go through a difficult way, but the Lord is upholding them, showing to all the angels, to all the devils, and to the oppressors, that his people remain faithful to him and that they are unconquerable. Even when they are killed, they are still unconquerable, because they go to heaven.

So the Lord Jesus is glorifying his name, and he will reward them richly. "Rejoice when you suffer persecution, for your reward is great in heaven." If the Lord Jesus says that, it's most true, a great, a great reward in heaven. And so the Lord is drawing sinners who are convicted by his word. The Lord does it here and there and at various places. In London in the 19th century, there were large churches in dismal suburbs, in dismal areas. In East London, a downtrodden part of London, churches were established there, thousands of members in the Metropolitan Tabernacle where Spurgeon preached, 5,000 people. And then after 30 years, 40 years, it started to peter out. The Metropolitan Tabernacle is still there. There are still worship services there. My wife and I were able to see that some years ago. But you see, the Lord works with his Spirit and causes revivals to happen and awakenings and then it's like a shower of rain, the shower of the Holy Spirit, and then the shower can move on. If the people don't appreciate it, if they are more enticed by the things of this world, then the Holy Spirit is grieved and he moves on to another area.

In China, more people go to church there than in the whole of Europe. That never was the case but the Lord is at work pouring out his Spirit there. In Romania, the Gypsies were the outcasts of society. My previous congregation supports Romanian churches that work specifically among the Gypsy people there and there are revivals going on, villages where there was no proclamation of the word, there are Reformed churches. And one minister, one Romanian Gypsy minister, he went to another village and the men beat him up. He lost a tooth but next Sunday, he went back again. "Oh, it's only a tooth," he said, and he went on preaching the gospel. And now there's a small church there because the Lord is at work everywhere.

He is the mighty God. He calls whom he wills and whom he desires to save, he will save, whatever happens. The Lord is not waiting if people would come to him and be so kind to listen to him. No. Oh, no. He's in full control. The classic example is Saul of Tarsus. He was a terrible scourge for the early church. Those faithful Christians were dead scared of Saul of Tarsus. When he came back after his conversion to Jerusalem, nobody even wanted to talk to him. But he was converted because the Lord Jesus rules. He is in control.

And at times it can be that the church is so persecuted that they flee and they leave. That happened to the church in France. More than a million Reformed people in those days, the 1600s and 1700s, they fled and they established churches in other countries and strengthened church life. In Holland, the churches never were strong in the 16th century. They were much stronger in Belgium. That's where the Reformation started in the Netherlands. But because of the Spanish oppression, many fled to the northern Netherlands and then the churches were strengthened there. And many French refugees came there because the Lord leads all things. He's in control. He calls his church into existence from the right hand of God. He creates his church where there was no church. He plants a church. There was no church in Ireland until around 430. Patrick went there. He used to be there as a slave and he ran away. He was converted. He had a dream that he had to go back to Ireland where he had been a slave. And he went there and he planted many churches because the Lord Jesus controls that. He's in full control.

Where there was nothing, he creates it. When you look at a beautiful painting, you know someone painted that, someone made it. If you see a building, this church, someone built it. Someone drew the drawings and put this church up. Someone built it. If you look at creation, the trees, the plants, the animals, someone made that. It doesn't happen on its own. You and I are made by God and the church, it's planted and sustained by God.

And the Lord maintains his people. He maintains his people. That's the comfort. When you have been led to faith, when you have been led to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are wondering how can I ever carry on? How can I ever be faithful because I'm so weak? And you feel when the Spirit works, you feel your weakness, you feel your need of Christ and you wonder how can I ever carry on? But you may know he is at the right hand of God. He sustains, upholds, maintains every one of his children.

His people are drawn to him. They are kept by him. He governs all things. But at times his rule and his governing seems to be hidden for us, then we can have questions about

God's guidance. Yes, there was an earthquake in Syria and in Turkey, a terrible earthquake. Tens of thousands of people have lost their lives but the Lord is still in control. And there's a terrible war going on in Ukraine and the attacks are becoming so strong that every day around a thousand Russian soldiers are killed. It's terrible. But the Lord is still in control. The Lord rules everything from the right hand of God and the Lord knows that the tension is increasing, wickedness is increasing, but the Lord is leading all things to his Second Coming. The Lord has prophesied that to us in the book of Revelation and in the epistles of the New Testament. We may realize that he is still in control, leading all things. He governs from the right hand of God the glorious day of his Second Coming and you, in the midst of your adversities, in the midst of your struggles, he sustains you. He renews strength day by day. It can be in spiritual struggles that you're in doubt and temptation like Asaph, but faith looks up to him. "I will yet hope in the Lord. Whom have I in heaven beside thee?"

And so God's church may live in the realization that from the right hand of God, Christ rules everything and you may cry out to him for strength, for grace, you may think he's not answering but he will answer. He is already answering, but we don't always see it. He is faithful to the honor of his name. But then the Catechism continues and we look at the next question. "What profit is this glory of Christ, our Head unto us? First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members, and that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies."

So the Lord pours out heavenly graces upon us his members. What are those heavenly graces? Well, every good gift comes from God. The benefits of daily life, blessings of healing after sickness, his care, his mercy. How often has the Lord heard you while you were still unconverted but you prayed for deliverance or for health or for a job and the Lord heard you? You still did not have the Lord at the center of your life. He still was not the ruler of your heart, but still the Lord heard you. He delivered you and now the lovingkindness of the Lord should lead us to repentance. Have you been led to repentance? Have you seen that the blessings God gave you was a calling to repent?

But as we think of these heavenly blessings and graces the Lord gives, we think especially then of spiritual blessings, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people, and we can draw the comparison with the desert. In the desert everything is dry. In the interior of Australia there are such dry deserts, water only comes there once every ten years. But when it's there, there's a radical change. The little plants start to grow, little seeds that were lying there for years start to grow and the desert starts to bloom. Wild birds flock to these waters. When rain is poured out, what a difference this makes and that's how it is in spiritual life as well. By nature our lives are like a barren desert and there's no fruit but when the Spirit from on high is poured out, everything changes. Then there is life, there's fruit, your life flourishes. You receive a rich perspective upon life, upon the Lord.

You know that account of Jonathan, the son of Saul who was fighting the Philistines, and he came through a forest and there was honey dripping there and he was famished with hunger, he was nearly exhausted and he took some of that honey and he ate it and his eyes were enlightened and his body was refreshed. Well, when we receive the honey of

heaven, our blind eyes are opened and we see things we cannot even see by nature. Then we see heavenly graces poured out upon us from the throne of Christ. Then you realize how empty your life was without Christ and you see how poor and miserable you are in yourself and you see your need of Christ and you desire him more as your Redeemer, as your Savior and then blessings come forth.

Then you understand Paul in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." What are those heavenly blessings? Regeneration, a powerful internal calling by God's Spirit. Receiving a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Being blessed with justification and led into a new life of devotion, of being adopted by God, experiencing peace with God, which is above our understanding. And the Lord gives love and hope and faith and joy. He gives strength. He gives contentment. He gives perspective.

Those are the heavenly graces at times you can feel in life like the author of Psalm 120. In Psalm 120, there the poet complains, "Woe to me, I live in Mesech, in the tents of Kedar!" What does that mean? Well, Mesech was away from the Promised Land, and the tents of Kedar, they were black goats' hair tents where Bedouins would live in, and those tents were very smoky from the inside because of the fires they would have inside to cook their meals inside those tents. So it was filled with smoke. It was depressing to be there. And that's the illustration of someone who experiences that he's a stranger in the earth, that he experiences opposition. He says, "Woe to me, I live in Mesech, I live in the tents of Kedar!" But then the Lord from heaven pours out heavenly graces, pours out comfort, peace, love, and it's again experienced that his grace is sufficient, and then you know that he can redeem you from every evil work and he shall redeem you from every evil work, and he will lead you through life, and at the appointed time by him, you'll be taken into heaven.

That's the child of God, living in the only comfort in life and death that I am not my own, but I belong to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, and the Catechism verbalizes that by saying here in this answer that by his power he defends and preserves us against all enemies. Again, he defends us and preserves us against all enemies. That's a child of God. You may still experience struggles and you will, you will go through afflictions. It will not always be easy. It may be an uphill battle and there will still be fiery darts of the devil. And death can still glare at you, instilling fear. And people can give you the cold shoulder or they laugh at you because you fear the Lord. Then it can be experienced that you have many adversaries and you have few people to comfort you, and that to your estimation there's nowhere you can go to. Then you have to confess, "I have many adversaries, O Thou Most High." It's a spiritual battle, not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of spiritual darkness. They want to draw you away from the Lord and from his service. These enemies can be cruel. Blood can flow. God's children can even be put to death. But the Lord sustains the faith of his people. He sustains the faith of his people. He sustains them even when they are under temptation of being seduced, even when the temptations come in a very subtle manner to slowly draw the bent of your soul away from the Lord to focus more upon this world. And the Lord awakens, he will deliver from all evil, from all enemies, because Christ is at the right hand of God.

Now that doesn't mean we can just presume that all is well and we carry on and nothing to worry about. No. We have to be alert, watchful, for many shall fall, the Lord Jesus said. Watch therefore. So it's not an easy ride but it is watching and how can you watch? Be alert, like a guard at night time, his eyes wide open. He's alert. What sound do I hear? Is an enemy approaching?

And so we have to be alert for enemies around us and we have to look to the Lord daily. That's how we are to be in this world, and in that way, the Lord shall deliver from every enemy and then Christ will bring them into the blessed glory where he is. That's why Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever." The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work. Paul was decapitated, but the Lord preserved him. The Lord took him into heaven. And that's how strong God's children are in the Lord. He is their fortress. He is their strength.

And so we need to be personally united to the Lord Jesus for all these blessings are experienced in the way of submission, in the way of faith. It's not our own righteousness. It's his righteousness. It's not about our willpower. It's about his strength poured out in us. It's in the way of denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following him to be faithful, to be always faithful. The United States Marines have as their slogan, Semper Fidelis, always faithful. That should be the slogan of a Christian. Always faithful. And they give their lives for an earthly kingdom. They're God's children. They live for an eternal kingdom. It cannot be broken. It cannot be overthrown because he is at the right hand of God. Whatever happens, glorious perspective, blessed reality, you may grasp courage and listen to him who from the right hand says to you, "My son, give me thine heart." Then you are safe. Amen.

Shall we bow in prayer?

Blessed Savior, how glorious thou art in thy First Coming and in thy Second Coming. Although thy First Coming was with great humiliation, yet, Lord, thy glory shone forth in lives of countless people in thine victory over death and hell engraved. And in thy Second Coming, thy glory shall shine forth as the sun in magnificence. But now also in this interlude, thy glory shines forth in thy church. And in this world in which thou dost shower down many blessings, we deserve all to be struck by earthquakes and by sicknesses and by wars for we have all sinned against thee, and in spite of all the curses rising up to thee, thou dost still bless our nation with many outward blessings. O Lord, thou dost bless us in many ways. We were blessed to be in thy house this afternoon. We pray, Lord, go with us in this week in the various church activities. Be with those who may go on vacation for a trip, wilt thou watch over them. Remember us all in thy mercy. Be the after-preacher of this thy word to the glory of thy name, Lord Jesus. Amen.