

Belgic Confession 20 – How are you saved?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **Christ is God. Christ is man.** He is one person with 2 natures. Those 2 natures had to be united in his one person for your salvation. Today will see the details of the **work of Christ, that infinite God-man, for your salvation.**

Our headings are:

Salvation is **grounded in the God-man**

Salvation is **given in the God-man**

Salvation is **guaranteed in the God-man**

Our goals are: **That you will get a better understanding of how Christ saved you, that you will appreciate the work of Christ for you, and that you will worship God with a more thankful heart.**

We believe that God, who is perfectly **merciful and just**, sent His Son to **assume that nature** in which the disobedience was committed, to make satisfaction in the same, and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death. God **therefore manifested His justice against His Son** when He laid our iniquities upon Him, and poured forth His mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation, **out of mere and perfect love**, giving His Son unto death for us, and raising Him for our justification, that through Him we might **obtain immortality** and life eternal.

Salvation is grounded in the God-man

1. Merciful God sent his eternal Son to assume human nature – a nature which he had to have - to die for your sins.

Romans 8:32 - "He who did not spare his own Son, **but gave him up for us all**—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

Ephesians 2:4-5 But **God, who is rich in mercy**, because of **His great love** with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ...**

He didn't have to do this, but out of mercy he did.

2. God's justice was perfectly satisfied in Christ, because of that God could show you mercy and save you from your sins.

It is very **easy to speak of God's mercy** (like John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.), it is **easy to speak of salvation** (men want to be saved) **but it is not easy to speak of salvation through justice.** Yet, the Bible often speaks about God's salvation through justice.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being **justified freely by His grace through the redemption** that is in Christ

Jesus, 25 whom **God set forth as a propitiation by His blood**, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness...

“Propitiation” is the satisfaction of God’s divine justice and anger.

3. Unless you get a sense of God’s mercy AND justice, you will not have a proper view of the cross and of your salvation.

a. You would either be sentimental (Oh, Jesus loves me so much).

b. Or you will be cold (he died for me and that’s all I care about).

Pastor Riddlebarger summarized this well: “The cross was the only means by which the holy God could deal with human sin so as to **demonstrate his love for lost** and fallen sinners while at the same time **satisfying his holy justice.**”

It is dangerous to not maintain a balance between God’s love and his justice.

While John Calvin was famous in keeping this balance, other famous theologians tended to lean on one side or the other. For example: **Luther leaned toward God’s love, Zwingli leaned more toward God’s justice.**

4. Some people like to split (justice and mercy) between the Old and New Testament.

Is God different in the Old Testament (justice) than in the New Testament (love) as some allege? Not at all!

In the Old Testament, God put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden (justice), and yet gave them the proto-evangelium, the hope of the coming Christ (mercy).

Later, all sacrifices (justice) of the Old Testament which pointed to Jesus as our sacrifice, was the means by which the wicked were shown mercy.

In the New Testament, God sent Jesus Christ to you (mercy) and yet he sent Jesus to the cross to be crucified (justice).

Those who draw this sharp distinction, as dispensationalists often do, have a weak view of Christ. Even Christ’s love would seem less, as God’s justice would not seem as severe. This leads to our next point.

Salvation is given in the God-man

1. God the Father, in mercy and justice, gave his Son to fix man’s problem of sin and enmity with God.

He knew that man would not and could not remedy his problem; man was dead in trespasses and sins.

2. The Father knew God the Son had to become Man for you to experience his justice and mercy.

Remember, Jesus was born of Mary, the oldest of her many children. His family line is in Matthew 1, and Luke 3. He grew up in Nazareth, like other children grew up. He grew in wisdom and stature. He grew tired. He was hungry. He was sad. He was thirsty. He cried. He had to be a man to take God's justice and show God's mercy because a man sinned. Without being man and suffering he could not please God and meet God's standard of justice.

3. The Father knew the God-man had to be God in order to face the most severe and horrible death in his body – as the atoning sacrifice for many.

Isaiah 53:2b-5 ...He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

a. The Father poured (not dripped) his justice out on his innocent Son which should have been poured on you.

b. Christ's angst – suffering - was even more intense because his Father turned away from him. Remember Jesus words: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." He had to be condemned millions of times. Put your name in the mix of those condemned...Mitchell, Doug, Nathan, Max...! Christ was conscious of every single person who would believe in him!

c. Christ suffering was made even worse because other people thought he was guilty. (When you see a man is sentenced to 450 years in jail...don't you think he must have done something really horrible? Imagine one being crucified – **reserved for the worst** - and slowly being killed!) But, brothers, it should have been you sweating and moaning and hanging upon the tree. Further, when you see the horrible suffering of Christ **you will get a better sense of how sinful man's nature** is that God had to punish him so severely.

4. How does atonement of Christ not work?

Before we come to the correct one, there are 2 main false theories about the atonement.

a. Christ's death was directed toward Satan. It is called the Christus Victor theory. They suppose that Satan controlled man so Christ gave himself as a ransom to Satan to free you, and that victory was fully accomplished after he was victoriously raised from the dead. There is no great sense of God's great anger against sinners. Eastern Orthodox Churches hold to this view and was the view of CS Lewis in the Chronicles of Narnia. Aslan gave

himself to the witch to free the children.

b. Christ's death was directed toward man. It is called the Moral Influence theory. The theory teaches that Christ sacrifice on the cross was done to teach you to sacrifice for others and you will be saved. There is no sense of God's great anger against the sinner. This is the theory of modern liberalism and liberal churches like the United Church of Canada.

5. Now what is the correct view of the atonement?

Christ's death was not directed toward Satan or toward man, but to God. The death of Christ appeases God's wrath against sin and satisfies the requirements of His justice.

Ephesians 5:1-2 - Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, **just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

You can see here the proper weight of God's anger, the seriousness of sin, and the agony of the cross. The 2 estranged parties, God and man, enemies, are brought back together in Christ. And your salvation was completed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because he lives, you can face tomorrow.

Romans 4:25 - He was delivered over to death for our sins and **was raised to life for our justification.**

Romans 5:10-11 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, **shall we be saved through his life!**

So if you don't know Jesus Christ, you cannot know salvation. This means you will die in your sins and spend eternity in hell. This is why you should get to know Jesus now, and if you do, tell others!

Salvation is guaranteed in the God-man

1. The effect of Christ's atonement is man now has become immortal...yes...spiritually immortal.

You were dead in your trespasses and sins, but now you are permanently made alive. You will never die again; **you can never die again.** Rejoice in fullness! You don't have to worry you will fall. You can never fall away! Yes, you can backslide for a time and really hurt yourself and not feel like a Christian, **but you can never ever fall away and** lose the benefits of the atonement. Your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life... Mr. Clean's Magic Eraser can remove lots of things...but not your name from the Book of Life.

2. This eternal life you get from Christ's atonement will be experienced in fullness in heaven.

You can know you have eternal life. You have that absolutely sure assurance in your heart from God's Holy Spirit. But your salvation you will ultimately experience in heaven.

1Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And **thus we shall always be with the Lord.**

Conclusion:

Your **salvation was grounded in the God-man**, the (one) Jesus Christ, in his Divine and human natures. Then **God gave his Son to show you his mercy and justice**. He did this because he loved you. **God the Son** did not simply make salvation “possible,” **but made salvation sure (guaranteed it)** when he died on the cross.

You will receive your salvation in fullness in heaven! If Jesus Christ died in the place of sinners, if he reconciled sinners to God, if he redeemed those for whom he was dying, if he propitiated God’s wrath toward sinners, then these sinners are saved - **guaranteed. This atoning act demonstrated God’s perfect love and mercy, which, at the same time, satisfied his perfect justice. So it is not faith and repentance that saves you, but the atonement of Christ.** By faith you receive what Christ did for you and you repent to show you have received what he did.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Never take credit for your salvation. Instead, see how you should have received the justice of God, and how God, in love, rooted and revealed your salvation in Jesus. Jesus took your justice so he could show you mercy. You can count on that salvation in heaven.

2. Do you see how indebted you are to God? So with thankful hearts, praise him, more and more, better and better, with greater sincerity. Sing songs of praise. **Tell others about Christ’s wondrous works** for you. **Live a life of thankfulness.**

Finally, Christ is the only atonement, the only sacrifice that God would accept to free you from your sins. Good works are not acceptable. Giving money to the poor is not acceptable. Being a good child is not acceptable. Only if you accept the finished, willing, sacrifice of Jesus on the cross will you be made acceptable. I pray you will see the hopelessness of your future apart from Christ and then come to him.