

## JESUS: MEDIATOR/DELIVERER, GOD/MAN

**Text:** Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 5

**Read:** Hebrews 2:10-18

Recap

**1:** Can we escape God's punishment and return to his favor?

Only if the claims of his justice are paid in full (Ro 8:3-4)

We can't pay this debt ourselves

We actually increase our guilt every day

**2:** Can another creature pay this debt for us?

No mere creature is capable (He 10:4)

God won't punish another creature for what man is guilty of (He 10)

**3:** So What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for?

One who is truly human, truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures

ie. one who is true man and true God (Is 53; Ro 5)

ie. Jesus

**And so:** Turn to Jesus as the only mediator/deliverer between us and God!

Dear Congregation

The last few Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism have left us in no doubt that we are sinners suffering the consequences of Adam's sin and our own.

Adam was our father immigrating to the far country of sin and misery, with his descendants having no choice but to go with him. And so ***we now sin because we're born sinners***. Humanity now suffers the struggle, pain, loneliness, spiritual emptiness, and the inclination to abuse and exploit that comes along with that.

And we saw from the last Lord's Day that ***God isn't going to just take that kind of rebellion*** sitting down.

He's a just judge who punishes the criminal according to his crime. He's not the kind of judge who tries to tell us that that's just normal behaviour now in Australia and we shouldn't expect any better.

Our problem is, that in this case, humanity is the criminal in the dock. And when we're the ones that have broken God's law, then too often we hope to get off lightly, then ***we hope for mercy instead of justice***.

But we saw last week that God is a just judge whose mercy doesn't work against his justice – they work together.

***But then where does that leave humanity***, caught on the wrong side in this cosmic war between God and Satan, good and evil? And sinners face punishment now and in eternity – eventually to be cast out forever into outer darkness where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth.

***So do we have any hope?*** And the one good thing about coming to understand this terrible state of affairs is that at least now we know we need to look for a solution. But is there a solution? And as we come to Lord's Day 5 of the catechism, we move from looking at the problem to beginning to look at the solution.

The first section of the catechism dealt with our sin and misery. This second section of the catechism deals with our deliverance. Tonight, we move from sin to salvation, from guilt to grace.

### **Point 1**

And so the first question tonight starts to look for the solution - ***how can we escape this punishment and return to God's favour?***

And in light of everything the catechism has said, the answer is pretty obvious. ***All we have to do is satisfy God's justice.*** If we have taken something to Cash Converters and want to redeem it, all we have to do is pay what we owe. And so all we have to do is face the punishment, pay the price, and it will be all over and done with. As Romans 8 says, all that's needed is that the righteous requirements of the law are fully met in us.

***The problem is - we can't do it.*** We've spent the money Cash Converters gave us, and we aren't able to pay it back, let alone with interest. We're about to lose the item forever.

Sinners face the punishment for sin - eternal death. The price for sin is far more than we could ever pay – we simply can't redeem our lives and satisfy God's justice. We face losing our life forever.

But it's not for lack of trying. Enough people have tried to claw their way up the ladder of God's justice, and failed. Martin Luther is an example we're probably all familiar with. He would pray, sometimes for 6 hours at a time. He lived in an unheated room in a monastery allowing himself no luxuries. He would fast for days.

He went to Rome on pilgrimage and underwent devotional practices that were meant to bring him grace – things like climbing a set of 28 stairs on bleeding knees, kissing each one in turn and uttering a prayer. He did all of this and more trying to pay his debt for sin and become right with God. But none of it brought him a sense of victory.

Luther came to understand that redemption isn't a Do-It-Yourself project. It's not as simple as going to Bunnings, getting the right tools and materials, and working at it for a week or a year or a lifetime. We simply can't satisfy God's justice on our own.

In fact, even as we possibly try to do this on our own, *we actually increase our guilt before God every day.* We're like too many of the poorest countries of the world that actually increase their international debt every day – they aren't even able to pay the interest, let alone start to repay the loan.

And even as we maybe try to settle our debt with God on our own, we continue to sin each new day. We're the criminal caught robbing banks to try and repay the trillion dollar fine from our last court case. It just can't be done that way. Each day again we owe God our perfect love, faith, hope, trust, obedience with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength – but each day again we fall far short.

## **Point 2**

But then, is there an other alternative. And taking a hint from the Old Testament sacrificial system, *can some other creature pay the debt for us* - anything else in all creation for that matter?

After all, if you think back to the Old Testament sacrificial system, another creature could die in your place. If you sinned, the punishment for that sin was death, but you could come to the temple with a bull or a goat, and the priest would take the life of that animal in your place - the understanding was that your life was now saved and you could go free, forgiven for your sin.

Can we do something like that? Can we have something else die in our place to make us right with God?

But there's a couple of problems with that approach as well.

The first one is that *all of creation has fallen under the curse of sin along with us*. Romans 8 tells us that the whole creation is groaning along with us – the whole of creation came under death and decay along with humanity when Adam fell into sin. And so, even though the Old Testament sacrificial system required that sinners bring animals without spot or blemish to be sacrificed, even the best in the flock or herd still wasn't perfect. They were under the cosmic law of death and decay too.

Another problem is that *the bulls and goats of the Old Testament sacrificial system didn't actually pay the punishment for the sinner*. Hebrews 10 explains to us that 'the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year [can never] make perfect those who draw near to worship. ... Those sacrifices are [actually] an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.' It turns out that the Old Testament sacrificial system didn't actually pay for sin. What they were was an imperfect picture of the kind of sacrifice that was needed - a perfect sacrifice that is able to pay for the sins of others. But where in all of the Old Testament do you find something that doesn't come under the cosmic law of sin, death and decay? Where do you find something that's able and willing to pay for the sins of others? And so Hebrews 10 says, 'The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves.'

The other thing you come to realise from the book of Hebrews is that *God expects humanity to pay for their own sin*. At the very least he's looking for a human willing and able to pay for the sins of humans. In the same way that Adam led us all into sin in the first place, God would be satisfied with another representative person who was able to lead us out of sin by paying the punishment for sin for all of us.

And this isn't a solution that we would have worked out by ourselves, but it is the kind of solution you see presented in passages like Isaiah 53. This is a passage that describes God's Suffering Servant and his work. It says things like, 'surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, ... he was pierced for our transgressions; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ... the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ... it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, ...

the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, ... my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.’

### **Point 3**

And so, in our search for a solution, we realise that we can't offer our chooks or dog or cat to die in our place, or even the bulls and goats of the Old Testament. *What we need is the kind of righteous suffering servant of Isaiah 53 – someone who is willing and able to take on himself the eternal death of others, and pay for their sins.* As Romans 5 describes him, a last Adam, or a second Adam, to make right the things that the first Adam made wrong.

And so you find the last question and answer here tonight, ‘What kind of mediator and deliver should we look for then? One who is truly human and truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.’

One difficulty for the Old Testament people of God is that *without the New Testament explaining that to you, you would find it hard to draw that conclusion.* And so the Jews of Jesus day were looking for a Messiah to come – a prophet, a priest, a king, or some combination of them. But they didn't expect this Messiah to be a suffering and dying Saviour that was true man and true God. They were expecting God to use a purely human figure, someone like a King David, a military man who would deliver Israel from the Romans by the sword. The deliverer they were looking for wasn't a deliverer from sin, but a deliverer from Roman oppression.

And so, when Jesus came - truly human, truly righteous, more powerful than any creature, true man, true God, completely fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament, like Isaiah 53, come to deliver God's people from sin through suffering and sacrifice - you can understand why the Jews generally didn't recognise him as the Messiah. But that is who he is. That's who the New Testament demonstrates him to be. We need to

understand and accept Jesus as truly human, truly righteous, more powerful than any creature, true man, true God, come to deliver God's people from their sin and its consequences.

## **Conc**

And so this Lord's Day finishes by talking about Jesus as our mediator and deliverer.

Mediation is intervening between 2 persons or groups for the purpose of reconciliation, like when parents sit down two of their kids and help resolve their differences.

Deliverance refers to rescue, setting us free, like when someone is saved from a burning house, a wrecked car, a cage a kilometre below the surface in a Beaconsfield mine.

And on a much larger scale, we need someone to successfully intervene between us and God for the purpose of reconciliation, to make things right again between us and God through their own sacrifice.

We need to be rescued from our sin, and its consequences and punishment.

And as we see from the Bible, Jesus is the only one who fits the bill. Jesus is the only one who fits this job description.

And so the question that we're left with tonight that the catechism can't answer for you, is have you turned to Jesus as the only mediator and deliverer between us and God?