

Sing before the service: Psalm 67:1

Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Beloved, grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm of praise 147:1, 2

Prayer

Psalm 119:22

Scripture reading: John 14

Scripture text: John 14; Catechism Lord's Day 5 and 6

Adam and Eve already felt the hope of salvation when the Lord promised them in Genesis 3:15 that He would put enmity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent.

- This foretold the Lord Jesus Christ's victory over the devil and his works:
- **he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.** (Genesis 3:15 NIV-UK)
- And so all mankind received the hope of salvation.

Hence there would be two kinds of people to come:

- The one group (the woman's offspring) would focus on the Lord.
- The other people would not depend on the Lord for their life and their future. They would focus on this earth and its benefits only.

The apostle Paul said that these people who only live for their daily bread, progressing in life and for achievements, are to be pitied more than all men (1 Corinthians 15:19).

- Achievements and material goods are important, but these should never be the main interests in our lives.
- Most important is: How can I be delivered from my sins and death?
- How can I eventually enter into the eternal light with God?

There is only one way to be saved and that is if full payment can be made to satisfy the wrath of God for all the sins we have committed.

- The Holy Spirit says in Romans 8:4 that the requirements of the law must be fully met by us who do not live according to our sinful nature but according to the Spirit.
... **in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.** (Romans 8:4 NIV-UK)
- We who live according to our sinful nature are the man who sins – we are in fact the people who must live according to the Spirit if we want to be saved.

In other words, the requirements of the law must be met. Verses 5 and 6 state the difference between those who live according to their sinful nature and those who live in accordance with the Spirit: The mind of the sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.

- Death in this context is more than just dying when you reach the end of your life on earth.
- Here it means to be in hell – to be without God when you have died on earth.

This is the essence of the matter. This is what it's all about.

- This is what makes us afraid to die, because we do not know where we are going to end up!
- This is the fear that keeps bothering us – the fear that we may end up in hell.

This is why we all have that tremendous need of salvation.

- There should be hope somewhere.
- Somewhere in God's counsel must be grace – the grace proclaimed at the very beginning of history.

While God punished man and the earth, He also told them about this grace: One born from Eve's seed would bring about salvation.

The history of mankind is proof of its inability to accomplish salvation by itself.

- Even our best works in this life are imperfect and defiled with sin.
- David says in Psalm 51:5 he was sinful at birth, sinful from the time his mother conceived him.

Since the very first moments of his existence he and sins were allies. We are exactly the same!

- No man who has come into the world like this can escape from or conquer the past and all his sins.
- Hence we cannot accomplish any salvation for ourselves or for anybody else.

Therefore we build our hopes on the Saviour God promised.

- He is the Saviour who has to be a true and righteous man in the first place.
- But at the same time He has to be true God.
- If such a Person has lived, we have hope of salvation, because then God's promise has been fulfilled.

In our time people's faith and knowledge of the Bible have seriously deteriorated. Hence we should thoroughly search through the Bible to find this Saviour – and then we must focus on three important matters regarding the issue of the Mediator between God and mankind.

- 1. The requirements to be met by the Mediator**
- 2. The significance of such Mediator**
- 3. The source of knowledge. Where do we learn about Him? Where do we get to know Him?**

1. The requirements to be met by the Mediator

In this regard we know there are two matters of utmost importance.

- In the first place the Mediator must be a true man.
- He must also be absolutely righteous and perfect.

Why must He be a true man in the first place?

- The main reason is that we have no say – it is according to God's dispensation.
- He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature that has sinned should pay for sin. He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner cannot pay for others.

God's righteousness determines this because it was a man who disobeyed God.

- God's righteousness determines that only people (human nature) who sinned should be punished.
- From the point of view of God's righteousness it would be unfair to punish anything else in the creation but man who trespassed.

Hence an animal or anything else in the creation is ruled out of order to reconcile man to God.

- However, the Lord instituted sacrificial service in the Old Testament.

- No propitiation was made when an animal was offered.
- But every time it was a prophecy or prediction of the way in which the Mediator would accomplish his task.

Because Adam sinned, the Mediator had to be born from Adam's seed.

- 1 Corinthians 15 deals with this issue in detail and shows the connection between the first and the second Adam.
 - The one brought about the curse.
 - The other One brought about salvation.
- This is why the Messiah is also called *Son of Man* in the Old Testament.
 - Throughout the Bible *Son of Man* is always, and only, used in connection with Christ's suffering.

The Mediator must also be *righteous* because the fall of man and the life thereafter are all about the powerlessness of man.

- An unrighteous man cannot survive before God.
- The Lord said to Moses that nobody could see Him and survive, and this was in respect of his friendly face. Much less can we survive before God's angry face!
- No man, tainted with sin, can stand in the holy light surrounding the Triune God.
- Hence, the Person appearing before God's judgment seat must be perfectly righteous otherwise propitiation simply cannot be accomplished.

It's actually already explained why our Mediator has to be God.

- If man cannot even survive before the friendly face of God, then only God will be able to bear his own wrath without being destroyed.
- No man or angel can satisfy that requirement – it's just too hard.
 - This is why the Scriptures tell us the following about the angels who serve the Lord in heaven: they all have a special pair of wings to cover their faces.

Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. (Isaiah 6:2 NIV-UK)

- This is to protect them from being destroyed.

Also, we may not forget that the consequences of Christ's redemptive ministry still apply.

- The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross – it's true – but it's also true that He sent us another Counsellor.
- He sent the Spirit of God to confirm the salvation to us, and to lead us along the way of God's commandments.
- If the Mediator was not God, then also He would not have been able to send the Holy Spirit to us!

Another aspect we should pay attention to is *time*.

- No creature can escape from time.
 - In other words, no creature can do anything to render anything null and void that happened long ago – say three hundred years ago.
- Also, we can only work while we're still alive.
 - In other words, the Mediator who has to save us from our sins must also have the power to make propitiation for the sins of Adam.

Thus the Saviour's redemptive ministry had to be able to work retrospectively from the time of the creation and into the future up to the Second Coming.

- The redemptive ministry has to be so powerful that it will be able to stand the test of all times and all new structures to come.
- Otherwise it will not be salvation because the redemptive ministry will become obsolete.

This makes everything very clear: The Mediator can only be the Lord – God working in one of his Persons.

2. The significance of such Mediator

The significance of the Mediator is that He cancelled God's curse on man and the creation.

- Besides, we read in the Bible that the creation waits in eager expectation to be saved.
- The significance is also that the Mediator separates the people worthy of sharing in God's honour and glory from those who dishonour the Lord and who do not acknowledge, confess or live his righteousness and truth.
- Further, because of the Mediator and his work we have received the privilege of God's Spirit residing in our hearts.

This means that spiritually we are refined continually.

- We are always strengthened – in other words, in times of hardship the Spirit of God gives me strength to live through it, and to keep my faith.
- The Holy Spirit inspires me to take the right decisions.
- God the Holy Spirit decorates us with the image of God because then we can reveal true knowledge, righteousness and holiness – albeit imperfect und tainted with sin.

3. The source of knowledge. Where do we learn about Him? Where do we get to know Him?

Where do we get to know the Mediator? There are three sources.

- The first and most important source mentioned in the Heidelberg Catechism is the Bible – the Word of God.
 - As we've already seen, the Lord revealed the Mediator to us the very day on which He punished man.
 - Since that day, according to a fixed pattern, the Bible has dealt with the revelation of the Messiah.
 - God instituted specific sacrifices that point to the redeeming sacrifice of the Messiah. Even Cain and Abel, in the time they lived, brought offerings.
 - The prophets regularly foretold the advent and the work of the Messiah.
 - Then in the New Testament it is confirmed that He came and that He fulfilled his work according to the prophecies.
- This brings us to the second source of knowledge of Christ – a source not mentioned by the Catechism: This is God the Holy Spirit.
 - We must never lose sight of the Trinity of God.
 - The prophecies in the Old Testament are the work of the Father – the entire history is his counsel.
 - In the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is at work. He reveals Himself through his life, his ministry and his crucifixion and resurrection.
 - But now the Holy Spirit reveals to us the Lord Jesus and the Father. Although we have the Bible, without the working of the Holy Spirit giving us insight and guiding us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it wouldn't mean anything to us.
- The last source is nature.
 - In Romans 1:20 we read the following:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities— his eternal power and divine nature— have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (NIV-UK)

- This implies that nature must also learn about the need for the Mediator.
- It's true. Think of drought – it calls for salvation. Consider sickness – it calls out for recovery. Listen to Paul's words about the creation in Romans 8:22:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (NIV-UK)

We can summarise everything as follows:

- To know the gospel means to know the Lord Jesus Christ.
- When we know Him we will praise Him out of love and being deeply dependent on Him.
- And we will show Him our heartfelt gratefulness for his love and our salvation.

Let's read together Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 5 en 6 and see what we confess about all this.

11. Q. But is God not also merciful?

A. God is indeed merciful,[1] but He is also just.[2] His justice requires that sin committed against the most high majesty of God also be punished with the most severe, that is, with everlasting, punishment of body and soul.[3]

[1] Ex. 20:6; 34:6, 7; Ps. 103:8, 9. [2] Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Deut. 7:9-11; Ps. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:30, 31.

[3] Matt. 25:45,46.

12. Q. Since, according to God's righteous judgment we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, how can we escape this punishment and be again received into favour?

A. God demands that His justice be satisfied.[1] Therefore full payment must be made either by ourselves or by another.[2]

[1] Ex. 20:5; 23:7; Rom. 2:1-11. [2] Is. 53:11; Rom. 8:3, 4.

13. Q. Can we ourselves make this payment?

A. Certainly not. On the contrary, we daily increase our debt.[1]

[1] Ps. 130:3; Matt. 6:12; Rom. 2:4, 5.

14. Q. Can any mere creature pay for us?

A. No. In the first place, God will not punish another creature for the sin which man has committed.

[1] Furthermore, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.[2]

[1] Ezek. 18:4, 20; Heb. 2:14-18. [2] Ps. 130:3; Nah. 1:6.

15. Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer must we seek?

A. One who is a true[1] and righteous[2] man, and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is at the same time true God.[3]

[1] I Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:17. [2] Is. 53:9; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26. [3] Is. 7:14; 9:6; Jer. 23:6; John 1:1;

Rom. 8:3, 4.

16. Q. Why must He be a true and righteous man?

A. He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin.[1] He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner cannot pay for others.[2]

[1] Rom. 5:12, 15; I Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16. [2] Heb. 7:26, 27; I Pet. 3:18.

17. Q. Why must He at the same time be true God?

A. He must be true God so that by the power of His divine nature[1] He might bear in His human nature the burden of God's wrath,[2] and might obtain for us and restore to us righteousness and life.[3]

[1] Is. 9:5. [2] Deut. 4:24; Nah. 1:6; Ps. 130:3. [3] Is. 53:5, 11; John 3:16; II Cor. 5:21.

18. Q. But who is that Mediator who at the same time is true God and a true and righteous man?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,[1] whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption (I Corinthians 1:30).

[1] Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; I Tim. 2:5; 3:16.

19. Q. From where do you know this?

A. From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise.[1] Later, He had it proclaimed by the patriarchs[2] and prophets,[3] and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law.[4] Finally, He had it fulfilled through His only Son.[5]

[1] Gen. 3:15. [2] Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 49:10. [3] Is. 53; Jer. 23:5, 6; Mic. 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb. 1:1.

[4] Lev. 1:7; John 5:46; Heb. 10:1-10. [5] Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4, 5; Col. 2:17.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Scripture hymn 2-4:1 (33:1)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen.

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