

**Sing before the service:** Psalm 86:1

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 7:1

Prayer

Psalm 66:6

**Scripture reading:** John 3

**Scripture text:** John 3:13, 14; Catechism Lord's Day 7

**No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, (John 3:13-14 NIV)**

Those who believe in Jesus Christ, have eternal life.

- This is the most important truth to embrace in this life, because we know that all people commit sins.
- We are personally aware of the fact that all people are cooperating with Satan in one way or another.
- And it is also true that not all people know God.

The Lord tells us that those who believe have eternal life.

- What is most amazing is that the Lord does not say that those who are without sin have eternal life.
- He does not demand a perfect life.
- He only requires faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's focus on the following today:

**1. The relationship between sins and redemption**

**2. The death on the cross and faith**

**1. The relationship between sins and redemption**

For all ages people have struggled to gain clarity on the relationship between sins and redemption. *In essence it's about the difference between what Adam did to humankind and how Jesus Christ redeemed mankind.*

Fact is that the Lord put Adam to the test through a trial commandment.

- The moment he fell in sin, all his descendants would fall in sin with him.
- In practice it means it also affects us:
  - It means that all generations of people to be born would be born and live in sin.
  - This explains our current situation.

Can we escape from this situation? The answer is straightforward and clear: Yes, we can, but then we need a Mediator to save us from the burden of our sins.

What kind of qualities should such a Mediator have?

- The Bible reveals that such a Mediator should be a true man, because God does not punish anything else for people's sins.
- The Mediator must be perfect so that He does not have sins He should be punished for because then He could not redeem anybody.
- And he had to be God so that He would be able to bear the punishment of the Lord without being destroyed.

The Lord Jesus Christ has always been just like this. He indeed died and rose from the dead and made propitiation for our sins so that we could live in the grace of God.

For many people this causes a serious problem. If Christ is God, then surely his work should be perfect.

- Why then is there still a hell and why am I still attacked by sins every day?
- This has always been difficult to comprehend. Hence it was thoroughly investigated, a long time ago, and what the Bible reveals about it was written down in question and answer 20 of the Heidelberg Catechism. This investigation of the Scriptures specifically focused on whether Christ saves all people just as they all perished through Adam.

In other words: Is the extent of the Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the cross the same as the extent of the Fall?

- This is a very delicate question, because I should know more than just about the troubles of Adam and his descendants.
- I must also know that there is a Redeemer; also, I must know how I am included in the eternal redemption obtained by Him.

When we want to obtain clarity on a matter like this, we should first realise that we are dealing with the entire counsel of the Lord and that we then need to obtain clarity on everything in connection with redemption.

- One such a matter is the predestination of the Lord.
- The predestination sheds a lot of light on Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, because it reveals that Jesus Christ definitely did not die for everybody.
  - He died only for those who believe in Him.
  - Such people receive the true faith through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Hence there is a remarkable difference between the consequences of the Fall and the consequences of the redemption through Jesus Christ as both mankind and the creation were cursed because of man's sins.

- Adam's sin therefore became the birthright of every human being.
- The similarity between these two incidents is that both are real – the one effects death and the other gives life.

## 2. The death on the cross and faith

The death on the cross was completely different from what Adam did, because Adam's deed was in complete disobedience to God, while Jesus acted in total obedience to God the Father.

- The difference between these two incidents is that Adam's deed includes all people who physically descend from him.
- But the Lord Jesus' deed includes only those who spiritually descend from Him (namely believers). Listen what John says about it:

**Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – (John 1:12 NIV)**

Hence all people who reject Jesus will never become children of God. John 3:18 also sheds light on it:

**Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.**  
(John 3:18 NIV)

Hence the cross of the Lord Jesus clearly separates people.

- It's different from the perdition through Adam in which every single person shares.
- The passage we've just read clearly says that those who do not accept Jesus remain cursed through Adam.

Those who believe will enter God's rest, while the others will never enter the rest of the Lord according to an oath of God. This is written in Hebrews 4:3:

**Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"** (Hebrews 4:3 NIV)

The difference between Adam's deed of sin and the redemptive work of Christ is also revealed through the various covenants they headed.

- Adam was head of the covenant of works.
  - He had to work and had to keep the creation.
  - Later this covenant crystallised out into the Ten Commandments.
  - The apostle Paul calls it the "covenant of death" because nobody can keep it.  
**Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned** – (Romans 5:12 NIV)
- On the other hand, the Lord Jesus Christ is Head of the covenant of grace.
  - This covenant is very limited: Those who believe in Him receive grace.

Adam performed a physical deed and therefore the punishment is also physical.

- Your body dies and is buried.
- This death is symbol of the spiritual death that resulted from the Fall.

This is exactly why Christ came and He saved physically and spiritually.

- He literally died like we do and was buried.
- But He returned from the dead and brought us back into life with Him.
- Hence this covenant is of spiritual importance in this – our souls are saved, but on the last day our bodies will also be raised to life and will be united with our souls.

In this covenant the Holy Spirit and his work are strongly emphasised.

- We are incorporated into the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.
- This is effected by the Holy Spirit, because nobody can believe unless the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, inspires him to believe and to persevere in faith.

*If it's all about faith, then we must know what faith is about and also know the content of faith. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans (1:17) that the righteous will live by faith. Faith is therefore of vital importance.*

Faith, in the first place, is knowledge.

- It entails everything you know because the Bible has revealed it to you.
- It is everybody's responsibility to study the Bible and agree to its contents.

Then faith is also trust.

- You must accept what is written in the Bible as the truth, and you must trust that the redemptive counsel of the Lord revealed by it also includes you.
- Or we can put it like this: The Bible reveals how the Lord saves people from sin.
- Grace is that I am included in the salvation – God is bestowing his grace on me.

Our confession of faith is actually a brief summary of the content of the Bible.

- The first part tells what we know and believe of God the Father: He is our Father and He is the Creator of heaven and earth.
- Then we confess that, from God's point of view, that Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son; but from our point of view he is our Redeemer.
- We confess all his suffering and his resurrection.
- We confess Him as our Supreme Judge who will come to judge all the dead and those who are still alive on Judgment Day.
- Then we confess the Holy Spirit and his work:
  - He works in the church.
  - He also effects the resurrection and eternal life.

Those who understand these matters and personalise them, are no longer slaves of the fear of death and life hereafter. These matters give us the knowledge and trust to live with courage till the day on which we shall stand before the throne of God in the hereafter.

Let's read what our confession teaches us about it in the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 7:

**20. Q. Are all men, then, saved by Christ just as they perished through Adam?**

*A. No. Only those are saved who by a true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all His benefits.[1]*

*[1] Matt. 7:14; John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21.*

**21. Q. What is true faith?**

*A. True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word.[1] At the same time it is a firm confidence[2] that not only to others, but also to me,[3] God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation,[4] out of mere grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.[5] This faith the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel.[6]*

*[1] John 17:3, 17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19. [2] Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:16. [3] Gal. 2:20.*

*[4] Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:10. [5] Rom.3:20-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10. [6] Acts 16:14; Rom. 1:16; 10:17; I Cor. 1:21.*

**22. Q. What, then, must a Christian believe?**

*A. All that is promised us in the gospel,[1] which the articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith teach us in a summary.*

*[1] Matt. 28:19; John 20:30, 31.*

**23. Q. What are these articles?**

*A. III. 1. I believe in God the Father almighty, III. 1. Creator of heaven and earth. III. 2. I believe in Jesus Christ, III. 2. His only begotten Son, our Lord; III. 3. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, III. 3. born of the virgin Mary; III. 4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, III. 4. was crucified, dead, and buried; III. 4. He descended into hell; III. 5. On the third day He arose from the dead; III. 6. He ascended into heaven, III. 6. and sits at the right hand III. 6. of God the Father almighty; III. 7. from there He will come to judge III. 7. the living and the dead. III. 8. I believe in the Holy Spirit; III. 9. I believe a holy catholic Christian church, III. 9. the communion of saints; III. 10. the forgiveness of sins; III. 11. the resurrection of the body; III. 12. and the life everlasting.*

**Amen.**

Closing prayer

Closing hymn: Psalm 80:10

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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