



Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 5: The Deliverance of Man

LORD'S DAY 5

Q. 12. SINCE THEN, BY THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD, WE DESERVE TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, IS THERE NO WAY BY WHICH WE MAY ESCAPE THAT PUNISHMENT, AND BE AGAIN RECEIVED INTO FAVOUR?

ANSWER: GOD WILL HAVE HIS JUSTICE (A) SATISFIED, AND THEREFORE WE MUST MAKE THIS FULL SATISFACTION, EITHER BY OURSELVES, OR BY ANOTHER (B)

**(A) GENESIS 2:17, EXODUS 23:7, EZEKIEL 18:4, MATTHEW 5:26,
II THESSALONIANS 1:6, LUKE 16:2; (B) ROMANS 8:4**

Reconciliation through satisfaction

It is an emotional moment in the Bible story when the prodigal son said, *"I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants"* (Luke 15:18-19). He was looking for the way back. He was motivated by the misery in which he found himself, but also by the love towards his father, which he again felt in his heart. The name of Jesus, the Saviour, the Deliverer from sin and guilt is not mentioned in Lord's Day 5. And yet that part of the catechism entitled "OF MAN'S DELIVERANCE" correctly begins here. For when the Holy Spirit regenerates a man, when He causes him to be born again – now in a spiritual sense – the Spirit first works a heartfelt confession of guilt. That is the convincing work of the Holy Spirit. He causes a man to ask for the Deliverer. He makes room for Him in this way. The way back begins in this way, the same as with the prodigal son.

How can a righteous God, who is justly angry against sin, forgive a guilty man? Lord's Day 5 teaches us that there is no reconciliation possible except by payment: the bearing of the punishment of sin. God's justice must be satisfied. It is the commission of an earthly judge to maintain justice. The heavenly Judge also desires and does this. The debt must be paid, by ourselves or by another. Cannot God simply forgive guilt? Isn't that what is required of us too? Yes, but we are sinful people, who must live by forgiveness. Therefore we must simply forgive our fellowman when he asks us for forgiveness (Matthew 18:23-35). However, God is the Holy One; He created everything perfect. He is angry against sin – the evil which man brought into God's creation. Everything has to

be made perfectly good again. This can only be done if the punishment of sin has been borne. Only then will sin be completely blotted out: reconciliation through satisfaction.

And the love toward the holy God, which the Holy Spirit works in the heart, causes a man to agree with this! This was the case with the prodigal son. However, then an anxious question will certainly arise!

Q. 13. CAN WE OURSELVES THEN MAKE THIS SATISFACTION?

ANSWER: BY NO MEANS; BUT ON THE CONTRARY WE DAILY INCREASE OUR DEBT. (A)

(A) JOB 9:2, 15:15-16, 4:18-19; PSALM 130:3; MATTHEW 6:12, 18:25, 16:26

No self-deliverance possible

Can we ourselves bear this punishment? Can we ourselves pay? The answer is clear: by no means. Even if we decided today not to sin anymore, the old debt would still be outstanding. And we have nothing with which to pay. The debt cannot be paid by placing good works over against it, like many religions teach. For of ourselves we can no longer do good works. The Lord Jesus once said, *“What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26)*. Every day we only add to our debt. Adam’s sin spoiled the entire human race. We are even so badly contaminated by sin that we of ourselves do nothing but sin every day in thoughts, words and deeds. This is our spiritual depravity, spiritual death. It is a discouraging and humiliating truth. But God’s word says it: *“They are all gone aside, they are all become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:3, see also question and answer 8)*.

Therefore the punishment of sin against the eternal God, which is so deeply rooted in us, is also so extreme: eternal death, eternal suffering and forsaken by God in hell. That punishment will never end. Then there is only one question left, which is also an anxious question. Is there anywhere a surety, that is, someone who will pay for someone who cannot pay for himself? Is there anyone among the creatures who can do this?

Q. 14. CAN THERE BE FOUND ANYWHERE, ONE, WHO IS A MERE CREATURE, ABLE TO SATISFY FOR US?

ANSWER: NONE; FOR, FIRST, GOD WILL NOT PUNISH ANY OTHER CREATURE FOR THE SIN MAN HAD COMMITTED (A); AND FURTHER, NO MERE CREATURE CAN SUSTAIN THE BURDEN OF GOD’S ETERNAL WRATH AGAINST SIN, SO AS TO DELIVER OTHERS FROM IT (B).

(A)EZEKIEL 18:4, GENESIS 3:17; (B)NAHUM 1:6, PSALM 130:3

No creature can help us

If we, men, cannot ourselves pay, is there then anywhere anyone outside of us who can pay the debt for us? A mere creature, without divine power, perhaps an angel, or an animal? Again, the answer is clear: No!

This is not possible for two reasons: in the first place, because it is incompatible with God's justice that some other creature should suffer instead of guilty man. God Himself said, *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezekiel 18:4).

It is not possible in the second place, because one who is a mere creature is not able to bear the infinite punishment, the burden of the eternal wrath of God.

"Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?" (Nahum 1:6).

Who else then can help us? Who then can mediate between a holy and righteous God and guilty man? Who can then pay our debt and deliver us from sin and debt?

Q. 15. WHAT SORT OF A MEDIATOR AND DELIVERER THEN MUST WE SEEK FOR?

ANSWER: FOR ONE WHO IS VERY MAN (A), AND PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS (B); AND YET MORE POWERFUL THAN ALL CREATURES; THAT IS, ONE WHO IS ALSO VERY GOD (C).

(A) I CORINTHIANS 15:21; (B) HEBREWS 7:26; (C) ISAIAH 7:14&9:5, JEREMIAH 23:6, LUKE 11:22

What sort of mediator do we need?

The situation appears hopeless. The holy God cannot pass by sin. Guilty man cannot pay and outside of man there is no creature that can help. Then the almost hopeless and desperate question arises: What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for, who does not only mediate between an angry God and guilty man, but who Himself also can supply the ransom, the payment of his debt?

Then there is already a glimmer of hope in the answer. The answer is not that such a mediator and deliver does not exist! Oh, who knows....

However, conditions are laid down, conditions which appear to be impossible to be fulfilled. The mediator must be very man and perfectly righteous, one who truly has our human nature. And this must be in a very special way, such as is not found among men: he must be righteous, without any sin. Moreover, at the same time, he must have super-human power; he must have divine power. Indeed, He Himself must be truly very God, thus man and God in one Person.

Questions:

1. What does the judgment imply which God pronounced on man?

2. Why cannot God simply forgive sin?

3. *Why is man not able to make satisfaction for the punishment by himself?*

4. *Why cannot our sinful deeds be amended by good deeds (as many other religions teach)?*

5. *Mention two reasons why other creatures, for instance, sacrificial animals or angels, cannot bear our punishment?*

Between what two parties does the Mediator mediate?

Evaluator: _____

Meditation: “Christ’s Divinity: Rock and Refuge of My Soul”

The almightiness of God now moved in a human arm. The infinite love of God now beat in a human heart. The compassion of God to sinners now glistened in a human eye. God was Love before, but Christ was Love covered over with flesh. Just as you have seen the sun shining through a coloured window. It is the same sunlight still, and yet it shines with a mellowed luster. The wounds of Christ were the greatest outlets of His glory that ever were. The divine glory shone more out of His wounds than out of all His life before. The veil was then rent in twain, and the full heart of God allowed to stream through. It was a human body that writhed, pale and racked, upon the accursed tree; they were human hands, and feet, and side; it was human blood that streamed from hands, and feet, and side; the eye that meekly turned to His Father was a human eye; the soul that yearned over His mother was a human soul. But oh, there was divine glory streaming through all; every wound was a mouth to speak of the grace and love of God. Divine holiness shone through. What infinite hatred of sin was there when He thus offered Himself a Sacrifice without spot unto God? Divine wisdom shone through. All created intelligences could not have devised a plan whereby God would have been just, and yet the Justifier. Divine love: every drop of blood that fell came as a messenger of love from His heart to tell the love of the Fountain. This was the love of God. He that hath seen a crucified Christ hath seen the Father.

Taken from “Gems of Robert Murray McChesney”