

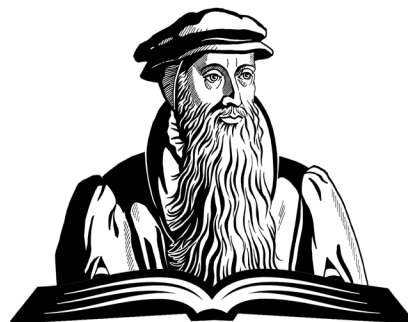
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

# Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

*Sermon #7, Lord's Day 5*

## Perfect Satisfaction: A Requirement for Deliverance



The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education

## **John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

© 2025 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

Visit our website: [www.johnknoxinstitute.org](http://www.johnknoxinstitute.org)

Bartel Elshout is pastor of the Kalamazoo Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan. He previously served as pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregations of Jordan (Ontario), Chilliwack (British Columbia), and Hull (Iowa). He continues to serve as a part-time instructor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He previously served as the founding principal of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School in Pompton Plains, New Jersey and as an evangelist in Denver, Colorado. He is also the translator of Wilhelmus à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, *The Christian's Only Comfort in Life and Death* by Theodorus van der Groe, and Alexander Comrie's *The Distinctive Marks of Saving Faith*. He was previously married to his late wife, Joan, with whom he has two children, David and Sarah, and seven grandchildren. He is presently married to Clarice.

[www.kalamazooreformed.org](http://www.kalamazooreformed.org)



VIDEO SERMON SERIES  
**Sermons on the  
Heidelberg Catechism**  
by Rev. Bartel Elshout

1. The Christian's Only Comfort in Life and Death (Lord's Day 1–1, Question 1)
2. The Pattern of Christian Experience (Lord's Day 1–2, Question 2)
3. The Law of God and our Misery (Lord's Day 2, Questions 3–5)
4. The Total (Radical) Depravity of Man (Lord's Day 3, Questions 6–8)
5. Man's Sinnership in Light of God's Justice (Lord's Day 4-1, Questions 9–11)
6. The Doctrine of Hell (Lord's Day 4-2, Question 11)
- 7. Perfect Satisfaction: A Requirement for Deliverance (Lord's Day 5, Q. 12–15)**
8. The One Mediator Between God and Man (Lord's Day 6, Questions 16–19)
9. True Saving Faith (Lord's Day 7, Questions 20–23)
10. The God of Salvation: A Triune God (Lord's Day 8, Questions 24–25)
11. Faith in God the Father (Lord's Day 9, Question 26)
12. The Providence of God (Lord's Day 10–1, Question 27)
13. Rich Benefits Derived from Believing God's Providence (Lord's Day 10–2, Q. 28)
14. Jesus, the Savior of Sinners (Lord's Day 11, Questions 29–30)
15. Faith in Christ (Lord's Day 12–1, Question 31)
16. The Identity of the True Christian (Lord's Day 12–2, Question 32)
17. The Unique Identity of Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 13–1, Question 33)
18. The Lordship of Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 13–2, Question 34)
19. The Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 14, Questions 35–36)
20. Faith in the Suffering Son of God (Lord's Day 15, Questions 37–39)
21. Christ—A Savior Who Has Paid the Wages of Sin in Full (Lord's Day 16, Q. 40–44)



**VIDEO SERMON SERIES**  
**Sermons on the**  
**Heidelberg Catechism**  
**by Rev. Bartel Elshout**

- 22. The Threefold Benefits of the Resurrection of Christ (Lord's Day 17, Q. 45)
- 23. The Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 18, Questions 46–49)
- 24. Faith in the Exalted Christ (Lord's Day 19–1, Questions 50–51)
- 25. The Second Coming of Christ (Lord's Day 19–2, Question 52)
- 26. Faith in God the Holy Spirit (Lord's Day 20, Question 53)
- 27. The Holy Catholic (Universal) Church of Christ (Lord's Day 21–1, Q. 54–56)
- 28. The Church's Confession Regarding the Forgiveness of Sins (Lord's Day 21–2, Q. 56)
- 29. The Future of the Christian Church (Lord's Day 22, Questions 57–58)
- 30. Justifying Faith (Lord's Day 23, Questions 59–61)
- 31. The Believer and Good Works (Lord's Day 24, Questions 62–64)
- 32. Faith and the Sacraments (Lord's Day 25, Questions 65–68)
- 33. Holy Baptism and the Promise of the Gospel (Lord's Day 26, Questions 69–71)
- 34. The Water of Holy Baptism (Lord's Day 27–1 Questions 72–73)
- 35. The Baptism of Infants (Lord's Day 27–2, Question 74)
- 36. The Holy Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 28, Questions 75–77)
- 37. The Value of the Lord's Supper (Lord's Day 29, Questions 78–79)
- 38. The Observance of the Lord's Supper (Lord's Day 30, Questions 80–82)
- 39. The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (Lord's Day 31, Questions 83–85)
- 40. The Good Works of the Christian (Lord's Day 32, Questions 86–87)
- 41. The True Conversion of Man (Lord's Day 33, Questions 88–91)
- 42. The Transcript of God's Mind (Lord's Day 34–1, Questions 92–95)



**VIDEO SERMON SERIES**  
**Sermons on the**  
**Heidelberg Catechism**  
**by Rev. Bartel Elshout**

- 43. The Holy Law of God (Lord's Day 34–2, Questions 92–95)
- 44. The Second Commandment (Lord's Day 35–1, Questions 96–97)
- 45. Preaching of God's Word and Graven Images (Lord's Day 35–2, Question 98)
- 46. God's Commandment Concerning His Name (Lord's Day 36, Questions 99–100)
- 47. God's Name and the Oath (Lord's Day 37, Questions 101–102)
- 48. The Fourth Commandment, part 1 (Lord's Day 38–1, Question 103)
- 49. The Fourth Commandment, part 2 (Lord's Day 38–2, Question 103)
- 50. The Threefold Requirement of the Fifth Commandment (Lord's Day 39, Q. 104)
- 51. The Sixth Commandment (Lord's Day 40, Questions 105–107)
- 52. The Seventh Commandment and Marriage (Lord's Day 41, Questions 108–109)
- 53. The Eighth Commandment (Lord's Day 42, Questions 110–111)
- 54. The Ninth Commandment (Lord's Day 43, Question 112)
- 55. Final Observations About the Law of God (Lord's Day 44, Questions 113–115)
- 56. The Prayer of the Christian (Lord's Day 45, Questions 116–119)
- 57. The Address of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 46, Questions 120–121)
- 58. Hallowing of God's "Father" Name (Lord's Day 47, Question 122)
- 59. The Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 48, Question 123)
- 60. The Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer, (Lord's Day 49, Question 124)
- 61. The Christian's Petition for Daily Bread (Lord's Day 50, Question 125)
- 62. Readiness to Forgive (Lord's Day 51, Question 126)
- 63. The Last Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 52, Questions 127–129)



### **Introduction**

Congregation, our advanced medical technology enables us now to see things which were never seen by the human eye. We're now able to look beyond the surface of our bodies and to get a true assessment of what really goes on, on the inside. And how unsettling, at times, the outcome can be, when that technology is used, when we are confronted with very unpleasant realities. And yet, what a blessing it is that we have such technology, because it enables to give us the true state of our bodies. And should that technology reveal that we have a serious disease, it will then prepare us for the remedy that might yet be available to deal with such a malady. How foolish it would be for us to ignore that assessment. How foolish it would be, to be like an ostrich, and put our heads in the sand, and to make believe that that diagnosis is not real. And yet, congregation, that is what we are so inclined to do about our spiritual condition. And really, what we have in Lord's Days 2, 3, and 4, is an X-ray, if you will, a biblical X-ray of who we really are in the sight of God.

We have learned some very unsettling things about that diagnosis. We have learned that we are lawbreakers, who are prone to hate God and our neighbor. We have learned that we have lost God's image. We have learned that we have broken the covenant of works he established with Adam. We have learned that we are conceived and born in sin. We have learned that we are corrupt,

wholly incapable of doing any good, inclined to all evil. We have learned that by nature, we are dead in sins and trespasses, that we have deprived ourselves of all divine gifts. We have learned, in Lord's Day 4 especially, that because we are sinners, because we are lawbreakers, that we are subject to God's terrible displeasure and curse, resulting in temporal and eternal punishment as a just reward upon our iniquity. And that the nature of our sin is such, as we saw last Sunday, having committed it against the Most High Majesty of God, and therefore, it requires eternal, everlasting punishment—such is the serious nature of our spiritual condition by nature. And congregation, unless, unless we recognize this, not only intellectually and doctrinally, but unless we recognize this experientially, we will never understand that our only hope is in God's provided remedy, namely, his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, the section on man's misery is relatively short, but it's very precise, and it's very accurate, because it serves a purpose; it serves a purpose to set the stage for the unveiling of God's appointed remedy, and we see the beginning of that in Lord's Day 5 of our Heidelberg Catechism. So turn with me to Lord's Day 5.

As you see, it has the heading of *Man's Deliverance*. But you remember, boys and girls, perhaps you remember, when we dealt with the Lord's Day 1, the second question was, What must we know in order to live and die happily? How can we experience that only comfort in life and death? And the Answer was, We must know by experience how great our sins and miseries are, how we can be delivered from that misery, and how we can show our gratitude for such a deliverance. So this marks the beginning of the second division of the Heidelberg Catechism.

We read in Question #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 favor?*

The Answer: *God will have His justice satisfied, and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves or by another.*

Question #13: *Can we ourselves then make this satisfaction?*

The Answer is: *By no means; but on the contrary we daily increase our debt.*

Question #14: *Can there be found anywhere one, who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us?*

The Answer is: *None; for, first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed; and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it.*

Question #15: *What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?*

The Answer is: *For one who is very man, and perfectly righteous; and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God.*

And so, what this Lord's Day sets before us is that a requirement for deliverance is perfect satisfaction—a satisfaction, first of all, *Required by God*. So again, boys and girls, you who are able to read, look at the Answer to Question #12. The Question is, Is there any way we can escape this punishment and be received into favor? And the Answer is, *God will have his justice satisfied*—period. So, a satisfaction that is *Required by God*. Secondly, a satisfaction that is *Beyond Our Reach*, because in Question #13, the Question is, Can we do this ourselves? Can we meet that requirement? Can we perfectly satisfy God's requirement? And then, in Question #14, Can there be anyone else, found anywhere who is able to satisfy for us? So, a satisfaction, as we will see, that is *Beyond Our Reach*. And thirdly, a satisfaction that *Demands a Qualified Mediator*. And it spells out for us what kind of Mediator we need in order for those requirements to be met. And of course, in Lord's Day 6, this will be unpacked for us in detail. Then, of course, the glorious name of Christ

will be unveiled. But as I expound this Lord's Day, and as I expound the Word of God, I will, of course, be referring to Christ, as we work our way through, because that's obviously implied here. So, *Perfect Satisfaction—A Requirement for Deliverance; Required by God, Beyond Our Reach, and Demanding a Qualified Mediator*.

### 1. A Satisfaction Required By God

Noteworthy of this Question is that here, the student that is asking these question no longer has any objections. In the previous Lord's Day, we could almost see the student, as it were, debating with the teacher, "Is it really this bad? Are we that depraved?" And all kinds of objections were raised. But that's no longer the case here. The student has now come to a point where he realizes that everything that was said before was absolutely true. And so, the Question is, *Since then*—in light of what has been expounded in Lord's Days 2, 3, and 4—*Since then* all of this is true, and *Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment*. So here is a person who says "amen" to the devastating indictment of Lord's Days 2, 3, and 4. Here is a person who says "amen" to the judgment that God pronounces upon the sinner. Here is a confession of one who fully agrees that his spiritual plight is so serious and is so awful that, indeed, having sinned against a holy and righteous God, that, indeed, he is deserving of both temporal—that means judgments in this life—and above all, eternal punishment. Here is a person who accepts the indictment. Here is a person who accepts the verdict.

And again, congregation, I'm not going to determine to what measure you have to experience this, but I do want to emphasize right from the start, that if we are ever to value the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are ever to value the gospel, if we are ever to understand what he accomplished by his one sacrifice on the cross, in some measure, we have to arrive at this point in our experience. Not as a condition to be met, though without grasping in some measure experientially this reality, we will never marvel at the good news of the gospel. Is it not remarkable that, in the very brief conversion account of the thief on the cross, we find exactly that. He talks to his fellow malefactor, he says, "We indeed justly, we deserve to hang here. We deserve this." And because he recognized that he deserved it, there was only one option for him, that is, to cry out to this crucified Jesus next to him, "Remember me." In Leviticus 26, verse 43, we read this: "They shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes." You see, only when we grasp this in some measure will we understanding why we need a crucified Savior; why we need a Savior to save us from our sins. I fear there are far too many today for whom Jesus is merely a good friend; he's merely a problem solver; but who fail to realize, and actually, to put it very bluntly, who offers fire insurance to them. It's their ticket out of hell, into heaven. But the Holy Spirit, when he convicts of sin, sovereignly, the measure is entirely up to him, and when he convicts of sin, he brings us to the point where we need the Mediator that we will be speaking about; that we need a crucified Christ.

Again, it says, *By which—Is there [then] no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favor?* And it's very important to see the connection between those two. This pupil is not merely asking to escape that punishment. He's not merely asking, Is there a way that I can escape hell? Is there a way that I can escape the whole consequences of sin? No, there's something that propels him to ask this. That's so important. And it says, *be again received into [thy] favor*. That's why this pupil is looking for a solution, because he represents the sinner wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, whose ultimate journey is to be reconciled with God; whose ultimately journey is to be restored into the favor of God. And you see, when the love of God is

shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and we realize against whom we have sinned; and when the confession of David, in some measure, becomes ours, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psalm 51:4), the thought of having to go to hell, the thought of being banished forever from him and from his presence, is an unbearable thought. And therefore, this cry, “Lord, is there a way that I can escape this punishment and that I might yet be restored into thy favor?”

You see, that’s the difference between a legal conviction and a saving conviction. And again, let me explain myself. When I say “saving conviction,” I’m not saying that conviction will save you, because it won’t. But what I mean by “saving conviction,” is a conviction wrought by the Spirit, that brings us to this Mediator, that makes me realize my need of this Mediator, that propels me towards him to embrace him by faith. And a legalistic conviction merely seeks to escape the consequences of sin, rather than being reconciled with God. Here is the cry of someone who longs to be reconciled with God, who yearns to be restored into the favor of God. So I ask you, congregation, do you recognize that in yourself? Is that something that resonates within your own soul? Is that why Christ is precious to you? Is that why he is for you “the only name under heaven whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)? Is it the deep yearning of your soul to know that you are reconciled with God, the God after whom your soul yearns, and pants as the hart pants after the waterbrooks (Psalm 42:1).

Now, if we had been writing the Catechism, we might have given a very different Answer. We would, perhaps, have said, “This is the moment. What a question, what a question, when somebody asks this!” We would say, “Of course.” You would immediately proclaim the gospel to them. You would immediately point them to Christ. And yet, wisely, wisely, the Catechism does not do that yet. And we will see in a moment, the reason for this, the wisdom that is couched in these Answers. Because, actually, the Answer is a very unsettling one, an answer we would not expect. It says, *God will have His justice satisfied*—period. That’s unsettling. But why this answer? Because the instructor wants his pupil to understand that, in order for him to answer that urgent question—how can I escape this punishment? how can I be restored into thy favor?—that the sinner needs to understand that there is only one way in which this can be answered correctly.

And so, what the instructor does, he confronts this questioning sinner, this troubled soul, he confronts him with the reality of who God is. As if to say, “You confess that you are worthy of temporal and eternal punishment. Let there be no mistake about it. God is just, and he will have his justice satisfied.” That means this, congregation, God is a God for whom compromise is impossible. God’s character is such that the claims of this justice are non-negotiable. Those claims must be satisfied, and they must be satisfied fully; that God is a God who cannot possibly overlook sin, who cannot possibly look the other way. As I pointed out last week, the justice of God is that attribute that demands that his law be honored, be upheld, and be vindicated. And that’s why it is impossible—there are some things God cannot do—it is impossible for God to let a single point sin go unpunished. That’s impossible. Sin must be punished. Sin is worthy of temporal and eternal punishment.

As I pointed out last week, either we have to make that payment ourselves, or we have to have someone make that payment for us, as we will see in a moment. That’s why Job cried out in Job 9, verses 2 and 3: “How should man be just with God?” How can man measure up to God’s standards? How can man measure up to what God requires? “If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.” That’s why last week, we looked at that passage in Exodus 34, verses 6 and 7, that marvelous unveiling of God’s character to Moses. And when God, almost mysteriously,

after unveiling that he is a merciful and gracious God who pardons sin; and yet he adds in the same breath, “Who will be no means clear the guilty”—who will be no means clear the guilty. Sin must be punished. God will have his justice satisfied. Of course, what the Catechism wants to teach us immediately here, is that God’s plan, God’s plan of redemption, God’s plan of deliverance is consistent with that reality; that God’s plan of deliverance is not a plan of compromise, is not a way in which God looks the other way, but is a way of deliverance that is fully consistent with God’s character and with his being, who will have his justice satisfied.

What does his justice require? First of all, it requires perfect, flawless holiness; perfect, flawless obedience. That’s the positive requirement. So what’s the negative requirement? The negative requirement is exhaustive punishment—a punishment that fits the crime. That’s why there is a hell, as the only fitting judgment for having sinned against the Most High God, a God of infinite holiness, and of infinite majesty. And unless those requirements are met—perfect holiness, and exhaustive punishment—it is impossible for a sinner like you and me to escape that punishment; impossible to be restored into his favor. And so, the implication is, if there is a way that those requirements can be met, if there is a way in which God’s justice can be perfectly satisfied to his satisfaction, only then can we escape the punishment; only then can we again be received into his favor.

And if you read carefully—and I know some of you older ones here, of course, are very familiar with the Catechism—but it’s noteworthy that already in this answer, the instructor gives his pupil a glimmer of hope. He says, *We must make this full satisfaction*—underscore the word “full”—*either by ourselves*—either we have to do it—*or by another*. And I want to suggest to you immediately that we may actually capitalize that word, “Another.” So already, the Catechism is hinting at the fact that if we cannot do it ourselves, that there might be a solution in another. But the point is that, ultimately, it matters not to God whether we make that satisfaction or another; what matters to him is that his justice must be satisfied.

## 2. A Satisfaction Beyond Our Reach

And so, then follows the Question #13, *Can we ourselves then make this satisfaction?* You know, congregation, that’s ultimately a question that every religion in the world seeks to answer. Because even though we are fallen creatures, we are all religious creatures. We are all born with an innate knowledge of God. And most people in the world innately know that they need to do something to be right with God, or with the gods they are worshipping. And so, the mark of every false religion ultimately is, the answer is, “Yes, I can do this myself”; that the answer is, “that, yes, if I do my best, and if I do enough good works, and if I do enough to please Allah, I can, perhaps, count on his favor.” So the mark of every false religion is that somehow by our own efforts, by our own works, by our own contributions, we are able to satisfy the claims of God’s justice. If there was any man who attempted that, it was Martin Luther.<sup>1</sup> What a devout monk he was—a monk who took the Word of God seriously; a man who punished himself, who tortured himself, who deprived himself of sleep and nourishment, who did his utmost to satisfy the claims of a righteous God, the God against whom he knew he had sinned; a man who was so conscious of his sin that

<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther (1483–1546), was a German priest, theologian, author, hymn writer, professor, and former Augustinian friar, who was the seminal figure of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Much, but not all, of his theological teachings became the basis of Lutheranism, especially his stance against the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic church, particularly in regard to the doctrine of justification, being declared righteous by faith alone through God’s grace alone. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Protestant Christian history,

he was exasperating to his confessors, to whom he confessed his sins. And yet, God allowed him, for a season, to wallow in all of that, to make him the chosen instrument to recover the gospel of salvation by a divinely-appointed Mediator alone.

That's why the natural man is offended by the biblical gospel. Because the biblical gospel says, *By no means*—it is not even remotely possible that I, by my own works, by my own contributions, that I can please God, that I can meet his requirements, that I can measure up to what he requires—*by no means*; not even remotely possible. As I said this morning, that's why the Pharisees hated Christ, because that was their religion, you see. That's what they taught. And the poor people of Israel, who were so ignorant regarding the truth, they believed those false teachers. They really believed that if they could measure up to the Pharisees, that if they could attain to their righteousness, that God would be pleased with them. We know from the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, how very pleased the Pharisee was with himself. And how he ticked off all of his accomplishments: "I'm not like this, and I'm such and such," and who was just praising himself to God, as if God should have been so very, very pleased with a man like him (Luke 18:9–14). Remember, when Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount, what a devastating blow it was to that whole false system of religion. And he said, "I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and [of the] Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). And for the Jewish people, the righteousness of the Pharisees was the ultimate standard to which they all sought to attain, and Christ demolished it. And he said if you have nothing better than the righteousness of the Pharisees, you shall in no way enter the kingdom of heaven—*by no means*.

That's why we will never embrace the biblical gospel except by the grace of God. By nature, we will never say "amen" to that devastating indictment. Because ultimately, congregation, that's what the gospel of the cross is. The cross—and boys and girls, you can remember that—the cross puts a cross through all human merit. It puts a cross through all human accomplishments. It puts a cross through all human righteousness. The cross declares that all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. The cross tells us that all of our accomplishments fall short of what God requires. Hence, the necessity of the cross.

The Catechism, goes on to say, *But on the contrary*—the very opposite is true—we *daily increase our debt*. So what that means is that every moment we breathe, we make things worse. That means that, as sinners, we continue to sin; we continue to sin daily in thought, word, and deed, and thereby we continue to increase our debt. It's like someone who has an enormous credit card balance, way out of control, and yet they keep using their credit care. They're sinking deeper and deeper, and deeper into that hole. And so it is with us. All we can ever do as sinners, we can only *daily increase our debt*.

And so, what is the radical verdict? Can we do this ourselves? Can we make the satisfaction? Can we please God? Can we, by our own works? The answer is, *by no means*. And I want to emphasize here, congregation, that this is something that we don't just only learn once. In a sense, even believers have to learn this over, and over, and over again, our whole life. We are still inclined, secretly, to trust in something other than Christ. We are still inclined, secretly, to trust in our emotions, in our feelings, in our tears, in our this, and in our this or that. If you are honest, you will catch yourself at it many times. And time and again, even as believers, we have to come back to square one; time and again, we have to come to the point where we realize, "My only hope is in the finished work of Christ, alone. He alone, his work alone, in what he has accomplished alone is the foundation upon which I can have a relationship with God." So the first proposed solution—unacceptable.

### 3. A Satisfaction Demanding a Qualified Mediator

The next proposed solution, Question #14: *Can there be found anywhere one, who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us?* Again, the Answer is devastating: *None*. That also is not an option. *For*—it says here—*first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed*. In Ezekiel 18, verse 20, we read, “The soul that sinneth, [he] shall die.” And so, in order for there to be a solution, it has to be a solution that involves man, because we are the transgressors, we have sin. The creature that has sinned must make satisfaction. So in other words, at least the pupil, by asking this question, understands that he himself cannot make that satisfaction; he understands that he cannot provide that which God requires; he understands that all he can do is make matters worse. And so now, he begins to look elsewhere. And is there another creature? Are there other options? And so it eliminates, here, it eliminates all possibilities, all other creatures.

For what are the other creatures that might be an option? So, could an angel make that satisfaction for us. The answer is “No.” Why not, boys and girls. Why cannot an angel be our Mediator? Well, an angel is a spirit, but a spirit who doesn’t have what?—a spirit who doesn’t have a body. We have sinned in soul and body. So an angel is disqualified.

How about an animal? We know there are very many animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. But the very reason why those sacrifices had to be repeated every day for thousands of years until Christ came, is because those sacrifices, in and of themselves, also were not satisfactory. All they did was point to the ultimate remedy that will be revealed in the fulness of time. And so, why can’t an animal not be our Mediator? Why can’t an animal make that satisfaction in our place? Well, an animal has a body, but an animal has no soul, therefore it is disqualified. We were created in body and soul. We sin in body and soul. So in order for God’s justice to be satisfied fully and perfectly and satisfactory to God, there needs to be a solution for who we are as sinners, having sinned in both body and soul. And so the conclusion is that a mere creature cannot secure our deliverance.

Psalms 49, verse 7: “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him”—none of them. Revelation 5, verse 3: “And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.” No one was qualified. And so, the inescapable verdict is that all human solutions are unacceptable. In Job 15, verses 15 and 16, Job confessed: “The heavens are not clean in his sight.” Now, listen to what it says here. This is a solemn indictment: “How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” Congregation, let me tell you, you and I have no idea how abominable we are in the sight of God, as sinners; how abominable we are apart from Christ. We have no idea how exceedingly offensive our sin is to a holy God. That’s what Job confesses here. He said even the universe, even the heavens are not clean in God’s sight. And how much more abominable and filthy is man?

And so, we come here to a double impossibility—an impossibility from God’s side, who cannot compromise; who cannot change the requirements; who by his very nature, must require perfect satisfaction; but also an impossibility to our side, that we cannot possibly meet those requirements. And again, the instructor, very wisely, has literally painted his pupil into a corner, into a corner where he cries out, “If all that is not possible,” *what sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?* I want you to notice two things, so you can see it’s just like the sun is beginning to rise. It hasn’t come above the horizon yet, but the light is beginning to rise. The instructor now has the pupil, as an educator, exactly where he wants him to be, to the point where he realizes there’s only one solution, and that is God’s solution. No human wisdom avails him. And so, he’s setting the stage for the unveiling of God’s wisdom, unveiled in the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. *What*

*sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?* Because, congregation, that's what we need. That's what you and I need. We need a Mediator, and we need a Deliverer. Why do we need a Mediator?—because of the enormous breach there is between God and us; the enormous gulf that separates us from God.

You know, in the business world, when a labor dispute has to be settled, often a mediator is called in. That means the negotiations between an employer and his employees have so completely stagnated that a mediator needs to come in who represents both parties, and whose work it is to reconcile both parties, and to bridge the gulf that separates them. And a qualified mediator will be successful. It may take some time, but it will be successful. However, these mediators, they have no dog in the fight,<sup>2</sup> to use a common expression. In other words, when they walk away from their assignment, they have no connection with either party A or party B. They are totally disinterested in the parties they represented. That's not the kind of Mediator we need. We need a Mediator; we need a Mediator to bridge the gulf between God and us, a Mediator who fully understands what God requires, and who fully understands what we need as fallen sinners. Because the goal, you see, the goal of redemption is not merely to deliver us from the punishment of sin. The whole goal of redemption—that's why the word "mediator" is so important—the goal of redemption is to bring us back to God; the goal of redemption is to restore that broken relationship; the goal of redemption is to restore that Father-child relationship that existed between God and Adam. And so, we need a Mediator to bring us back together again.

Secondly, we need a Deliverer as well. We need a Deliverer who delivers us from all that separates us from God; a Deliverer who will deliver us from the guilt of sin, from the pollution of sin, and from the power of sin. The guilt of sin—a Deliverer who can secure the full pardon of my sins; a Deliverer who can cleanse me from all the vileness of my sin, all of my pollution; a Deliverer who can set me free from the power of sin. Again, basically, what this emphasizes, in a nutshell, is what our serious plight is as sinners—separated from God, guilty, polluted, corrupt, and in bondage to sin. Oh, what hopeless cases we are!

But thanks be to God, the gospel unveils to us that there is precisely such a Mediator. The Answer is short and to the point. As I said, it will be unpacked for us in Lord's Day 6: *For one who is very man, and perfectly righteous; and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God.* And here, you see that Catechism, as it echoes the Word of God, it begins to unveil God's solution. It is saying, for sinners such as we are, so hopelessly lost, there is only one solution, that is, God's solution. Only God's wisdom can provide a solution for such wretched sinners as we are.

And so, this Mediator, in order to satisfy God's claims, has to be very man. We learned that. It has to be a human person, in order to represent a fallen humanity. But he can't just be another human being. No, he must be perfectly righteous. He must be flawless. He must be sinless. He must be perfect. That's why, when you read through the ceremonial laws, especially in Leviticus, when you read about the various sacrifices, it's repeated over and over again, that these animals have to be "without blemish." Without blemish—even priests who have physical blemishes could not serve; they were disqualified from serving—without blemish. And so, this Mediator has to be without moral blemish. This Mediator has to be sinless. He has to be perfectly righteous. Why? Because only a perfectly-righteous Mediator can satisfy the claims of a perfectly-righteous God. In other words, it has to be a Mediator who is compatible with a righteous and a holy God—very

---

<sup>2</sup> "No dog in the fight" is a colloquial phrase meaning that the mediator has no bias in the negotiation because he has nothing to gain or lose.

man, perfectly righteous. That's why all human solutions are disqualified.

*And yet*—it says here—*more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God*. In other words, if this Mediator were merely a sinless, righteous man, he would not be able to endure the wrath of God provoked by our sins; that infinite wrath of an infinitely holy God. If that Mediator were merely a man, even a righteous man, he would be absolutely crushed by the wake of God's wrath. That's why this Mediator also has to be very God, to enable him to endure this, and as we will see next week, to give eternal value to everything that he accomplished.

Congregation, thanks be to God for such a Mediator. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2, verse 5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." You see, no human brain could have ever conceived such a solution. No human brain could have ever devised such a way of redemption. And yet, this is precisely what God has eternally purposed within himself. And that's why he sent his Son in the fulness of time: the Son, not the Father, not the Spirit; because it is the person of the Son with whom God interacts with man. It is the person of the Son in whom the Father reveals himself to man. And therefore, it was the person of the Son who had to become this Mediator; who had to become also, very man—God and man in one person. So that in him, God and man could again be reunited; that God and sinners can again be reconciled.

And so, my dear congregation, do you need such a Mediator? Have you learned experientially that only such a Mediator can save you from your sins? Only such a Mediator can reconcile you with God? Only such a Mediator can satisfy all the claims of God's justice? As we will see, that's the marvel of the gospel. Those are the glad tidings of the gospel that God is well pleased with that Mediator, and that whoever believes in that Mediator will not perish, but have eternal life. That's the amazing plan of salvation, that I, as a guilty, wretched, polluted sinner, when I put my trust in that Mediator, when I believe in him, when I trust in him, God will view me as if I had satisfied his justice himself. He will view me in light of that righteousness. And all of that will be unveiled more to us.

But I hope you realize the educational objective of the Catechism. They want to make sure that we understand who this Mediator is. They want to make sure we understand why we need precisely such a Mediator. And again, congregation, God is free in how he leads us precisely, but one thing is for sure—when God saves us, his Spirit will so work in our hearts that we understand our need of such a Mediator. And so, the Spirit of God does make room for such a Christ in our heart and soul, not only once, but again and again. That's an entirely biblical concept. The Holy Spirit will see to it that this Mediator fits our heart as precisely as a key fits a lock. And he will so work that that Mediator becomes our only, only hope. He will so work in us that we will cry out, "Give me that Jesus, or else I die; or else I perish!" And then we will understand experientially—not just theologically, but experientially—what Peter meant when he said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)—whereby I must be saved; whereby you must be saved; boys and girls, whereby you must be saved—no other name.

I'm going to give you homework. I want you to think about it this week, if that name has become, for you, personally, experientially, the only name given under heaven, so that you understand the poet when he says, "Give me Jesus or else I die." So I ask you, are you seeking such a Mediator? Amen.

### **Let's Pray.**

Our faithful God and Father in heaven, we give thee thanks for the instruction from thy Word,

for the wisdom of the men who composed this Catechism, who so faithfully echoed the truths of thy Word. And Lord, we pray that we would consider what we have heard tonight. We have heard that thy justice must be satisfied, that there are no human solutions, that we cannot do it, no creature; that we need a Mediator and Deliverer who is very God and very man. We give thee thanks that there is such a Mediator—our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. And Lord, we pray for thy work in our hearts to make room for that Christ, over and over again, that even as thy people, we would glory in that Mediator alone. Forgive us our sins of this day and hour. Go with us into the coming week. Grant what is needed as we engage in our daily calling. Bless our children in school. Keep us safely from all harm and danger, and gather with us again this coming Lord's Day. We ask it in Jesus' name alone. Amen.