

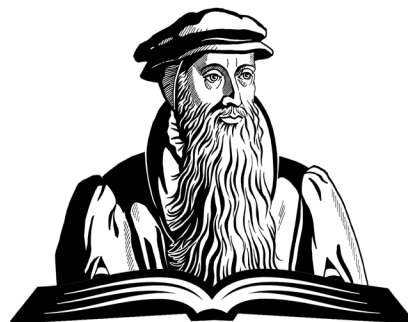
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #21, Lord's Day 16

Christ — A Savior Who Has Paid the Wages of Sin in Full



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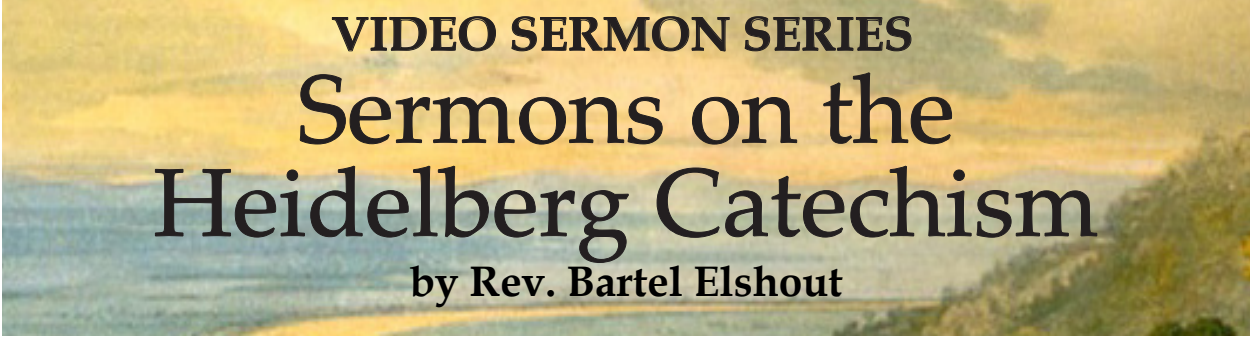
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Bartel Elshout is pastor of the Kalamazoo Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan. He previously served as pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregations of Jordan (Ontario), Chilliwack (British Columbia), and Hull (Iowa). He continues to serve as a 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.

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**Sermons on the
Heidelberg Catechism**
by Rev. Bartel Elshout
Sermon #21, Lord's Day 16
**Christ—A Savior Who Has
Paid the Wages of Sin in Full**

Romans 6, verses 8 to 10
Questions and Answers #40 thru #44

i. Introduction and Review

- 1. This is Affirmed by His Death and Burial**
- 2. This Yields Rich Benefits for the Believer**
- 3. This Secures Deliverance from Hell**

Introduction and Review

Boys and girls, maybe you looked at our bulletin today, and at the sermon outlines, and you asked yourself the question, and maybe others did, this morning we focused, or began to focus on the birth of Christ, the glorious event in the fulness of time, when he was born, as the seed of Abraham, in Bethlehem's manger. And tonight, the focus is on the death of Christ. Perhaps you're asking yourself, "Well, how do these two relate? What's the connection between the birth of Christ and the death of Christ?" The connection is a very, very important one. So, boys and girls, let me put it to you very simply. Jesus was born to die. He came to this world for one reason, and one reason only. The moment he was born, his destiny was the cross. The moment he was born, the shadow of death hung over him; the shadow of the cross hung over him. That's why we need to realize that the birth of Jesus and all that surrounds it is not a romantic event that the world makes it out to be. There's nothing romantic about the birth of Jesus—Jesus, who was born under exceedingly shameful circumstances.

And so, boys and girls, when we talk about the birth of Jesus, we are talking about what we call the first step of his humiliation. A couple weeks ago, I addressed that very subject, that when we look at the life, and ministry, and the death of Christ, we talk about the steps of his humiliation.

And step, by step, he was humbled ever greater. And when we're finished with this, we're going to look at the steps of his exaltation.

So, again, what do we mean by *the steps of his humiliation*? So what are they? Let me just state them very simply. He was born under shameful circumstances; lived a life in which he endured, in various ways, the reality and consequences of sin; suffered—suffered, as if he were a sinner; died, as if he were a sinner; was buried as if he were a sinner; but also, on the cross, experienced the full reality of hell, as if he were a sinner. And why did Jesus have to go through these steps, one at a time, leading him ever, ever deeper? That's because, congregation, to be the Savior of sinners, to be the Mediator of sinners, he had to take our place completely. And so, as our Mediator, he had to experience the full reality of our sin and all of its consequences. Because what is the normal trajectory of a person who is born in sin and dies in sin? We are born in sin; by nature, we live as sinners; we die as sinners; we will be buried because we're sinners; and we will go to hell as sinners. That's the trajectory of the life of every fallen son or daughter of Adam, if they die the way they are born.

And in order to save such sinners as we are, Christ had to experience every aspect of that trajectory. And so, we could put it differently: step, by step, Christ descended into the depths of our fallenness. He experienced the full reality of our fall and all of its consequences, in order, and by doing a perfect work, he could then be exalted. And so, next week we will consider the resurrection by way of Lord's Day 17. Then we begin to consider the steps of his exaltation. First of all, he comes out of the grave—step number one; then, he ascends to heaven—step number two; sits at the Father's right hand—step number three; and ultimately, will come back in glory—step number four. And ultimately, what he does in his exaltation, he lifts sinners, and brings us back into the very presence of God. So first he descends into the depths of our fall, and then, by his exaltation, lifts us from the dunghill and brings us back into the very favor of God.

So in Lord's Day 15, we considered the first two steps of his humiliation. For Lord's Day 16, we're going to look at the next three steps of his humiliation: his death, his burial, and his descent into hell. Let's turn to Lord's Day 16 of our Heidelberg Catechism. There, we read in,

Question #40: *Why was it necessary for Christ to humble Himself even unto death?*

The Answer is: *Because with respect to the justice and truth of God, satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise than by the death of the Son of God.*

Question #41: *Why was He also "buried"?*

The Answer: *Thereby to prove that He was really dead.*

Question #42: *Since then Christ died for us, why must we also die?*

The Answer: *Our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage into eternal life.*

Question #43: *What further benefit do we receive from the sacrifice and death of Christ on the cross?*

The Answer: *That by virtue thereof our old man is crucified, dead and buried with Him; that so the corrupt inclinations of the flesh may no more reign in us, but that we may offer ourselves unto Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving.*

Question #44: *Why is there added, "He descended into hell"?*

Answer: *That in my greatest temptations, I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself in this, that my Lord Jesus Christ, by His inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which He was plunged during all His sufferings, but especially on the cross, hath delivered me from the anguish and torments of hell.*

And so, *Christ* is set before us here as *A Savior Who Has Paid the Wages of Sin in Full*. That was the last verse we read from Romans 6: “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ” (verse 23). So, the Savior has paid the wages of sin in full. First of all, *This is Affirmed By His Death and Burial*. Secondly, *It Yields Rich Benefits for the Believer*. In terms of what death means to the believer, but also, the powerful effect of the death of Christ in the life of the believer. And finally, *It Secures the Full and Complete Deliverance from Hell and All of Its Torments*. So, *Christ—A Complete Savior Who Has Paid the Wages of Sin in Full, Affirmed By His Death and Burial, Yields Rich Benefits for the Believer, and Secures the Deliverance from Hell*.

1. This Is Affirmed By His Death and Burial

What a solemn statement it was, was it not, that final verse of Romans 6: “The wages of sin is death.” So, in other words, the reason why human beings are dying is, they are getting what they deserve. God told our first parents in Paradise, that if they disobeyed him, that they would die; that they would surely die (Genesis 2:17). So what does death mean, again? Death simply means “separation”. So death means that something is separated that belongs together. First of all, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were separated from God. They died spiritually, they were expelled from the garden. But as a consequence, they would also die physically. And when we die physically, again, there is a separation of that which was never meant to be separated. And so, when death occurs, body and soul are separated. But then, if we die in our sins, that will result in everlasting death, everlasting, radical separation from God. That’s what hell ultimately is. Hell is a place of everlasting death, where those who are in hell will ever be dying without being able to die—everlasting separation from God.

And why is it that specifically stipulated that death would be the penalty upon sin; that death would be the wages of sin? So let me try and explain that to you again, congregation. It’s really important for us to grasp that. God did not arbitrarily select a punishment. But he said, when you sin against me, when you disobey me, when you transgress the covenant, when you break your relationship with me, when you divorce yourself from me, the penalty will be death. Because, you see, death is the exact opposite of the covenant. What is the covenant that God established? What does that mean, the covenant, in Scripture? It means a relationship. It means a relationship in which two parties are bound together. And so, when God created us in Adam, he created us in a special relationship with himself. And so, “covenant” means that two things are united that belong together. That’s why God said, If you violate that, if you violate that relationship, the opposite will happen. Rather than being united to me, you will be separated from me. So death is the exact opposite of the covenant. So death is the penalty that fits the crime. That’s what God meant when he said to Adam and Eve, You are my children. You are my people. There’s a special relationship with us. And when you transgress it, when you disobey me, when you divorce yourself from me, when you break the covenant, you will receive the covenant penalty, and you will die, and you will be separated from me.

That’s why Jesus not only had to suffer, but he also had to die. He had to pay the full penalty of sin. Jesus had to experience, as the second Adam, the full consequences of our covenant breach in Adam. He had to receive the wages of sin. What must that have been, congregation, for the Prince of Life? No wonder he crawled in the garden of Gethsemane as a worm and no man. No wonder he sweat great drops of blood when he faced that enemy coming his way, knowing that he, the Prince of Life, would have to die; knowing that he would have to face the full reality of hell, oh, in your place, dear believer.

That's why the Catechism says, *Why was it necessary*—why was it so essential—for Christ to *humble Himself even unto death*? And the answer is simple: *Because, with respect to the justice and truth of God, satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise*. So the Catechism highlights here two of God's essential attributes: his justice and his truth. So what do we mean, again, by the "justice of God"? The justice of God is that attribute that will uphold the integrity of his own law and of his own Word. It's that attribute of God that cannot tolerate disobedience. And it's that attribute of God that demands the punishment of the sinner, the punishment of the lawbreakers. Because God is who he is, compromise is impossible for him. He is a perfectly just God. He is a God who can by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7). He is a God who cannot overlook sin. And by his own statute, his justice required the death of sinner. That's the penalty that his justice required for our transgressions.

So, dear believer, in order to save you, in order to reconcile you to his Father, God's justice required that he pay that penalty in your place. God's justice required, God's justice, the claims of God's justice had to be satisfied in your place. And therefore, he had to die. He had to receive the wages of sin. In other words, boys and girls, if Jesus had only suffered—and his suffering was awful, what he endured on the cross. What a shameful thing it was. But if he had not died, he would not have completed his work that he came to do.

Secondly, God's truth required it. And it's very simple, right? What truth? Well, the truth that God stated to Adam. He said, "The day you eat thereof, you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). In Ezekiel 18, verse 4, we read: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And so, God's truth expressed in his Word demanded that the Savior, the Mediator, the substitute would have to endure the penalty of death.

And most importantly, most important is that by dying, by receiving the wages of sin, he laid the foundation for complete reconciliation with God. He made satisfaction. The eternal Son of God made satisfaction. John says this so beautifully, in 1 John 3, verse 16—listen carefully: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." That simple statement is the heart of the gospel. "He"—the eternal Son of God—"He laid down his life for us." He laid down his life in your place, on your behalf, as your substitute. The same John writes in 1 John 4, verse 9: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." And so, it's so very simple. Dear believer, boys and girls, Jesus died, so that we could live. Jesus died—he paid the penalty for sin, in order that we could live forever, and be reconciled to God, and be restored into his favor.

And that's why, when Jesus died, when he yielded his Spirit unto God, when he died, when he physically died and breathed his last breath, what does God do so dramatically? He rends the veil. And what does that veil symbolize? That veil symbolized separation. And so, God taught the people of Israel by means of that veil—which was in the tabernacle, but also in the temple—he taught them in a very graphic way, that because he is holy and they were unholy, there is a separation. Something separated them from God. And remember, the word "death" means "separation." And that's why, the moment Christ pays the penalty, the moment he finishes the work, the moment he commended his spirit into his Father's hand, we read that the veil was rent (Matthew 27:51). For by God, in a powerful way, demonstrated that because of the death of his only begotten Son, the wall of separation was gone, so that God cannot come to us, but we can come to him. And all those who believe in that Christ will not perish, but will live forever. Oh, herein "perceive we the love of God, because he"—that is, Christ—"he laid down his life for us." Congregation, we can never meditate on that enough. We can never dwell enough on that astounding truth. "He laid down his

life for us.” And we’ll see in a moment, what an obligation we have, as the people of God, to lay down our life for him, as a living sacrifice for a Savior who gave himself to pay for us the penalty of sin, to secure, by that sacrifice, eternal life.

But, *Why was He also “buried”?*—Question #41. The Catechism actually gives a very, very simple answer: *Thereby to prove that He was really dead.* So, boys and girls, I think you can understand that. Why is that so important for us to know, that Jesus was really dead? Unto this day, there are those who deny that he actually died; who claim that he was in a deep coma, and thereby, when he came out of the grave, he just woke up out of his coma. It wasn’t a real resurrection. No, God saw to it that everybody knew that he died. And so, of course, we already know that he died before he was laid in that grave—that new grave that had never been used before. Because you know that the soldiers stabbed him with a spear. And the fluid that came out of his body clearly indicated that he had truly died. So, already that was undeniable evidence. That’s why they left him alone, they did not break his legs, which they otherwise would have done. There was already physical evidence of his death.

And then, it’s so important to realize that that burial is yet another affirmation that he really died. Because our whole salvation depends on that fact. If that were not true, if that death were not real, our salvation would not be real. Why is it that we can be so certain of our redemption? Why can we be so certain that by believing on him, we will not perish but have eternal life? It’s because he really died, and really paid the full penalty for sin, and we see the wages of sin.

But there’s more to it, because this is yet another step of his humiliation. Congregation, do you realize what a humiliating thing it is to be buried? We look at cemeteries. Again, as we travelled home, we saw many cemeteries. And time and again, it strikes me, when I see all of those tombstones, it’s the overwhelming evidence that we live in a fallen world. What a shameful thing it is for our bodies, which were created in Adam for God’s glory, those bodies to be committed to the dust of the earth, to the grave; to know that those bodies of ours will be consumed by worms. What a shameful thing. What a shameful reminder of the bitter consequences of sin. And so, the grave is a symbol of that shame. The grave is a symbol of God’s judgment upon sin. That’s why it was so humiliating when he, who knew no sin, this sinless Savior, that he had to be committed to a grave.

And yet, it was, again, an essential part of his redeeming work. Because not only did it confirm that the wages of sin had been paid in full, that God’s wrath had been quenched, but for the believer, it means that by your Savior laying in a grave, being buried in a grave, he has sanctified the grave for you. That’s why, when a believer dies, they are buried in a sanctified grave, a grave that is a resting place for that body, which Christ has also purchased, until the trumpet sounds, and the graves will open again. That’s why it’s so different to stand by the grave of a believer who died, or by the grave of an unbeliever. When we stand by the grave of a believer, we know that that’s a sanctified grave, because Christ did not stay in that grave. He came out of that grave. The stone was rolled away. And so, by being buried, in a very real sense, as your Mediator, he also was buried in your place. He was laid in the grave in your place, on your behalf. So that your grave, dear child of God, will be your resting place, a sanctified grave where you may rest until he comes again in glory.

2. This Yields Rich Benefits for the Believer

Question #42: *Since then Christ died for us, why must we also die?* So we’re going to look now at the benefits that accrue from the death of Christ. And that’s a very legitimate question. If Christ has paid the penalty for sin, if he has died in our place, then why is it that we must still also die? At

least, that will be true until Christ returns. We know that Enoch did not die (Genesis 5:24), Elijah did not die (2 King 2:11), and those who are alive when Christ returns will not have to die, but will be translated into glory (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). But until that day, also believers have to die.

And yet the answer is simple and beautiful: *Our death*—the death of the believer, that is—*Our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage into eternal life*. Let that sink in for a moment. *Our death is not a satisfaction for our sins*. So when believers are buried, they are not paying the penalty, if you will. That’s all been done by Christ. But then, why is death such an essential component of the redemption of God’s people? Stop and think about that for a moment. Dear believer, your death is a very important part of your redemption. Why? Because death alone will be the end of your sinnership. Death alone will deliver you from the body of sin. Death alone will set you free from your sinful existence. Because you see, with this body of ours, this body that causes us so much trouble, this body that leads us into so much sin, this body of ours, of God’s redeemed people, this body is utterly unfit for glory. And that’s why this body has to die. This body has to be sown into the earth, so that ultimately, we will be resurrected with a glorified body; we’ll be resurrected with a perfect body.

Oh, dear believer, if only we would grasp this better. If only we would grasp what death will mean for us. Because also for God’s children, that’s why this question is there. Death can be a fearful thing. Also, for God’s children, death will remain their last enemy. But dear believer, if Christ is your Savior, death is not your enemy. Death will be the very best thing that has ever happened to you in this life. Your death means that at last, at last, you will be delivered from yourself; at last, you will be delivered from the body of this sin, to sin never, ever again. It will be the end of your sinful existence.

In that sense, sin is like cancer. There are so many cancers that are incurable. No matter what remedies are used—chemo, whatever it is, radiation—there are some cancers that just cannot be cured. And the only moment that cancer ends its wretched influence is when the person dies. Then, the cancer dies at last. And so, as God’s people, while we’re here, we have to deal with the wretched, abiding reality that we continue to be sinners until we die. That’s why the Apostle Paul, in Romans 7, cried out in holy exasperation, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). Who shall deliver me from myself? And you know how he groans in that chapter about his ongoing struggle with sin. And then, with joy, he cries out, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (verse 25). Oh, he knew that a day of full deliverance was coming. That’s why it says here, *is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage into eternal life*. The Apostle Paul, he grasped that. He said it so beautifully in Philippians 1, and verse 23: “For I am in a strait betwixt two”—I am torn, he says, torn—“having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” So he was longing for the day of his death. He knew that dying meant to be delivered from himself, to be delivered from his body of sin, to be with Christ, to be in his presence, which is far better. And that’s how it ought to be.

And so, if faith is strong, and we have the proper focus, and we look to Christ, and we understand what he has accomplished in our place, then we should begin to look forward to the day of our demise. Believer, your death is an essential component of your redemption, and it paves the way for you to receive that new and spiritual body that Paul talks about—1 Corinthians 15, verses 42–44: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption”—it goes into the grave as a corrupt body—“it is raised in incorruption: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” Not only will it be a perfect body that will be utterly delivered from all the bondage of the fallen state; but what Paul means by “spiritual body,” does not mean that is not a real body. Yes,

it is a real body, just like the body of Christ was a real body when he rose again. But it will be a body perfectly suited to serve God forever. It will be a body in which we will no longer be in the bondage of that body. You and I, we live every day, we live in bondage to our bodies. But not with that body, not with that perfect body. And that body alone, you see, will be perfectly suited to worship and to serve God forever. That's why we, too, have to die.

And of course, if we live to witness the resurrection and the return of Christ, then we know that we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. In the twinkling of an eye, those believer who will still be alive will instantly be transformed and will receive a perfect body like unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is more: *What further benefit do we receive from the sacrifice and death of Christ on the cross?* The Answer is, *That by virtue thereof our old man is crucified, dead and buried with Him; that so the corrupt inclinations of the flesh may no more reign in us, but that we may offer ourselves unto Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving.* It's a bit unfortunate that the English translation is a bit inaccurate. Not only did I read the Dutch version, but I went to the German version, the original version. And it literally says, in German, *That by His power—it says—That by His power our old man is being crucified, dead and buried with Him.* And that's the more accurate rendering. So what's beautiful, congregation, is that God's children are the daily beneficiaries of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, dear believer, when Christ was crucified to the cross, you were crucified. Your flesh, your wretched, sinful flesh was nailed to the cross. And that's why that old nature of yours, that flesh of yours, is destined to die, because it was nailed to the cross in him. That's why your wretched, sinful flesh will never gain the upper hand again. And that's why God leads you in ways. In other words, the cross not only has secured your justification, but the cross secures your sanctification. The cross demands the crucifixion of our flesh. That's why God so often will lead you in ways, in which you will be compelled to crucify your flesh. That's why he leads you in ways in which you have to die to yourself. *By His power, our old man is being crucified, dead and buried with Him, that so the corrupt inclinations of the flesh may no more reign in us.*

Isn't that the grief of every believer? Do we not all struggle with those corrupt inclinations?—not just corrupt deeds, but corrupt inclinations. That's what Paul struggled with in Romans 7. Every true believer struggles with those corrupt inclinations. And what grief it causes the true believer. You see, the ungodly are only worried about what happens on the outside. The ungodly are only concerned about whether something will hurt them or not; only concerned about the consequences. But the true believer, who has been made alive in Christ, they deal, and they groan, and they wrestle with those inclinations, which may not always manifest themselves in actions. Sometimes they do, as happened to David (2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12). His inclination was translated into sinful action. But God's children grieve. Oh, that they grieve so deeply about those wretched inclinations, those corrupt inclinations that will manifest themselves time and again.

But the blessing is that because of the death of Christ, those corrupt inclinations will never gain the upper hand. They will no longer reign in us. And so, *we may offer ourselves unto him, a sacrifice of thanksgiving.* That's why Paul said, in Romans 6, reckon yourselves to have died (verse 11). Understand, believer, understand, understand that by virtue of the death of Christ, you know that, as much as those corruptions will grieve you and weigh you down, they cannot and shall not ever gain the upper hand again.

And so, what that does is, it frees the Christian, it frees the believer to offer himself to Christ as a living sacrifice. We need to understand, and on some future day I will unpack that more. But what

we need to grasp is that not only is our justification guaranteed, but your sanctification will not fail ultimately. And what is sanctification? Sanctification is to become like Christ. So the more we are sanctified, the more we will resemble him. But we need to understand this, that sanctification is becoming, dear believer, what you already are; not becoming what you ought to be, because then it's a hopeless case. But it means that gradually, the Holy Spirit so works in us that we become what we already are in Christ. In Christ, we are complete. In Christ, we are without spot or wrinkle. In Christ, we are righteous. God views us in Christ always. But now, with the process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit, who works within us, will gradually work in us so that, gradually, we become more and more what we already are in Christ.

And why is that so important? That if we fail, and we do, when those corrupt inclination get the upper hand sometimes, when we fail, it does not mean that our relationship with God is in jeopardy. It means that “We confess our sins, [and] he is faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). And then, by grace, we can say, “God, even though I’ve failed miserably, my corrupt inclinations got the better of me, but Lord, enable me today, enable me today to be what I am in Christ.”

3. This Secures Deliverance from Hell

And then, finally, *Why is there added, “He descended into hell”?* And so you might ask the question, “Why does it have that position in the Apostles’ Creed?” Was Luther¹ correct, then, when he said that when Jesus died that he went to hell to declare his victory? Obviously, that’s not what it means, because Jesus said to the thief, “To day thou shalt be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). And so, Calvin grasped, you see—this was Calvin’s teaching expressed in this answer. Calvin grasped that it was the cross which was Christ’s hell, especially those three hours of darkness, when he was utterly abandoned by his Father, utterly forsaken by Him, felt the full wrath of God burning in his holy soul, when he cried out, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). That’s why it says here, *His...hellish agonies; His inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which He was plunged during all His sufferings, but especially on the cross.* And that was his deepest, that was his deepest step of his humiliation.

And Christ experienced what will be the ultimate destiny of every unbeliever, the ultimate destiny of those who lived and died in their sins, will experience forever what Christ experienced. That’s why I’ve said before, the cross is God’s ultimate window into who he is, the ultimate window in what the everlasting consequences will be of those who die in their sins.

But dear believer, he descended into hell as your Mediator. He descended into hell as your substitute. He endured the full reality of hell in your place, so that you will never have to experience it. *That in my greatest temptations—in my most difficult times—I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself with this, that my Lord Jesus Christ—my Lord Jesus Christ—hath delivered me from the anguish and torments of hell.*

And there can be times of great personal trial in the life of God’s children. Think of Job—times of spiritual darkness; times when it appears as if God has forsaken us. The psalmist says it in Psalm 13 so powerfully. He says: “How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?” (Psalm 13:1–2). Those seasons when

1 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. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Protestant Christian history.

Satan will greatly assault the believer, and say, “Where is now your God in whom you trusted?” So the Catechism beautifully grasps what this all means, that even in our most difficult times. I think of Richard Wurmbrand,² as he languished in prison there in Romania, the unspeakable torture he endured. And yet, in it all, he did not lose his focus on Christ. He experienced, in a very real way, in that horrible place, that Christ had gone before him. If you’re familiar with *The Hiding Place*,³ then you will know that, in the concentration camp, that Betsie said to her sister, Corrie, she said, “There is no pit so deep but he is not deeper still.” In that horrible place, under those horrible circumstances, she found her comfort in this Christ, who, in your place, descended into hell itself, in order that you may forever be in the presence of God. Because hell is the ultimate consequence, and awaits the unbeliever. Hell is everlasting death, everlasting separation, everlasting endurance of the wrath of God, the unmitigated wrath of God. That will be your future, if you’re not in Christ.

Oh, my dear friend, that’s why life is so serious. That’s why we need to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith. Because, if we are wrong on this issue; if we are wrong on the state of our soul; if we are wrong on the matter of salvation, thinking to enter, and then to hear from Christ, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23), there was never a real experiential relationship between us. And then, to be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. That’s the truth that needs to be preached, that I need to preach. I have to tell you, that that’s your future if you die apart from Christ. That’s why Paul said, “Examine yourself whether you be in *the* faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5)—the faith of the saints; the faith that is wrought by the Spirit; the faith of a true believer who is poor in spirit, who mourns over sin, humbles himself before God, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, is merciful, pure in heart, and is a peacemaker. That’s the picture of the true believer.

And so, dear believer, what a precious Savior we have—a Savior who died in your place; a Savior who was buried in your place; a Savior who went to hell in your place, so that your death will be a translation into glory, a translation into the presence of Christ, where he is. And as Paul said, to be with him is far better (Philippians 1:23). Do you ever long for that day of full deliverance, to think that there’s a future for you, in which you will never sin again?—never!—no more corrupt inclinations, no more sin; a sinless future for those who have put their trust in this Christ. Because the wages of sin will be paid. Either we have to do it, or Christ did it in our place. And therefore, let me conclude with the words of Isaiah 55, verse 7: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” And that’s the wonder of the gospel, the wonder of the gospel, that God offers his Son to hell-worthy sinners, a Savior, who suffered and died and experienced hell to save hell-worthy sinners. So I ask you, can you say that this Christ is your Lord Jesus Christ? Amen.

2 Richard Wurmbrand (1909–2001), was a Romanian Evangelical Lutheran priest, and professor of Jewish descent. Converting to Christianity in 1938, he publically stated that Communism and Christianity were incompatible. He preached at bomb shelters, and rescued Jews during World War II, and he was imprisoned and tortured by the Communist regime of Romania. After 14 years, he was ransomed in 1964 for \$10,000 and sent to Norway and England, and he and his wife, Sabrina, who had also been imprisoned, emigrated to the United States and dedicated the rest of their lives to publicizing and helping persecuted Christians.

3 *The Hiding Place* is an autobiographical book by Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983), published in 1971, which documents the lives of the ten Boom family of Holland, who hid Jews in their home during the Nazi occupation in World War II. They were discovered and many of the family were killed, and the sisters, Corrie and Betsie, wound up at the notorious Ravensbrück concentration camp. Only Corrie survives to tell the tale, travelling the world in speaking engagement and preaching the gospel, and eventually writing the book.

Let's Pray.

Lord, we give thee thanks for thy precious Word. O Lord, how inexpressibly rich and beautiful is the person and work of Christ. O what had he accomplished by his substitutionary death for hell-worthy sinners such as we are! To think that all those who truly believe in him, and trust in him, will not perish, but have eternal life. Lord, thou knowest how often we live below our privileges, and because of our unbelief, that sin that so easily besets us, we so easily lose sight of Christ and what he has accomplished in our place. Lord, we pray that through the work of thy Spirit, that we may grow in our understanding of who Christ is and what he has accomplished in our place; and that it would stir up in us that deep yearning in our soul that Paul expressed, when he said, For me, "to depart, and to be with Christ...is far better." Remember us now as we return to our daily responsibilities. Bless us in the work place. Bless us as parents. Bless our children. Keep us safely, and gather with us again the next Lord's Day. Bless also our time with our young people in this evening hour, that that, too, may be a fruitful time, a fruitful discussion also for them. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.