

THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS

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CATECHISM

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

Lecture #22

Redemption Applied
Catechism Questions 29 and 30



The John Knox Institute
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Rev. Jonathan Mattull is minister of the gospel at Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, in St. Louis, Missouri, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

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Lecture #22

Redemption Applied

Question 29: *How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?*

Answer: *We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.*

Question 30: *How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?*

Answer: *The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.*

In our last lesson, we closed with a summary of Christ's work as the Redeemer. As Prophet, Priest, and King, Christ humbled himself to save his people, and he was exalted in glory. And we long for that day yet to come when he will return in that glory. Well, truly, his work is amazing. It should fill us with wonder, and it should cause us to order our lives in light of his work. It should be much in our minds and our meditation.

However, there should be a question that comes up in one way or another—how does his work benefit us? How is it that what he's done should then be brought unto us for our good? Well, for instance, we might think of what it is that we're hungry. We sense our need for food. And yet merely knowing that there is food is not what satisfies our hunger. It's not what gives us nourishment. But nourishing food must be brought unto us, and must be made one, as it were, with our body. As we eat it, and our body digests it, we get strengthened by it. Merely knowing that there is food is not what satisfies or benefits us. We have to take some unto ourselves.

Well, merely knowing about Christ's work, as good as that work is, and as glorious a thing as that is, is not what benefits us. So there's a similarity between food and our nourishment, and Christ and our salvation. Merely knowing about his work is not all that's needed. Rather, if ever we are to be helped by Christ's work, what he's done must be applied onto us. The next four Questions of the Catechism, that is, Questions #29 through #32, introduced this and explained the way it happens. In our lesson today, we'll look at two Questions, #29 and #30. And these introduce the way in which Christ and his salvation is applied onto his people.

Question #29 asks, "How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?" The Answer, "We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit." And Question #30, "How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption

purchased by Christ?" The Answer, "The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling."

Well, notice a couple of words. First, "partakers"—to be a partaker is to be one who shares in something, to have a part in something. If we are partakers of a meal, we share in the food that's before us.

Second, notice the word "effectual." This word means that something takes effect, that is, it works, it accomplishes its purpose. For instance, a fire is an effectual way of cooking food. It's effectual because it accomplishes the purpose of cooking. You'll notice that the word comes up in both Questions before us: the effectual application, and effectual calling. In this lesson, we'll look more at the effectual application of Christ's redemption, and we'll look next lesson more particularly at the work of the Spirit known as effectual calling.

So let's look at two points for our lesson today. First, Christ's purchased redemption; and Second, the Spirit's gracious application.

So first, Christ's purchased redemption. We've already looked at Christ's work in previous lessons, and oh, that we would continue to consider it, not only for the short time of these lessons, but all of our life. But you'll notice that these Questions before us are referring to that work again. And so, though we've concluded the summary of his work, yet his work is never taken away, as it were, from the important focus of our lives, and for the benefit of our salvation. So the Questions before us refer to the redemption purchased by Christ. Remember that the word "redeem" refers to gaining something by way of purchase. Christ's redemption refers to his work of purchasing his people and their salvation by his sacrificial death.

This reminds of the work of Christ in atoning for the sins of his people. He made payment for them. And praise God, this will bring to pass the redemption of his people. He did not die in vain. You'll likely know how Isaiah 53 holds forth Christ's death. In Isaiah 53, we have an encouraging testimony. We read there that "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (verse 11). In other words, Christ's death will bring forth its purpose. He did not die for the possibility of redeeming a people. He died for the certainty of redeeming his people. This is a glorious truth. Christ's atonement certainly secures the salvation for those for whom he died.

It is mirrored in his prayer recorded in John 17. Notice verses 6 and 9, Jesus prayed to the Father, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." And verse 9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." Well, likewise, Christ laid down his life for his sheep. He laid down his life for those given to him, and to the glory of his name, not one drop of his blood, not one part of his suffering was in vain. He has secured the salvation of each of his chosen people. As Isaiah 53 says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He will not be disappointed on the last day, because he will see the effect of his work.

Well, although the price has been paid, the price which guarantees the salvation of his people, his people are still brought into this world as sinners. They have a portion of their lives dedicated to rebellion and sin, and were God to leave them in their sin, they would only continue in that state. In other words, they exist for a season apart from that salvation that Christ has purchased for them. Paul mentions this in Ephesians 2, and verse 1. Writing to the Ephesian Christians, he says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Before they are given life, before they share in the salvation that Christ purchased for them, they were dead. Paul says this is true of

everyone. Those for whom Christ gave his life must be given life, they must be given that salvation which has been purchased for them by Christ.

And so we see the redemption Christ has purchased is a completed thing, a perfect thing, and it will not go without being applied. But it must be applied. And this is what brings us to the next point of our lesson, the Spirit gracious application.

We remember that God is one God. We also remember that there are three persons in the Godhead. You'll remember the answer to that Question, "How many persons are there in the Godhead?" "There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." And the Catechism now directs us to the work of the third person of the blessed and holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. And so, it's the Spirit that applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ. Notice the answer to the Question before us, Question #29, "We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit."

Well, this helpfully summarizes the Bible's teaching, and it reminds us that it is the Holy Spirit who applies the redemption of Christ to his people. In other words, it is the Spirit who takes the salvation purchased by Christ, and gives it effectually to his beloved people. Because of this, we are able to say that salvation was planned by God, accomplished by God, and is applied by God. To be more specific, as others have said, Salvation was planned by God the Father, accomplished by God the Son, and is applied by God the Spirit. Every part of salvation is of divine work. This is why the Psalms, the book of praise that God has given, is so full of praise to God, who is only the Savior. There is no other savior, nor do we contribute to our salvation. But God is the one who has planned it, has accomplished it, and applies it.

Well, Titus 3, verses 4 through 6, gives us a helpful summary of great point. Paul writes there, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The love of God that was prepared appeared. Jesus Christ our Savior suffered and died. But how is this applied to his people? Paul says it is "not by the works of righteousness that we have done." This tells us that we are not the ones who qualify ourselves, or apply it to ourselves. Rather, as Paul wrote that it is "according to his mercy," "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." In other words, the Holy Spirit applies this salvation to his people.

Well, "to apply" something means to put something on, or put something in. For example, if you have a cut, your parent, or perhaps a nurse or doctor may place medicine on that cut. We would say, a doctor applies medicine to the cut or wound. He's taking the medicine—what heals our wound—and he places it on our wound. He's applying it. Now notice what the Spirit applies. The Spirit applies the redemption purchased by Christ. The Spirit takes the work of Christ, and gives that work, and applies it to his people. And in doing so, the salvation planned, and purchased, is then applied. We can build on this illustration perhaps. Sin is the problem. It's the spiritual disease, and death, and curse, and guilt, and misery and so on. That's our problem. Christ's work is the remedy. It's the answer to the whole problem. We've seen this in previous lessons. Every aspect of our sin and misery is answer for and remedied by and in Christ. Christ's work is that remedy.

Well, it's the Spirit who takes Christ and that remedy and applies it to his people, that they are made whole, that is, that they are saved. When the Spirit applies Christ's redemption to us, what happens? There's a lot to say about this, and we'll talk about that in coming lessons in more

detail. But our Catechism here helps focus our attention on the main effect of his grace. Notice the words in the Answer to Question #30: “The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.” When the Spirit applies Christ’s redemption to a sinner, he produces faith in that sinner. We’ll look at this process more fully in the next lesson, but let’s consider this main point. The way that the Spirit applies Christ’s redemption to a sinner is by giving that sinner faith, and by that faith, uniting him to Christ. In a future lesson, we’ll look at Question #86. It asks, “What is faith in Jesus Christ?” And it answers, “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is [freely] offered to us in the gospel.”

Now don’t worry, we’ll give that Question the full attention it deserves. But for now, simply note that saving faith is receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation. It’s not simply knowing that Christ is the Savior, nor is it simply knowing that he would save us if we trusted in him. It is actually embracing him, relying upon him, or as the Catechism says there, “receiving and resting upon him alone.” Now that isn’t something that is in our power. It’s not something we can do of ourselves. It’s what the Spirit works within us. It’s the gift of God. He, God, gives us faith. This is why Paul can write, in Ephesians 2, and verse 8, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Notice, the salvation is the gift, and the faith is the gift of God. We do not earn this faith. We do not work it up within ourselves. We don’t somehow merit faith. We don’t do something in order to qualify for obtaining faith. Faith is the gift of God, sovereignly given, and it is the Spirit of God who gives that gift to God’s chosen people.

John reminds of this in his Gospel, in chapter 1, verses 12 through 13. We read there, “but as many as received him”—speaking of Jesus Christ—“to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” How is it that they received Christ? How is it that they believed on his name? It’s not because of their noble birth, it’s not because of their natural giftedness, it’s not because of their superior work. It’s because they were born of God. God—more particularly, God the Holy Spirit—gave them new life, and in doing so, gave them faith. This is what Christ speaks of, in John 3, to Nicodemus, when he says, in verse 3 and verse 5, “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

It’s the Spirit that gives the dead sinner life. And in doing so, the dead sinner now has the ability to see and enter into the kingdom of God. This is done by grace. Just as a dead body can do nothing physical of his own ability and power and will, so a dead sinner can do nothing spiritually of his own power, and desire, and will. Instead, first, the Spirit must give him life, and in doing so, give him faith, that he then may embrace Jesus Christ and receive him as his Savior.

Notice what faith does. The Catechism says that one effect of this gift of saving faith, is that he is then united to Christ. This doesn’t mean that we become Christ. We remain ourselves, and Christ remains himself. However, what the Spirit does, in uniting us to Christ by faith, is he makes us to receive salvation, his benefits. We see an image of this in John 15. Notice verse 5. Christ is speaking, he says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” Just as branches are supported by and given life by the vine, so are believers supported by and given life by Christ. Well, the Spirit takes us and, as it were, places us in Christ, and he does so by giving us faith. Faith trusts in and lays hold of Christ. And as soon as the Spirit gives us that gift, the life, the blessings, the benefits,

the salvation of Christ are then shared with us, because we now have Christ.

Think of it this way, as a different illustration. If you have an electrical light, it does not shine until it is plugged into the source of electrical power. It must be plugged in. It must be connected to the source, and thus, receive that electricity. And when the power and electricity flows into it, then it shines. Well, the same is true for the sinner. Until he is joined to Christ, he has no life. It's the Spirit who makes then the sinner to have life by giving faith to that sinner, so that he is joined to Christ, and made to enjoy and share in all of that salvation which Christ has purchased for him.

We get to look more at this in detail in the next lesson, but for now, simply remember this point—it is the Spirit who gives the sinner faith, in order that he may have that salvation that is found in Christ alone. And so we see again that salvation is a divine work.

Well, as we close, it's good for us to make sure we connect this truth to ourselves. So first, let us remind ourselves regularly that salvation, in all of its parts, is the work of God. There never has been and there never will be a sinner who saves himself. There never has been and there never will be a sinner who contributes to his salvation, or qualifies himself for his salvation. And to make this point more directly, you will not qualify yourself for salvation. You will not do anything that will make yourself saved. If you are saved, it is because God has saved you. If you aren't saved, and by God's grace you will be saved, it is only by the work of God. It is God and God only who saves.

This means then that all the praise for salvation goes to God and to him alone. This is why there's no one in heaven who will ever say, "Well I'm here because of what I've done. I'm here because I did better than others. When we get little glimpses of what takes place in heaven, all of the focus, all of the thanks, all of the praise is fixed on God and God alone. This makes sense. It's his plan, it's his accomplishment, and it's his application. God is the one who saves. Well if this is so, let us never look to ourselves for the hope of salvation. All hope of salvation is only in God.

Well, second, take notice of this Biblical truth—it is not enough to know that Jesus died and rose again. It's not enough to know and admit that you're a sinner, and that Jesus Christ is the Savior. It's not enough to realize that every other religion is false and that only Christianity is true. It's not enough to know that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Well, all of this is true, and all of it is good in its own way, yet more is needed. If you are to be saved, you must be united to Christ. His salvation must be applied to you. Notice that language. It's not that you apply that salvation to yourself—it must be applied to you. The Spirit of God must graciously apply it to you. This is what the Spirit does when he gives faith to a sinner. He unites the sinner to Christ by grace through faith.

So let me ask you, are you looking to Christ by faith? Not only do you acknowledge and admit that he is the Savior, but have you received and rested upon him alone for salvation? If you are, this is because the Holy Spirit has given you faith. This is because God himself has sovereignly and graciously applied to you this salvation. He has given you life. He has saved you. It's not something that you worked up. It's not something that you are just better than others in. It's because God supernaturally, graciously saved you. What a privilege. Whatever else your circumstances are in this life, know this, that God has saved you, which is reason to thank and praise him now and forever.

Perhaps you must say, "Well, I know that Christ is the Savior, and I know that there's no other Savior than Jesus. But I must say, I'm not trusting in him." Well that is a sad state. Indeed, it is a terrible state. You may be tempted in many ways, maybe panicked, and tempted to despair and say, "There's no hope. My sins are too great." You may be tempted to make yourself busy, and simply work harder. But let me direct you to your only hope. It's not in anything you do. It's in God alone. It's not in your tears, though your tears are justified. It's not in your crying though your crying

is right. What else should we do if we've sinned against God and we find ourselves condemned? It's not in your work and diligence, though we should be diligent, and reading God's Word, and attending church, and hearing the gospel preached. But none of that is your hope. Your only hope is God, the God against whom you've sinned. And here we have a reminder that the God against whom we've sinned is gracious.

And so, as you come face to face with your state, look to God, and cry out to him that he would be merciful. Cry out to him that he would do what you cannot do, what you never will be able to do. Your case is not beyond the Spirit's power. He is able to give you faith. He is able to draw you to Christ. Yes, confess your sins, and in doing so, cry out to God to have mercy upon you, to lead you to trust upon Christ. Despair of your own works, and cry out to God that he would, in his grace, give you faith, that with that faith, you would embrace Christ and know his salvation applied to you, to the glory and praise of the name of God now and always.