

Catechism Sec. 15: The Way To Be Saved

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Q67. What way of escape has God revealed to sinners that they may be saved from His wrath and curse due to them for their sin?

A67. God has revealed to sinners the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ, as the only way of salvation from their sin^{1,2}.

Notes: Following “The Shorter Catechism, A Baptist Version”, we have divided the question on the way of salvation into two, viz. Qs. 67 and 68.

1. Rom. 1:16, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

2. Acts 4:12, Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Comments

1. The gospel is a distinct message that may be summarized as “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). It is found throughout the Bible (Luke 24:27, 44). It is to be preached with the aim of winning souls to Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 20:20-21; Rom. 10:14, 17). Once souls are saved, they need “the whole counsel of God” to build them up in the faith (Acts 20:27; Eph. 4:11-16). In other words, they need systematic teaching of the Bible so that “the faith” may be established in them (Jude 3; 2 Pet. 3:18).
2. We must ensure that the gospel is not perverted by taking away from, adding to, or distorting, its contents. We have noted in an earlier study (“The Spirit’s Work In Salvation”) that the Roman Catholics err by *addition*, teaching that God cannot save without man’s co-operation, by the use of the sacraments of the mass, confession of sins to the priest, baptism, etc.; the Modernists err by *subtraction*, teaching that man can be saved by his own power, without the need of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit; and that the Arminians err by *distortion*, teaching that the Holy Spirit works in man only if he first repents and believes. The apostle Paul condemns all who pervert the gospel (Gal. 1:8-9).
3. Among Reformed preachers, there has been a tendency to either *maximalism* or *minimalism* in gospel preaching. Maximalism is the tendency to be all-encompassing in content, approach and outlook. When applied to gospel preaching, it is claimed that every time the word of God is expounded, the gospel is being preached. The effect of maximalism is to blur the distinctiveness of the gospel message and, therefore, the distinctiveness of gospel preaching. Minimalism has the opposite tendency of reducing everything to its bare essentials. In gospel preaching, minimalism tends to oversimplify the content, limit its scope, and under-estimate the power of the Holy Spirit in converting sinners. Maximalists tend to emphasize teaching at the expense of gospel proclamation, while minimalists tend to emphasize gospel proclamation at the expense of building up believers in “the faith”.

Q68. What does God, in His gospel, require of sinners that they may be saved?

A68. God, in His gospel, requires of sinners repentance to life and faith in Jesus Christ that they may escape His wrath due for their sin, and be saved^{1,2}.

Notes: We have placed repentance before faith, as required by the order of logic and the two Bible references used. The questions following are arranged according to this order. Also, we have made the slight alteration from “repentance unto life” of the KJV Bible to “repentance to life” of the NKJV (cf. Acts 11:18). The relevant scriptures show that “the means of grace” are to be distinguished from “the means of salvation”, and are therefore left out of the answer of this question. Keach’s Catechism follows the Shorter Catechism by including “the means of grace” in the answer.

1. *Acts 20:21, Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*
2. *Acts 2:37-38, Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Comments

1. Together, repentance and faith constitute conversion. They are two sides of the same coin. Conversion may be sudden, or it may be drawn out. It may be dramatic, or it may be mild (cf. Saul and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 & 9). When there is true repentance, there will be true faith in Christ, and *vice versa*. Although repentance and faith are the gifts of God (see later), it is the responsibility of the sinner to repent and believe (Acts 2:37-38). The inability of man to believe is not to be confused with the moral responsibility to believe. The inability of man to stop sinning does not nullify his responsibility for his sins. It is not for the sinner to know whether or not he is chosen by God for salvation, but it is his responsibility to turn from sin and to call out to God for mercy (Mark 9:24).
2. Repentance and faith do not contribute to the salvation that is complete in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10; 4:12). Yet, repentance and faith are needed to receive the salvation that is given freely by God to undeserving sinners. The call to repentance and faith is part and parcel of gospel preaching. *Hyper-calvinism* is the error of believing in the sovereignty of God while denying the responsibility of man to respond in repentance and faith to the gospel. *Arminianism* is the error of emphasizing the ability of man to respond to the gospel at the expense of the sovereignty of God in salvation. The true Calvinist, who believes the teaching of the Bible, would press home the responsibility of the sinner to respond in repentance and faith, while clearly teaching that God alone, in Christ, saves. The gospel is to be preach to all alike, with the call to everyone to repent and believe. This has been called “the free offer of the gospel”, which some people are unhappy with because it is claimed that it implies insincerity on the part of God, who never truly intended to save those who are not the elect.

Q69. What is repentance to life?

A69. Repentance to life is a saving grace¹, whereby a sinner, with grief and hatred of his sin, turns from it to God^{2,3}, with full purpose to strive after new obedience^{4,5}.

Notes: The answer of this question is couched in a similar way to that of the next question, omitting “out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ”. Instead of the original phrase, “with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience”, we have followed Spurgeon’s “with full purpose to strive after new obedience”.

1. *Acts 11:18, When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”*
2. *Jer. 31:18-19, I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: ‘ You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained bull; restore me, and I will return, for You are the LORD my God. Surely, after my turning, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, because I bore the reproach of my youth.’*

3. *2 Cor. 7:10-11, For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*
4. *Psalm 119:59, I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies.*
5. *Rom. 6:18, And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

Comments

1. True repentance involves all three faculties of the human personality - the mind, the affection, and the will (cf. Rom. 6:17; 2 Tim. 1:7). In true repentance, the mind is enlightened concerning the mercy of God in Christ (Jer. 31:18-19), the affection is convicted of guilty and shame due to sins (Joel 2:12-13; Acts 9:5, 8), and the will resolves to turn from enmity against God to submission to Him (1 Thess. 1:9; Rom. 6:18). Such repentance is the gift of God (Acts 11:18). Although the truly repentant does not become perfect in this life, he strives to obey God (Rom. 6:18). He does not merely abstain from past sins, but strives to live a righteous life (2 Pet. 3:18; Gal. 5:19-26).
2. There is a repentance that is of the world, that does not save (2 Cor. 7:10-11). It consists of remorse over sins, hurt pride, guilt, and shame at being found out, but there is no turning to God for mercy and, therefore, no trusting in Christ for salvation. The remorse experienced by Judas Iscariot was of this kind (Matt. 27:3-5; Acts 1:15-19).

Q70. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A70. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace¹, whereby a sinner receives² and rests upon Him alone for salvation³, as He is set forth in the gospel⁴.

Notes: Following CH Spurgeon, we have used the expression “set forth” instead of “offered to us”, in view of the continuing controversy over the use of the latter. We have changed “whereby we receive and rest” to “whereby a sinner receives and rests”. Also, we have changed the first and last references, which originally were Heb. 10:39 and Isa. 33:22, respectively.

1. *Eph. 2:8-9, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*
2. *John 1:12, But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.*
3. *Phil. 3:9, And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*
4. *Rom. 10:14, 17, How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Comments

1. God’s grace is His favour or kindness shown to undeserving people. The “common grace” of God is shown in many ways which does not end in salvation (Matt. 5:44-45; Psalm 50:10-11, 22-23). The “saving grace” of God is shown to the elect, and leads to salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). Just as true repentance is a saving grace, so also true faith in Christ is a saving grace. They are the gifts of God.

2. True faith is shown by: (i) believing in Christ as the Saviour; (ii) trusting in His finished work and imputed righteousness for acceptance before God; (iii) spiritual growth (Matt. 13:23; John 15:5-6; 2 Pet. 3:18). Spiritual growth is seen in the understanding of the truth, obedience to the truth, and usefulness in God's service (2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 5:13-14).

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