

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

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

Scripture References: John 1:12,13. John 3:5,6. Tit. 3:5,6.

Questions:

1. What do we mean by the word "redemption" in this particular question?

The word redemption in this question could be labeled as the complete doctrine of salvation that is revealed in the Scripture. The "broad" use of the word is in use here. Warfield states, "He died as a ransom certainly; but the salvation purchased by this ransom-price works itself out steadily in its successive stages unto the very end." (Biblical Foundations, Pg. 244).

2. How was this redemption purchased?

This redemption was purchased by the precious blood of Christ, I Pet. 1:19.

3. Is it not possible in some way for the believer to make of himself a partaker?

No, it is impossible for the believer to make of himself a partaker of redemption. The Bible teaches that we are totally unable to save ourselves, much less to deserve it.

4. By whom is our redemption applied?

Our redemption is applied by the Holy Spirit. It is his effectual working on us that brings it to pass.

5. How does this question help to make complete the doctrine of the Trinity?

It helps to make the doctrine of the Trinity complete by showing the work of the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption. We have seen how the Father ordains, the Son purchases and now the Spirit applies. Spurgeon had a favorite saying for the end of many of his sermons:

"We have heard the preacher,
Truth by him has been made known;
But we need a greater Teacher
From the everlasting Throne.
Application is the work of God alone."

THE PROCESS OF REDEMPTION

The above title may seem strange to many readers and yet it is theologically true. Warfield, in his book, "The Plan of Salvation", states: ". . . God's plan is to save, whether the individual or the world, by process. . . . Redeemed by Christ, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, justified through faith, received into the very household of God as his sons, led by the Spirit into the flowering and fruiting activities of the new life, our salvation is still only in process and not yet complete."

The process of redemption is taking place and yet there are so many Christians who insist that there is no room in others for mistakes and will criticise their bretheren in the Lord greatly if sin is committed. This is a strange and dangerous happening in the church of today.

A. A. Hodge had a favorite saying, "The Lord leads us, you know, by devious ways through our pilgrimage, and he appoints for us all our changes." Many times these "devious ways" are ways in which we fall prey to temptation. Now this in no way gives us any right to compromise with evil. The standard the Lord has placed before us is a standard of absolute perfection. The Christian can not live knowing there is a process going on, and then take advantage of it and use it as his ever-present excuse when he sins. This should be understood by all who name the name of Christ.

However, there is a danger that when the Christian recognizes the facts of the last paragraph he will, at the same time, come down with the disease of refusing to excuse, tolerate, or understand sin in other people. He forgets the Bible teaches that it is only when the last trump will sound that the incorruptible body shall enter into the glory for God's children, and that then the process of redemption will be complete. A great Christian had the right perspective when he said, "Toward God, a heart of fire. Toward myself, a heart of steel. Toward others, a heart of love." He recognized that he must put God first in all things. He recognized to do this he must rule out anything that would hinder him. He further recognized that others would be going through the same process as himself and his attitude toward them should be one of love.

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