

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 32.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #32. *How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant?*

A. The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator,¹ and life and salvation by him;² and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him,³ promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit⁴ to all his elect, to work in them that faith,⁵ with all other saving graces;⁶ and to enable them unto all holy obedience,⁷ as the evidence of the truth of their faith⁸ and thankfulness to God,⁹ and as the way which he hath appointed them to salvation.¹⁰

Question 1—*What is the first way in which the grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, the covenant of grace?*

Answer—The first way that the grace of God is manifested in this second covenant is in the provision and offer of a Mediator, Isa. 42:6. No sooner was man a rebel against God, and separated from his presence, being deprived of all blessings in this life and the life to come, then God made promise of one who would come to interpose to bring man back to God, Gen. 3:15. In this, as with all the promises of God, *cf.* Gen. 15:1; God reveals himself to be a covenant God, discovering the promise of grace, when man had forfeited both life and the life promised in the first covenant, Gen. 3:17-19.

Herein the grace of God appears in two ways: 1.) In that God should even admit of a Mediator, *cf.* Jude 6; when he might have exacted the debt of our own persons, and, we being unable to pay it, might have suffered everlasting punishment, *cf.* 2 Pet. 2:4. 2.) Not only does he admit of a Mediator but he himself provides one, John 6:27; 1 Tim. 2:5. For so far was fallen man from finding out who could or would plead his cause, he was without hope and alienated from all sources of relief, Job 9:33.

It was in and by this Mediator that God graciously holds forth the promise of both life and salvation, 1 John 5:11, 12. These are very comprehensive blessings containing all that the sinful creature now needs, Matt. 11:28-30; they are promised by way of covenant, Gen. 17:7. Life is brought to light by the Gospel which alone discovers the grace of the covenant, Phil. 1:21. This covenant contains the revelation of God himself as gracious, Isa. 43:25; and providing for the sinner all that he now lacks, 1 Cor. 3:22.

¹ Gen. 3:15; Isa. 42:6; John 6:27.

² 1 John 5:11, 12.

³ John 3:16; 1:12.

⁴ Prov. 1:23.

⁵ 2 Cor. 4:13.

⁶ Gal. 5:22, 23.

⁷ Ezek. 36:27.

⁸ Jas. 2:18, 22.

⁹ 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

¹⁰ Eph. 2:10.

Question 2—*What is the second way in which the grace of God is manifested in this covenant?*

Answer—The grace of God further appears in its contrast with that first covenant wherein the condition of that covenant was works, *this do and live*, cf. Gen. 2:17; and its keeping or breaking was committed to the hands of the man, cf. Gen. 3:11-13.

In the covenant of grace, the condition to an interest in the Mediator is not works but faith, Luke 7:50. Faith, not works, gives the believer an interest, or right to claim him, as his own Mediator, Surety, Advocate and Saviour, Acts 15:11. Thus, it is by faith, or belief, that the life and salvation promised are actually conveyed, John 3:16.

It is one thing to say that Christ is the Redeemer and Saviour of man, which is a truth founded in Scripture revelation, 1 Tim. 4:10; and by this, all may confess that general truth, Deut. 33:3. Likewise, it remains a general proposition that he is given for the elect people, in particular, that he might save them, which also may be confessed by all, Eph. 5:25. It is another thing altogether for men, by faith, to make particular and personal application of that redemption, with all those spiritual benefits, claiming an interest in the Mediator, Gal. 2:20. This interest, which is established upon the condition of faith (without discussion yet of one's actual ability), is his right to claim him as Saviour, John 1:12.

This grace of God is farther magnified when, despite the natural inability of sinners to meet this condition of faith, John 5:40; God has promised two things: 1.) His Spirit to make known his gracious covenant, so that they might come to know his promises therein, Prov. 1:23. 2.) He has promised to work in his elect that very condition which he requires for an interest in Christ, faith, 2 Cor. 4:13. So far, then, from being a condition that rests upon the works or merits of those in whom it is required, it is itself the grace of God working in them that gives what is demanded, Eph. 2:8. Lest men should find any reason of boasting, the Saviour himself warns against any such self-conceit, Luke 17:10.

Finally, this conditionality extends to all other saving graces, which are themselves fruit of that same Spirit working faith, Gal. 5:22, 23. These graces, which are the purchase of his blood, 2 Pet. 1:1; are wrought in us through the Spirit of his power toward his people, Eph. 1:19. These are discriminating blessings, bestowed only upon the elect of God, for all men have not the faith required to be partakers, 2 Thess. 3:2.

Question 3—*What is the third way in which the grace of God is manifested in this covenant?*

Answer—The grace of God is manifested and glorified even more in this, God has ordained that we should apprehend and discern our interest in Christ, and the blessings of the covenant, by faith, Heb. 11:1.

In order to make clear our interest in Christ, together with life and salvation in him, God has also given his Holy Spirit to enable believers to render all holy obedience, Ezek. 36:27. This obedience allows those who believe to apprehend their interest in Christ because: 1.) It is an evidence, both visible and tangible, of the truth of that faith whereby they have claimed a particular right to him and his benefits, Jas. 2:18, 22. 2.) It is a discernable expression of that thankfulness to God which is the fruit of that faith, 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. 3.) It is the method and way to salvation which God has appointed to those who truly believe and have right to Christ, Eph. 2:10.

By these things, the truth and sincerity of faith is evident, as well as the grace of faith wrought, by the Spirit, as promised, Ps. 25:14. God discovers to those who believe, not only that there is a covenant of grace in general, but that they have a particular right to the blessings which are promised in it, Eph. 4:30.