

“CHRIST’S SATISFACTION OF OUR SINS.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

November 17, 2013, 6:00PM

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 53:5-7, 10-12

Belgic Confession: Article 21

Introduction.

We are in the central and longest section of the Belgic Confession, the section that deals with the Doctrine of Salvation. It started in article 16 and continues through article 26.

Article 21 opens up for us the biblical understanding of the atonement and of Christ’s satisfaction of our sins. I would like to address this issue this evening through four questions.

What are we saved from?

Who saves us?

How does He save us?

What are we saved for?

What are we saved from?

You may think that the question, “what are we saved from?” to be painfully obvious, but if you think that, you haven’t been keeping up with our post-modern culture.

People today find our Christian way of thinking to be old fashion or out of date or just plain irrelevant. We are bad, we are just sick. We have diseases and addictions. We aren’t sinners, we’re victims. We don’t need salvation, we need therapy. Criminals shouldn’t be punished, they need rehabilitation. We aren’t responsible for our actions because they aren’t our fault.

If our culture thinks about the cross at all, and they don’t much, but if they do, they think of it as a symbol of love and not a symbol of a curse or a sacrifice for our sins.

So to ask someone today, “are you saved?” could easily get a response of “saved from what?”

To be saved simply means to be rescued or delivered from a dangerous or threatening situation. We can be saved from thirst, from enemies, from cancer, or even saved by the bell.

Now days we have to start with the basics. Salvation in the Bible is speaking about deliverance from the most ultimate dangers.

We are saved from the bondage of sin and the power of death.

We are saved from our iniquities, transgressions and evil deeds.

We are saved from the wrath of God.

We are saved from the Day of Judgment.
We are saved from the dominion of the devil.

To understand Article 21 and these Scriptures we have to understand that we are sinners and that we need to be saved from our sins and our rebellion against a holy God. We need to have our sins forgiven so that we don't have to pay the penalty of them.

Who saves us?

Article 21 starts by answering this question, but the answer is a bit strange and unfamiliar to us so let me back up a bit and fill in some background.

In Scripture we see very early on that the business of making sacrifices was the work of priests. Priests offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. These sacrifices were an atonement for sin, a substitute in the place of the sinner.

When the author of the book of Hebrews set out to show that Jesus was our great high priest he had a problem. He was writing to a Jewish audience who knew Jesus wasn't of the lineage of the tribe of Levi which was the biblical priestly line. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah which was the kingly line, of the line of David.

So how was it possible for Jesus to be a priest if He was of the kingly line? You might remember King Saul got in big trouble for doing the work of a priest back when Samuel was the high priest (I Samuel 13:8ff).

The author of Hebrews found in the OT that God thought of this already and had prepared a way through a very unique king-priest named *Melchizedek*.

Genesis 14:17-20 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).
18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)
19 And he blessed him and said,
“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;
20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Hebrews 7:9-11 One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, 10 for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.
11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

He then quotes Psalm 110:

Psalm 110:4 The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 7:20-22 And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, 21 but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him:

“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”

22 This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

Melchizedek’s priesthood was superior to Aarons, as he received tithes from Abraham, the father of the faith. Melchizedek’s priesthood superseded the Levitical priesthood.

Hebrews 7 shows that Jesus’ priesthood is of the line of Melchizedek’s. Christ is our great high priest, after the order of Melchizedek. Christ is the mediator of the new and better covenant.

As the final high priest Jesus made the final sacrifice and made all other sacrifices no longer necessary.

How are we saved?

Article 21 then addresses how Jesus saves us.

Hebrews 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

The function and role of the priest was to offer sacrifices.

Leviticus 4:35 ... the priest shall make *atonement* for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.

In the OT the system of atonement that God instituted was a sacrificial system where an unblemished male animal was used as a substitute to atone for their sins and make them right with God.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

As our high priest, Christ placed Himself on the altar as the sacrifice for our sins to appease and satisfy the eternal wrath of God and by His blood to cleanse and cover all our sins. By doing this Christ, our Savior, became our salvation.

Article 21 says it this way: Jesus *appeased* the Father’s wrath by His full *satisfaction* on the *cross* and by His *blood*.

To appease is to make peace. To satisfy is to meet a demand. Jesus not only satisfied the demands of the Father's justice, but He made full satisfaction once and for all and established peace between us and the Father.

If you could read between the lines of this sixteenth century document you would hear a veiled rebuttal to the Roman Catholic Church's system of good works, penance, and final justification in purgatory.

Jesus has paid the penalty in full, there is no more work of satisfaction we have to do.

Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Hebrews 7:27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

Hebrews 9:12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

I Peter 1:18-19 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

How?

Article 21 quotes Isaiah 53, that God laid on Him our transgressions, God crushed Him with our iniquities and laid on Him the iniquities of us all.

When the Ethiopian Eunuch asked Philip about this passage, Philip preached from it about Jesus (Acts 8:35).

Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

John 10:11, 14-15, 17-18 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ... 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ... 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

What are we saved for?

Article 21 concludes with the benefits of Christ's sacrifice/atonement for Christians.

Philippians 3:7-8 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

By His actions we know Christ, we know His all surpassing love and grace and worth.

By His wounds we are healed and we have comfort and consolation; we have peace with God.

By His work we have no other work. We are perfected in Christ. Not sinless, but acceptable to God. There is nothing more we have to do to win His approval. When Jesus said it is finished, that's it, it is finished. The work is done.

By His blood He has saved us from our sins, and we are accepted by God and adopted by God as His children. Not because of us, not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done. On the cross is revealed His full glory and His grace to us sinners.

We worship and love a wrath-sustaining, wrath-satisfying, bleeding Savior. Of this Christians have been singing for centuries.

Man of Sorrows! What a Name

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned he stood,
Sealed my pardon with his blood:
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

What thou, my Lord, hast suffered was all for sinner's gain:
Mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior! Tis I deserve thy place;
Look on me with thy favor, vouchsafe to me thy grace.

Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended

Who was the guilty who brought this upon thee?
Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee.
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee:
I crucified thee.

And Can it Be That I Should Gain (PH #267, 1-4)

And can it be, that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me!
Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

Without the substitutionary sacrifice and atonement of Jesus there is no salvation. And without that there wouldn't be anything to sing about.

Prayer: Christ was all anguish that I might be all joy,
cast off that I might be brought in,
trodden down as an enemy that I might be welcomed as a friend,
surrendered to hell's worst that I might attain heaven's best,
stripped that I might be clothed,
wounded that I might be healed,
athirst that I might drink,
tormented that I might be comforted,
made a shame that I might inherit glory,
entered darkness that I might have eternal light.
My Savior wept that all tears might be wiped from my eyes,
groaned that I might have endless song,
endured all pain that I might have unfading health,
bore a thorned crown that I might have a glory-diadem,
bowed his head that I might uplift mine,
experienced reproach that I might receive welcome,
closed his eyes in death that I might gaze on unclouded brightness,
expired that I might for ever live.

(From a Puritan prayer in *The Valley of Vision*).