

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 30 & 20.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #30. *Doth God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

A. God doth not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery,¹ into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Works;² but of his mere love and mercy delivereth his elect out of it, and bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Grace.³

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #20. *Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

A. God having,⁴ out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life,⁴ did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.⁵

Question 1—*Wherein does it appear that God did not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

Answer—It appears in that he made choice of some men and not others, 1 Thess. 5:9; Eph. 1:4. That this choosing does not include all, but some only, is evident because when all are taken, there is no choice made, yet we read that some men are chosen, Matt. 20:16. To say that God chose some men, implies that there are others who are not chosen, but passed by, 2 Tim. 2:19, 20. This is the party of the reprobate, whom God has not chosen unto life, but has decreed to let them lie in their natural state, and to damn them for their sins, Jude 4.

That God designed not to leave all mankind in this estate of sin and misery appears in his discovery of a way of salvation, given by promise to our first parents, Gen. 3:15; wherein was promised the manifestation of the Saviour of men, 1 John 3:8. This salvation is not extended to all the miserable creatures: 1.) Angels, who were the first that rebelled against God, were left to perish, without hope of salvation, 2 Pet. 2:4. 2.) As for fallen man, although this gospel of salvation is to be preached to all nations, Matt. 28:19, 20; and although all who sit under the sound of it are commanded and encouraged to believe, Acts 17:30; yet it is applied only to those who were ordained to eternal life, Acts 13:48. The purpose of God relating to it, and to its application, are joined together, Rom. 8:30.

And, although it is clear that the number of the those saved will be smaller than the number of the world, Matt. 7:13, 14; yet, the efficacy of the Lord's love and Christ's death is more and greater than Adam's sin, Rom. 5:20. Thus, the election of God outruns the sinfulness of man so that the total number of the elect comprises an innumerable multitude, Rev. 7:9.

¹ 1 Thess. 5:9.

² Gal. 3:10, 12.

³ Tit. 3:4-7; Gal. 3:21; Rom. 3:20-22.

⁴ Eph. 1:4.

⁵ Rom. 3:20-22; Gal. 3:21, 22.

Question 2—*What was the cause of man's fall into sin and misery?*

Answer—The cause of the fall of man was a breach of the first covenant, which God made with the first man, Adam, Hos. 6:7; 1 Cor. 15:22.

This covenant is commonly called the Covenant of Works because: 1.) The condition of that covenant was to be established or broken through the personal agency man, *cf.* Gen. 2:16, 17. 2.) The terms of that covenant were also to be met through the natural agency of man, Eccl. 7:29; whereby the works accomplished were to arise from the will as uncorrupted by sin, making them an acceptable service before God, *cf.* Mal. 1:8. 3.) These works, not being by faith, or from any motions of the Spirit of God necessary to make them “good works,” constituted a legal obedience or obligation, placed upon the man by God, his lawgiver, Gal. 3:10, 12.

Such was the connection, that once the condition of the covenant had been broken, the remaining obligation became an impossibility for these reasons: 1.) A breach of one law (and the condition, though a positive law, was a moral law to Adam, *cf.* Gen. 2:17), constitutes a failure with regard to the whole, Jas. 2:10, 11. 2.) Once broken, the law did not have the power to restore that right standing before God necessary to acceptable obedience, Gal. 3:11; this breach necessitates the introduction of unfallen agency to remedy, Rom. 8:3.

Question 3—*What are the reasons behind the electing love of God?*

Answer—It is altogether free, without any moving cause, but God's mere good pleasure, Eph. 1:5. No reason can be found for this but only in the bosom of God who, of his own mere love and mercy designed to deliver his elect out of this estate, Tit. 3:4-7.

There was no merit or motive in them, as Christ confirms, John 15:16. As creatures all subject to his wrath and curse, it is the grace of God alone which makes the difference between one and another, Mal. 1:2, 3. What reason can be given when the sovereign subjects one to condign punishment for his own crimes, and lifts up another to a place of profit and trust, but his own mere will, *cf.* Rom. 9:18?

This election is not based upon any moral perfection that God saw in them because, to the extent he would have an eye to them as actual beings, they would be possessed of nothing but corruption, Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:10, 11. Nor did this election have reference to any civil virtue, for God does not elevate nature to grace on any worldly accounting, 1 Cor. 1:26. Neither did it have any reference to foreseen faith and good works, or perseverance in them, because the effects cannot be its own cause, Rom. 8:29. The elect are chosen unto faith in order to obtain all of its consequents, John 1:12. This election is particular and definite, Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3. Finally, this election is not due to any obligation upon God to do so, but it is resolved into his inscrutable will of good pleasure alone, Rom. 9:11, 13, 16; Matt. 11:25.

As salvation is, then, to be ascribed to the grace of God alone, this election is brought to fruition by a second covenant, which God has made with Christ, 2 Sam. 23:5. This is commonly called the Covenant of Grace, because its blessings are the purchase of grace and depend not upon the works of man but are suspended upon his mere believing, Gal. 3:21, 22; Rom. 3:20-22.