

Lord's Day 30a, QA 80

Sermon Notes by Pastor Paul Goh

25 April 2010

Beloved, the doctrine that is contained in the Lord' Day is controversial because it singles out the Roman Catholic dogma of the mass and calls its an accursed idolatry! Many believers and even Reformed believers are embarrassed and at the same time offended about the answers given to question 80. They would wish that this offensive teaching might be removed altogether from the Heidelberg Catechism. Question and answer 80 was not in the first edition of the Catechism. But Frederick III, the one who commissioned the writing of this Catechism, instructed Casper Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus to have a teaching that exposes the false teaching of the Roman Catholic Mass. And recently, the Christian Reformed Church of North America deleted this offensive question and answer from the Heidelberg Catechism. Are you embarrassed by the answer given to question 80? I hope you are not? The Reformed Believer ought not to be embarrassed for it is the truth of God's Word.

This is an important Lord's Day because the heart of the Roman Catholic Church is the Mass and our Reformed Fathers have done us a great service by exposing it as a an accursed idolatry. I see a grave danger ahead of us: the danger that the next generation of Reformed believers will think that Catholics are true believers and they are on their way to heaven. And so, they willingly join hands with Catholic and worship in their churches. My concern is not unfounded because prominent Reformed theologians have already signed a document called Evangelicals and Catholic Together or in short ECT, and declared that they are joining hands in working together in missions and social work. Beloved, this is a crucial Lord's Day. And today's sermon, in opposition to the Mass, we will learn what Christ accomplished for us on the cross, the glory of the Son of God who is now in heaven and what comfort do we receive from the Lord's Supper knowing that it is a testimony of the one sacrifice of Christ.

The theme is: the Lord's Supper as the one Sacrifice of Christ. First, the testimony of the perfection of the cross. Secondly, the testimony of the glory of the Son of God, and finally, the testimony of the comfort of believers.

First, the testimony of the perfection of the cross. The Lord's Supper testifies of the death of Christ on the cross. And the nature of that sacrifice of Christ is that is one and only sacrifice for sin. First, Christ is the better sacrifice than the sacrifice than the sacrifices offered by the Aaronic priesthood. They offered the same sacrifices daily which can never take away sins and furthermore, there still is a remembrance of sins. For those sacrifices are only the types and shadows of the reality that would come in the person of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, Christ, in the order of Melchizedeck is of a better priesthood than the Aaronic priesthood. This is demonstrated that the Aaronic priesthood was superceded by the priesthood of Melchizedeck. And God declaring in Psalm 110, that Christ is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedeck. Furthermore, Abraham gave tithes to

Melchizedeck, which demonstrates the greatness of this priesthood. And since the Christ is the better sacrifice and he is of a better priesthood, no other sacrifices are necessary. We know that no other sacrifices are necessary because God testifies that He has accepted this one sacrifice of Christ by raising Him from the dead and exalting him to a place of honour and power at the right hand of God the Father. And it is through this one sacrifice of Christ that God does not remember our sins anymore. He has forgiven all our sins and removed it as far as the east is from the west? Do you know the distance between the east and the west? The distance is as long as the length of this universe and that is how far God has removed our sins from us. Neither does he remember our guilt nor does he impute our punishment and curse that is due unto us. And he has declared us just and innocent in his sight once and for all by his one and only perfect sacrifice on the cross. This blessing comes to us not only through the death of Christ on the cross but also from the covenant of grace that God has established with us. And in that covenant God says that he will put his laws into our hearts and in our minds. And as his sons and daughters, we will keep his word. But this beautiful truth is denied by Rome's dogma of the Mass.

The word, "Popish Mass is unbiblical unlike what the Bible calls it, the Lord's supper. And about the origin of that name, there is no consensus among Reformed theologians on when the word was first used. The Lord's Supper is a supper that belongs to the Lord; He has instituted it for the perpetual use of the church and for the spiritual strengthening of God's people. By implication, the Mass teaches that the one sacrifice of Christ is insufficient, unless Christ is sacrifice daily in the Mass. The Mass is not a memorial of the death of Christ but it is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, like the sacrifice two thousand years ago in Calvary. This sacrifice is not only for the living but also for the dead. Instead of Christ offering himself on the cross, in the Mass, the priest offers Christ. This is the heart of Roman Catholicism. And because Rome teaches that the sacrifice of Christ must be performed as often as they have the Mass, this implies that the one sacrifice of Christ is ineffectual for the salvation of God's people. Their sins are not forgiven completely by the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Something more must be done by the church by the saying of Mass and the good works that must be performed, includes all the other sacraments. And only then, they may be ready to dwell in heaven. The insufficiency of the death of Christ is seen in the place where Catholics go after their death. Faithful Catholics at death does not go to heaven immediately but to go to a middle place called purgatory. Question is: what did the death of Christ do for Catholic believers? Answer: nothing! They not only have to pay for their sins when they living but also when they are dead. Catholics go to purgatory to purge them from their sins which they have committed against God and they say that they fire of purgatory is the same fire that punishes sinners in hell! The word, "purgatory" means purge or cleansing and it refers to the cleansing of their sins. And how long do the Catholics need to be in purgatory no one knows. But Rome says there is one way in which you can reduce your time in purgatory by purchasing indulgences. Indulgences are certificates of forgiveness and Rome's top salesman during the time of the 16th Reformation was Tetzel, and his sales pitch was, "as soon as the coins in the box rings, a

soul in purgatory springs". And thus, the Mass is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Christ. This is what the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism declare in QA 80 after the Lord opened their spiritual eyes of this terrible abomination. Then it became impossible not to condemn the Mass with all their might. Their love for the honour and name of God made them will to sacrifice their good and their blood. Would they refrain from protesting against the God-dishonouring evil of the Mass? Could they keep silence when they see thousands of their fellow men go down the road to destruction" No, they could not. How about us? Should we remain silent? No. Should we cave in to the pressure to delete QA80 from the Heidleberg Catechism? We and our children and children's children ought not.

The Lord's supper also testifies of the glory of the Son of God. This glory of Christ is seen in that after his death, he is exalted to heaven. Before His exaltation, Christ suffered humiliation. Beginning from the time that he was born, he took on human flesh like us and suffered all the infirmities of the fresh, except sin. He suffered hunger, thirst, and was weary from all his travels and faced the opposition to his ministry inflicted upon him by the Pharisees and Sadducees. And especially on the cross, the Son of God suffered much. The death of Christ was the most humiliating way to die. Christ died with the greatest criminals. And the death of the cross was the most extreme form of suffering ever devised by man. It was a very slow way to die and is designed to inflict the greatest suffering upon the criminal. And on the cross, Christ suffered the punishment of his people. On his body, he bore God's wrath against sin and he also bore the curse of God. And that humiliation continued when he died on the cross and was put in the tomb. And after enduring all these suffering, God exalted him to the highest heaven. Gone are the humiliation of suffering and the death of the cross. The exaltation of Christ began when God raised the Son of God from the dead and after forty days, Christ ascended into heaven. And God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow of things in heaven, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. And the glory of the Son of God is that he is in heaven being clothed with all power and all honour.

But in the Mass, the Son of God is robbed of his glory! . He is brought down from the glory of heaven and to be bodily present in the Mass. For Christ to be bodily present in the bread and wine is for Christ to be brought down to the stage of humiliation all over again after having been given the glory of heaven. And the humiliation is even worse when he is not come in human flesh and in the divine person, but bodily in the form of bread and wine! And the only worthy response to that Christ in the form of bread and wine is worship And that takes place at the Mass, when the priest lifts up the element, the congregation bows the knee in adoration and worship of the host and the chalice of wine. They do that because they believe that Christ is in the form of bread and wine but the fact is that it is mere bread and wine. And so the heart of the Mass is an accursed idolatry. It is idolatry because instead of worshipping God, they now worship the bread and wine. And idolatry is sin because it breaks the first commandment, where God declares; "thou shalt not have no other gods before me". Furthermore, such idolatry is cursed by

God and therefore, they eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body. And therefore, in the Mass, God is robbed of his glory. But the testimony of the Lord's Supper as the one sacrifice of Christ is of great comfort to God's people.

Firstly, believers receive the full pardon of their sins. As for those who believe that there is a need for Christ to be sacrificed daily does not receive the comfort of the full pardon of their sin, instead they will be tormented with doubts, fears and a lack of assurance that their sins have been forgiven. And they will resort to their own works or to false teachers to give them temporary comfort that does not last. But, as for us who believe that Christ died for us once and for all for our sins, we have the assurance that our sins are forgiven and there is not a single sin which has not been forgiven. Our sins will not return to haunt us for Christ died effectually for our sins. And if the devil were to accuse us before the throne of God, we point him to the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross, where Christ once and for all atoned for all our sins. And we have exchanged the filthy garments of our own righteousness for the clean garments of the perfect righteousness of Christ. And to receive the full pardon of our sins means that we have been engrafted into Christ.

Secondly, believers are engrafted into Christ by the Holy Spirit. The figure here is grafting when a stem is cut and engrafted into another plant which is healthy. And that stem is no part of that new plant and therefore draws all its nutrients and source of life from that plant. You are that stem and you have been engrafted by the Holy Spirit so that you enjoy all these blessings that flow from Christ, by faith. And one of the blessings of this intimate union is sonship, where you are sons and daughters of God. And we not only know this from the Scriptures that we are the sons of God but the Spirit of Christ testifies to us that we are sons and that we belong to Christ forever and nothing can change our status. And thus through the Lord's Supper, we receive the assurance that we are true members of the covenant of grace. And the ground of that assurance is that one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. He died for my sins and through the cross I receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal, life. Amen.