

TEACHING GOAL

To show that no one can partake of redemption apart from the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. 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.
- S.C. 29; L.C. 57-61; W.C. of F. XXV, IX, X; Savoy 26, 9, 10; Young 58-59

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Hebrews 5:11-6:12

Support Passages: Support Passages: Matthew 7:15-23, 13:1-23, 22:1-14; Romans 2:17-3:8, 9:6-13, 11:1-10; I Corinthians 2-6-16; II Timothy 2:14-21; Titus 3:4-7

BIBLE STORY

Acts 5:1-11; Ananias and Saphira are examples of those who are outwardly members of the saved community and yet do not have the characteristics of repentance unto life.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21, ESV)

APPLICATION

We are hereby exhorted to take heed to the condition of our hearts. If we are not truly repentant, if our membership in the body of Christ is superficial, let us repent in truth before the Lord of Lords declares, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

SUMMARY

To this point the Catechism has led us through the doctrines of the written word of God, and the nature of God and His decrees expressed in His acts of creation and providence. We have also studied the doctrines of sin, the covenants of God and the nature of Christ as Redeemer. Now we shall examine the application of redemption to sinners.

The Catechism question for this week informs us that there is no possibility of being saved (one of the benefits of redemption) apart from the work of God the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, no benefit of redemption is available to anyone, apart from a direct and powerful act of God in each individual to whom they are applied, through His Spirit. Even though people have been endowed by God with minds that can reason and differentiate between good and evil (the animals cannot do this), people cannot and will not in their own free will repent and believe on Christ for salvation. What is required is the direct and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the individual before true repentance will occur and apparently God does not act in such a manner in everybody.

The study passage, Hebrews 5:11-6:12, teaches us that it is possible to be quite intimate with the benefits of redemption without having them powerfully applied by the Holy Spirit. Many reliable commentators differ in their interpretation of this passage mainly with the spiritual condition of the people of whom it speaks. One thing is certain, these are Hebrew people who claim to be Christians but have no noticeable growth for they "have become dull of hearing." When they should have been teachers they are still babes. They are like the vineyard in Isaiah's Song (Isaiah 5) which was well cultivated, fertilized, and protected, but instead of good fruit, it brought forth worthless ones. They are like ground that has drunk in God's rain but instead of useful vegetation it has yielded thorns and thistles (Hebrews 6:7-8). It is therefore possible that they have fallen away from an intimacy with the benefits of redemption because they were not powerfully applied by the Holy Spirit.

While this seems to be quite clear, it is verse 6 that presents the real difficulty. Paul writes (in the Greek text), "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, **while they again crucify** to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame." Now the only sin for which there is no pardon is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This text does not refer to the unpardonable sin, but to a hindrance to repentance. No one can truly repent unless these hindrances are removed. On the other hand the word *impossible* refers to the impotency of human beings to renew sinners to repentance; only God can do such things. These who have fallen away are re-crucifying to themselves the Son of God and putting Him to open shame and so long as they do this they certainly can have no assurance of salvation and may well wind up in the fires of hell. Paul here teaches that human beings are not able in themselves to correct this wretched situation; only God can do such things.

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) prove this point as well, for outwardly they were members of the saved community having heard the gospel and seeming to respond to it. But then they sinned so dreadfully against the Holy Spirit. Because this was a period of great revival and presence of the Holy Spirit their sin was much more heinous. Their behavior was certainly not typical of those to whom the Spirit had applied the benefits of redemption. It is as our Lord stated (Matthew 7:21), "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven."

The Titus passage (3:4-7) teaches directly that God our Savior saved us by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus. Justification (a benefit of redemption) is God's work and not ours.

Furthermore, Paul compares the visible church to a great house (II Timothy 2:14-21) which contains many types of vessels, some for honorable use and some for dishonorable use (cf. Romans 9:21). Hymenaeus and Philetus were dishonorable vessels yet were in the great house. It is God who saves us and not our works (II Timothy 1:9). The same may be said for the parable of the sower or the parable of the wheat and tares or Paul's statements about Israel in the Romans passages (2:28-29, 9:6-7, 11:5-7). No one can partake of the benefits of redemption apart from the work of God the Holy Spirit. They may approach it and seemingly partake of it, yet apart from the Spirit it never comes to fruition.