

The Perfect Sacrifice for Imperfect People

In our evangelical world today many Christians find it very satisfactory to simply know a few Bible stories about Jesus and nothing else. Giving diligent effort and committing ourselves to in-depth study of the scriptures in order to grow in the knowledge of God is rarer than it should be in our day. It's been a rallying cry for some to say, "I don't want to hear doctrine. Doctrine divides!" In this series of articles on John 1:14, I've reminded us that biblical *doctrine* is very important for encouragement and assurance for our *practical*—day to day—living. That being true, let me give us a succinct definition of why it was necessary for Jesus to take on humanity—with the exception of sin. This comes from the Heidelberg Catechism which originated in the city of Heidelberg, Germany in 1563:

16 Q. Why must [Jesus] be truly human and truly righteous?

A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for its sin; but a sinner could never pay for others.

Man lost his right relationship with God because of disobedience. Because *man* sinned, the penalty for sin must be borne by *man*. Only Jesus who is "truly righteous" can pay the penalty for imperfect sinners. In addition to this, the payment of the penalty must involve suffering in body and soul. Jesus had to be "truly human" because only as "truly human" can he suffer body and soul for others (John 12:27; Acts 3:18; Hebrews 2:14).

Reformed scholar and author, Louis Berkof writes, "Only such a truly human Mediator, who had experimental knowledge of the woes of mankind and rose superior to all temptations, could enter sympathetically into all the experiences, the trials, and the temptations of man (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:15-5:2) and be a perfect human example for his followers (Matt. 11:29; Mark 10:39; John 13:13-15; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 12:2-4; 1 Pet. 2:21)." This gives us instruction as to why Jesus had to be truly human. Why did he also need to be truly God?

17 Q. Why must [Jesus] also be true God?

A. So that, by the power of His divinity, He might bear the weight of God's anger in His humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

Dutch American theologian Dr. Geerhardus Vos has written, "Christ's work as Mediator must possess an infinite value, since that work must extend to the satisfaction of the eternal wrath of God. A mere man can never endure this wrath, as is already apparent from the eternal punishment of those who are lost. We would have to remain under that wrath eternally simply because our human nature is not able to endure its intensity."

What does this *doctrinal* truth of Jesus as the God-man mean *practically* for all of us who have trusted Christ by faith? I want to just list a few biblical truths for us to consider. Our right

relationship with God is secure because of the perfect work of the God-man Jesus Christ. That being true, the following is a representative list of assurances that will never be taken away from true Christians. This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

—Assurance of our complete salvation, past, present, and future. (Jn. 3:16; 1 Peter 1:3-9)

—Assurance of daily forgiveness. (1 John 1:8-9)

—Assurance of answered prayers according to the perfect will and timing of our Father (Mt. 6:9-13) Keep in mind that God's perfect will for our lives and for the answer to our prayers means that our prayers will not always be answered according to the way we prayed. God is perfect and we are not!

—Assurance that God has covenanted with us and promised to be a God to us and our children (Gn. 17:7)

—Assurance of God's provision for godly marriages and peace in our homes as we seek, by grace, to live according to his word (Eph. 5:22-6:4)

—Assurance of God's provision for healthy and God-honoring relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ (Eph. 4:1-16)

—Assurance of God's provision and plan for growth in Christ-likeness. (Eph. 4; Rom. 8:28; Titus 2:11-14)

—Assurance that our relationship with sin has changed (Rom. 6:14). We still sin, but sin is not our master, Jesus is our Master.

—Assurance of the promise of peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

—Assurance of the promise of nourishment and provision that allows for us to live our Christian lives in a way that is pleasing to God (John 15:1-17)

Meditating on this incredible, *doctrinal* plan of God for our salvation should bring *practical* comfort and encouragement in our day-to-day lives. May we continue to be strengthened and filled with joy as we ponder the love that God has for his people in Christ Jesus.

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