**Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion***

Lesson 16: The Work of Christ, Part 2 (Book 2, Chapters 16b-17)

**Chapter 16 Continued (How Christ Performed the Office of Redeemer in Procuring Our Salvation in His Death, Resurrection and Ascension)**

1. Christ Crucified
   1. In Christ being “crucified,” we are shown that His death was under divine accursedness, for the cross—hanging on a tree—signified accursedness (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13-14; 1 Pet 2:14). Christ shed His blood as a sacrifice for us, to cleanse us, and to satisfy God’s justice. He died so that we would not be swallowed by death (Heb. 2:14-15). His crucifixion and death are an expiatory sacrifice for sin, for the curse of our sin was transferred to Christ’s flesh. Although this curse was upon Him, He was not crushed by it. Rather, He crushed, broke, and scattered the whole force of that curse (Col. 2:14-15). His shed blood is not only an appeasement of wrath, but a basin that washes us pure (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; Rev. 1:5)
2. Christ Dead and Buried
   1. “By dying, He assured that we would not die, or –which is the same thing—redeemed us to life by His own death.”
   2. Christ died to conquer death, to crush the head of the one who had the power of death, the devil, and to deliver us from fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:22).
   3. Another benefit of Christ’s death for us is that now we are called to die to ourselves so that we may live (Rom. 6:4-5; Col. 3:3; Gal. 2:9, 6:14).
   4. “Therefore in Christ’s death and burial a 2-fold blessing is set forth for us to enjoy: liberation from the death to which we had been bound, and mortification of our flesh.”
3. Christ Descended Into Hell
   1. “For although it is apparent from the writings of the ancient Fathers, that the clause which now stands in the Creed was not formerly so much used in the churches, still, in giving a summary of doctrine, a place must be assigned to it, as containing a matter of great importance which ought not by any means to be disregarded. Indeed, some of the ancient Fathers do not omit it, and hence we may conjecture, that having been inserted in the Creed after a considerable lapse of time, it came into use in the Church not immediately but by degrees.”
   2. “But should any still scruple to give it admission into the Creed, it will shortly be made plain, that the place which it holds in a summary of our redemption is so important, that the omission of it greatly detracts from the benefit of Christ’s death.”
   3. Various Understandings of the Phrase
      1. Christ was buried
      2. Christ went to Abraham’s bosom to release the souls of OT saints in “prison”
   4. “Nothing had been done if Christ had only endured corporeal death. In order to interpose between us and God’s anger, and satisfy his righteous judgment, it was necessary that he should feel the weight of divine vengeance. Whence also it was necessary that he should engage, as it were, at close quarters with the powers of hell and the horrors of eternal death.”
   5. “But after explaining what Christ endured in the sight of man [buried], the Creed appropriately adds the invisible and incomprehensible judgment which he endured before God, to teach us that not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of redemption, but that there was a greater and more excellent price—that he bore in his soul the tortures of condemned and ruined man.”
   6. “He bore the weight of the divine anger, that, smitten and afflicted, he experienced all the signs of an angry and avenging God.”
   7. “Thus by engaging with the power of the devil, the fear of death, and the pains of hell, he gained the victory, and achieved a triumph, so that we now fear not in death those things which our Prince has destroyed.”
   8. In short, “He descended into hell” means that Christ underwent spiritual torment for us, not just bodily torment.
4. Christ Rose Again From the Dead
   1. 1 Peter 1:3 – “According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”
   2. “Through Christ’s death, sin and death are wiped out; through His resurrection, righteousness is restored and life raised up.” --J. Mark Beach
   3. Romans 4:25 – “who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”
   4. “For how could He by dying have freed us from death, if He had yielded to its power? how could He have obtained the victory for us, if He had fallen in the contest?”
   5. We must be careful not to separate the death of Christ from His resurrection. Though each may bring distinct benefits, they go hand in hand.
   6. Romans 6:4 – “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”
5. Christ Ascended into Heaven
   1. “For although Christ, by rising again, began fully to display his glory and virtue, having laid aside the abject and ignoble condition of a mortal life, and the ignominy of the cross, yet it was only by his ascension to heaven that his reign truly commenced.”
   2. In the ascension, Christ shows forth His glory and power more fully. It is at the ascension that the Kingdom of God is truly inaugurated (Eph. 4:10).
   3. John 7:39 – “Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”
   4. John 16:7 – “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”
   5. “Being raised to heaven, he withdrew his bodily presence from our sight, not that he might cease to be with his followers, who are still pilgrims on the earth, but that he might rule both heaven and earth more immediately by his power; or rather, the promise which he made to be with us even to the end of the world, he fulfilled by this ascension, by which, as his body has been raised above all heavens, so his power and efficacy have been propagated and diffused beyond all the bounds of heaven and earth.”
6. Christ Seated at the Right Hand of the Father
   1. “He was installed in the government of heaven and earth, and formally admitted to possession of the administration committed to him, and not only admitted for once, but to continue until he descend to judgment.”
   2. Ephesians 1:22-23 – “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, **23**which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
   3. Philippians 2:9-11 – “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10**so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11**and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
   4. The purpose of the sitting is “that both heavenly and earthly creatures may look with admiration upon his majesty, be ruled by his hand, obey his nod, and submit to his power.”
   5. What is the benefit of Christ’s ascension and reign for us? “First, our faith understands that the Lord by His ascent to heaven opened the way into the Heavenly Kingdom, which had been closed through Adam. Secondly, as faith recognizes, it is to our great benefit that Christ resides with the Father. For, having entered a sanctuary not made with hands, He appears before the Father’s face as our constant advocate and intercessor. Thirdly, faith comprehends His might, in which reposes our strength, power, wealth, and glorying against hell. ‘When He ascended into heaven he led captivity captive’ [Eph. 4:8], and despoiling His enemies, He enriched His own people, and daily lavishes spiritual riches upon them.”
7. Christ Will Return as Judge
   1. “Faith is most properly invited to meditate on the visible presence which he will exhibit on the last day. For he will descend from heaven in visible form, in like manner as he was seen to ascend, and appear to all, with the ineffable majesty of his kingdom, the splendour of immortality, the boundless power of divinity, and an attending company of angels. Hence we are told to wait for the Redeemer against that day on which he will separate the sheep from the goats, and the elect from the reprobate, and when not one individual either of the living or the dead shall escape his judgment.”
   2. To unbelievers, this is a dreadful thought and sounds ominous. For believers, this is a wonderful consolation.
   3. “It is most consolatory to think, that judgment is vested in Him who has already destined us to share with him in the honour of judgment, (Matth. 19:28;) so far is it from being true, that He will ascend the judgment-seat for our condemnation. How could a most merciful prince destroy his own people? How could the head disperse its own members? How could the advocate condemn his clients? For if the Apostle, when contemplating the interposition of Christ, is bold to exclaim, “Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom. 8:33,) much more certain is it that Christ, the intercessor, will not condemn those whom He has admitted to his protection. It certainly gives no small security, that we shall be sisted [summoned to court] at no other tribunal than that of our Redeemer, from whom salvation is to be expected; and that he who in the Gospel now promises eternal blessedness, will then as judge ratify His promise.”
8. “Thus in all these phrases of the Apostles’ Creed, which sum up in so few words the main points of our salvation, we see that the whole of our redemption rests in Christ. No part of it has another source: our salvation is in His name; our gifts, in His anointing; our strength, in His dominion; our purity, in His conception; our gentleness, in His birth; our redemption, in His passion; our acquittal, in His condemnation; our remission from curse, in His cross; our satisfaction, in His sacrifice; our purification, in His blood; our reconciliation, in His descent into hell; our mortification of the flesh, in His tomb; our newness of life, in His resurrection; our immortality, in the same; our inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, in His entrance into heaven; our protection, security, abundant supply of all blessings, in His kingdom; our untroubled expectation of judgment, in His power given Him to judge.” --J. Mark Beach

**Chapter 17 – Christ is Rightly and Properly Said to Have Merited God’s Grace and Salvation For Us**

1. This chapter is rather technical and involves discussion of “merit” which involved theological debates of medieval theology and scholasticism. I will try to be brief and only mentioned what is beneficial for us.
2. For some, the idea of “merit” is opposed to “mercy” and so they want to avoid saying Christ merited [earned, be worthy of] salvation for us in His works. If there’s merit, there is no room for mercy.
3. “Inasmuch as Christ’s merit depends upon God’s grace alone, which has ordained this manner of salvation for us, it is just as properly opposed to all human righteousness as God’s grace is.”
4. In other words, God in His grace and mercy ordained that Christ would merit salvation for us by living the perfect life and humbling Himself to the point of death on the cross. We certainly do not merit God’s grace. We can’t earn His favor by our works. But Christ earned His favor for us and all under God’s decree of a Redeemer for His people.
5. “By His obedience, Christ truly acquired and merited grace for us with His Father. If as a righteous man He suffered for unrighteous men, then He acquired salvation for us by His righteousness, which is tantamount to deserving it. God, to whom we were hateful because of sin, was appeased by the death of His Son to become favorable toward us.”