

# THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

## WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

### QUESTION # 71.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #71. *How is justification an act of God's free grace?*

A. Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in the behalf of them that are justified;<sup>1</sup> yet in as much as God accepteth the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them, and did provide this surety, his own only Son,<sup>2</sup> imputing his righteousness to them,<sup>3</sup> and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith,<sup>4</sup> which also is his gift,<sup>5</sup> their justification is to them of free grace.<sup>6</sup>

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Question 1—*Did Christ make a proper, real and full satisfaction to the justice of God in behalf of those justified?*

*Answer*—Christ wrought for us a righteousness, as a surety, by performing active and passive obedience, which makes a real and full satisfaction to the justice of God, Rom. 5:8-10. This is imputed to us for our justification and wrought in our own persons by a surety who performs all that is necessary for our justification, Rom. 5:19; such is our Lord Jesus Christ of whose suretyship several things must be considered:

*First*, what a surety is, since it is under this relation that the righteousness of Christ is made the matter of our justification, Heb. 7:22. Now, a surety is one who submits to be charged with, and undertakes to pay, a debt contracted by another, to the end the debtor be discharged, Gen. 43:9. Thus the apostle Paul engages to be surety to Philemon for Onesimus, who had fled from Philemon whom he had wronged or injured, and to whom he was in consequence indebted, Philem. 18. Furthermore, suretyship must be undertaken voluntarily, which he did, Heb. 10:9; and by one with a capacity to pay the debt, otherwise the surety might bring ruin upon himself, Prov. 22:26, 27. Moreover, the surety is supposed to be one that has not contracted the debt and, therefore, the creditor has no demands on him, Gen. 44:32, 33. This suretyship is established by covenant, Job 17:3; Prov. 6:1-3.

*Second*, that Christ as a surety was such for us, or substituted in our room, with a design to pay the debt which was due to the justice of God, Matt. 20:28. He was not rendered incapable of paying our debt, or of answering for the guilt which men had contracted in Adam, nor by any debt of his own, Heb. 7:26. Christ did not offer any injury to justice by performing any service which he had no warrant to do, for he paid in the human nature, which was his own, the full measure of the debt, 1 Tim. 2:5, 6. Additionally, this substitution was accepted and approved by him to whom the debt is due, the Father, who gave many

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 5:8-10, 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 10:10; Matt. 20:28; Dan. 9:24, 26; Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12; Heb. 7:22; Rom. 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 5:21.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 3:24, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. 2:8.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. 1:7.

undeniable evidences that what Christ did and suffered for us was acceptable in the Redeemer, Isa. 42:1, 21. Therefore, speaking of him before the Incarnation, it is clear he was anointed and separated to this work, Isa. 61:1, 2. Thus, when he was solemnly set apart by baptism to this public ministry, a voice from heaven spoke, Matt. 3:17.

*Third*, that Christ, as our surety, did pay all that debt which the justice of God demanded from us, and which consisted in active and passive obedience, Isa. 53:4-12. There was a debt of active obedience demanded of man as a creature, Rom. 2:13; and upon his failing to pay it, when he sinned, it became an outstanding debt due from us, which Christ paid, John 8:29; Rom. 5:19. There is also that passive obedience, whereby he is said to have suffered in our room and stead, John 10:18. Both of these ideas are joined by the apostle in one thought, Phil. 2:8. In his suretyship, Christ has received the charge of our guilt and sin imputed to himself that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, Gal. 3:13.

*Fourth*, this righteousness of Christ's suretyship is imputed for our justification, Heb. 10:10. By *imputation*, we may mean that accounting or approving of actions as righteous which might not otherwise be so accounted, Ps. 106:31. It also may signify those actions done by a person whereby that person might be made liable to just punishment, 2 Sam. 19:19; thus, Stephen prays that certain actions be not imputed, Acts 7:60. However, in the case of our justification, imputation is to be understood in a forensic sense whereby Christ, having discharged our debt, is now reckoned to constitute the righteousness of sinners, 2 Cor. 5:21. His fulfilling of the law is placed to our account and his righteousness, which he has as the result of his own performances, is made ours for justification, Rom. 8:3, 4. Christ, therefore, performed obedience for us, and accordingly God deals with us as if we had fulfilled the law in our own persons, inasmuch as it was fulfilled by him as our surety, Rom. 8:32.

This surety has been provided most freely by God in the person of his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Dan. 9:24, 26; who alone was able to meet the righteous requirements of fulfilling this law in all of its demands, 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

Question 2—*How is this righteousness received?*

*Answer*—Fallen man, being wholly unable by his fallen state to render any righteousness acceptable in the sight of God, Isa. 57:12; he could not bring himself from a state of sin to salvation again, Hos. 4:19. Nor is it possible that men be justified through the suffering of the punishment due to sin because of the infinite evil of it and the eternal duration of the punishment which it deserves, Matt. 5:26, 27. Even those works wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost fall far short of the perfection required for a righteousness of our own, Job 9:2, 3, 30-32.

It is not our works, even done after regeneration, that form the ground of our righteousness or of the righteousness that is received, Tit. 3:5. Instead, what is required for justification is faith, Rom. 3:24, 25. This faith is that which makes an appropriation, or receiving, of the righteous performances of Christ upon which may be made to stand all of hopes before the tribunal of a righteous and holy God, Phil. 3:9. It is by faith, then, that Christ is made that (that is, it is imputed) end of the law which will endure the fires of divine judgment, Rom. 10:4. Additionally, this faith, which is saving faith, is itself not the work or effort of the sinner but the result of the influences of the Spirit of grace, Eph. 2:8. Finally, we must note that in this whole exchange, this double imputation, there is no necessity on Christ to suffer nor upon the Father to accept this atonement in the stead of his people but all flows from the free grace and mercy of God alone, Eph. 1:7.