

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 37

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 37: *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?*

ANSWER: The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united in Christ, do rest in their graves, till the resurrection.

MONDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 73C

Scripture: Read Philippians 1:19-26

Key Thought: *For the believer, death is gain.*

Questions:

- ☞ Do people tend to think of death as a gain or a loss? Why?
- ☞ How could Paul say that for him, to die is gain?
- ☞ Can you say with Paul, "For to me, to live is Christ"? What does this mean?
- ☞ What was Paul's struggle in these verses? How did he resolve it?
- ☞ How does the believer's understanding of death help him to face the difficulties of this life and to counsel others?

Prayer

Notes: Having discussed the several benefits that those who are effectually called receive in this life, the *Catechism* now proceeds to examine the benefits that believers receive at death. It seems odd to the world to speak of death as a means of benefit, but such is the certain hope of believers in Christ! Discuss with your children the statement of Paul in Philippians 1:21 that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Show them that there is a connection between how we live in this life and what expectation we have at death. If we live this life for something other than Christ we have good reason to fear that at death we will suffer loss. But if Christ is our life, then death can only bring us closer to Him. Challenge your children to look at their own lives to see if they would be able to truly say, "for me to live is Christ." If the power of Christ is the principle of your life, the glory of Christ the purpose of your life, and the presence of Christ the joy of your life, then you may confidently conclude that to die will be great gain, for you will see Him face to face who has been your life.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 73C

Scripture: Read Isaiah 57:1-2; 1 John 3:1-3

Key Thought: *At death, believers are made perfect in holiness.*

Questions:

- ☞ What do we call the process of being made more and more holy?
- ☞ Do believers ever reach a point of perfect holiness in this life?
- ☞ When are we made perfect in holiness?
- ☞ Can there be any imperfection or sin in the presence of God?
- ☞ What troubles and difficulties of this life are you anxious to leave behind when you get to heaven? Did you mention sin?
- ☞ If we have the hope of seeing Jesus as He is, what does John say we will be doing now? How are you seeking to purify yourself?

Prayer

Notes: The first benefit that believers receive at death is the perfection of holiness. The final completion of our sanctification should be the benefit that our hearts most anxiously seek. The work of God's Spirit, making us more and more conformed to the image of Christ, is never complete as long as we live in this world. But when we reach heaven, every impurity and sin must be left behind, since no imperfection can stand in the presence of God. The Bible does not tell us how this glorious change will take place, but it gives us the assurance that it will certainly happen. Ask your children what troubles and difficulties of this life they are anxious to leave behind when they get to heaven. They may mention sickness, weariness, conflict, hunger, or sadness. Show them that the thing we ought to be most anxious to leave behind is sin itself, which is the root cause of every other problem this world contains. Finally, point out to your children that John exhorts those who have the hope of glory to be purifying themselves as they wait for Jesus to be revealed. Ask them to think about how they should be purifying themselves and counsel them to pursue purity in thought, word and deed.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 73C

Scripture: Read Luke 23:39-43; Hebrews 12:22-24

Key Thought: *At death, believers immediately pass into glory.*

Questions:

- ☞ Where did Jesus tell the repentant thief He was going?
- ☞ Where did the body of Jesus go on the day He died?
- ☞ How could Jesus have gone to Paradise that day?
- ☞ Where did Paul say his spirit would go if he died? (see 2 Cor. 5:8)
- ☞ Why do we refer to the state of those who die before the Final Coming of

Christ as the “intermediate state”?

- ☞ How do the verses above refute the error of “soul sleep” which teaches that the spirits of those who die (both believers and unbelievers) fall into an unconscious state until Jesus returns?

Prayer

Notes: The main concern of this question of the *Shorter Catechism* is to explain what happens during the so-called “intermediate state.” The term “intermediate state” refers to the experience of those who die prior to the Final Coming of Christ, which is different from this earthly life, but is not yet the fullness of glory that will be revealed when Jesus returns. The intermediate state involves the temporary separation of the spirit/soul from the body, which happens at death. The body of the dead person remains on earth and begins to decay, but where does the soul go? According to the Bible and the *Shorter Catechism*, the souls of believers immediately pass into glory. This can be clearly seen in the words of Jesus to the repentant thief on the cross. Show your children that Jesus told the thief that He was going somewhere called “Paradise” that day. Since the body of Jesus was taken away and buried, we know that Jesus was speaking of His soul. We also know that Jesus promised the former thief that he would also be with Him in the place He was going that very day. By this we know that the spirit, or soul of Jesus (and of the repentant thief) went directly into the presence of God when they died. Remember that Jesus prayed, “Father, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit.” There is much that is unknown about both the intermediate state and the final state of believers. We do know, however, that the intermediate state for believers is a conscious state of joy and deliverance from earthly sorrows in which the spirits of just men made perfect delight in the presence of God.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 73C

Scripture: Read Job 19:23-27; 1 Corinthians 15:35-46

Key Thought: *The bodies of believers rest in Christ till the resurrection.*

Questions:

- ☞ What happens to the body after death? Is it forgotten by God?
- ☞ What did Job believe would happen to his body someday?
- ☞ What will happen to our bodies on the last great day?
- ☞ Will they be the same bodies we have now?
- ☞ How will they be different?
- ☞ Should this knowledge affect how you treat your body now?

Prayer

Notes: There is a tendency among Christians to concentrate so much on the importance of spiritual things that they lose sight of the fact that God has a plan and

purpose for His physical creation as well. This includes our physical bodies. It was part of the heresy of Gnosticism to regard the body as inherently evil and the spirit alone as worthy of attention. Use the discussion questions to help your children understand that the body is God's creation as well as the spirit and that He does not merely discard the body at death. Job expressed the confidence that one day he would see God "in his flesh" and with his own physical eyes. This hope of the transformation and perfection of the body was an encouragement to Job in the midst of great physical suffering. We will have the same bodies we have now for all eternity, but they will be changed into perfect bodies, specifically equipped to enjoy heaven to the fullest. Likewise, the bodies of those who perish apart from Christ will be uniquely suited to experience eternal torment without breaking down or being consumed. Discuss with your children how this truth should affect us now.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 73C

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:1-11; Hebrews 9:27

Key Thought: *All will one day be raised either to gain or loss.*

Questions:

- ☪ How long do the bodies of believers rest in their graves?
- ☪ Who must appear before the judgment seat of Christ?
- ☪ How great is the gain of the godly on that day?
- ☪ How great is the loss of the wicked?
- ☪ How should we respond to this knowledge? (see 2 Cor. 5:11)

Prayer

Notes: What follows the intermediate state is the general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Since the *Catechism* is discussing the benefits that come to believers, it speaks of the resting of the bodies of believers until the resurrection. Nevertheless, the Scriptures assure us that all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, whether good or bad. On that Day, the gain of those who are in Christ will be great indeed, as their bodies are transformed and fitted for eternal glory and they are filled with joy in seeing their beloved Savior face to face. But the loss of the wicked will be indescribably great as well. They will lose the world, heaven, and their very souls. All hope will be lost forever. This knowledge should move us to fervent evangelism and careful obedience.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.