

Canons of Dort: 2nd Head, Articles 5-7-Getting the Benefits of the Atonement

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: Christ's atonement for sinful man was necessary, as man could not save himself. Christ's atonement for sinful man was sufficient so man does not need anything more to be saved other than Jesus' substitutionary (vicarious) atonement.

But **how do you get the benefits of Christ's atonement?** After all, **all don't get it.** **Those who rejected the atonement and died in their sins are screaming in the terrors of hell** even now, while **those who receive the atonement and died are in the presence of Jesus Christ** even now. You will hear today how we get the benefits of Christ's atonement.

Our headings are:

You must proclaim the atonement for all

If you reject it you are damned

If you accept it you are saved

Our goals are: **That you will learn the value of the Gospel which condemns the wicked but offers salvation through Christ's atonement, and you will then proclaim that Gospel to the world.**

You must Proclaim the atonement for all

Article 5: The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All - Moreover, it is the promise of the gospel that **whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life.** This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, **ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations** and people, to whom God in good pleasure sends the gospel.

1. Christians, one and all, should work for the proclamation of the message of the atonement of Jesus to the entire world.

Arminians say Reformed Christians who believe in election, don't need to preach anymore. **False! God works election through the Word of God being proclaimed.** And **the atonement is central in the preaching of God's Word.** "How anyone believe without a preacher?" Romans 10. The preacher's feet are beautiful!

Isaiah 52:7 How **beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news,** who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things...

It is true that Reformed people are sometimes reluctant to evangelized, but that is our sin; that is not the teaching of God's Word.

2. As an example of the necessity of proclamation of the atonement, consider God had one begotten Son and he sent him as a missionary to preach.

Jesus was even called the "Word of God." (John 1).

Mathew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 **"teaching them to observe all things** that I have commanded you...

Then Jesus sent out his disciples to preach.

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

You saw in Joel 2 the word "teacher" is the same for showers of blessings. Blessings come through preaching the Good News.

3. And remember the rule about preaching: If you can't go, send; send missionaries with your money and your prayers and encouragement.

Don't say you have a missionary if you don't do at least one of these things for him. Yes, if you are able, **financially support** him. How about sending **an e-mail of encouragement?** You don't even have to write letters as in the old days and hope they arrive. Don't let a day go by without **praying** for at least 1 missionary. Use the newsletters we distribute so you can pray with knowledge.

If you reject it you are damned

Article 6: Unbelief, a Human Responsibility: However, **though many who have been called through the gospel do not repent or believe in Christ but perish in unbelief,** this is not because the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross is deficient or insufficient, but because **they themselves are at fault.**

1. God calls mankind through his Word to turn to him and be saved, but some, of their own sinful desires, reject his call, so they are condemned to hell.

Look at one of the worst examples of this.

Matthew 27:22 Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" 23 Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" 24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "**I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.** You see to it." **25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."**

The Jews rejected him to their own loss and they even called on the Lord to reject their children. Look at another example of what Jesus said to Nicodemus, the church ruler.

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he **who does not believe is condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil.

Even the spiritual leaders lacked the knowledge of the necessity of the atonement and were leading their fellow Jews to hell.

2. Why is it some reject the Gospel and the vicarious atonement of Jesus for sinners?

They simply don't want salvation. Even some raised in the church don't want salvation. (Just saw a photo of a man with a poster that said: Send Jesus, so we'll kill him again. He clearly rejected Jesus and wanted him dead. He wasn't thinking of the benefits of the atonement.) So some aren't saved because they don't want to be. **So they cannot in all honesty blame God for them going to hell.**

So don't be surprised if some reject the message of Christ's work. You should not be surprised that Muslims or Hindus or atheists or Buddhists reject the Gospel. It is the condition of the heart. They reject it because they don't want it and **rob themselves of salvation.** Be patient, pray for, and preach to them.

3. Others accept the atonement of Jesus for sins, but they reject definite atonement (that Christ died only for his chosen people) because they think definite atonement is unfair - unjust.

But definite atonement does not mean the atonement is kept from the non-elect. **The key is how the non-believer responds to preaching about the atonement!** He rejects it. If he receives it, he is saved. It's not God's fault. Look again:

Hebrews 3:7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, **if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,** In the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. 10 Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, '**They shall not enter My rest.**'"

Those who reject definite atonement **rob themselves of the fullness of God's love.** God did not rob them.

4. Seeing the hopelessness of man without the atonement of Jesus, what are some implications for you?

Shouldn't you be moved with compassion for the lost? Shouldn't you reject imitation evangelism for the full Gospel? Shouldn't you reject the social Gospel for the full Gospel? Should you reject friendship evangelism for the full Gospel? **How about inviting and maybe picking up others so they can come and hear the wonder of Christ's atonement?**

5. You should be careful with your relationships with Arminians – avoid marriages with them, for instance.

Life will become very difficult if you differ on fundamental doctrines. (Disagreement on less important doctrines are less troublesome.) But if you disagree on important things, your worship will be different. Your love for God will be different. If you don't know the greatness of God's love, you will never be able to love him back properly. If a husband and wife view the atonement differently, how can they have the same zeal for the Lord? One may love evangelism and one might be indifferent!

If you accept it you are saved

Article 7: Faith, a Gift of God - But all who **genuinely believe** and are delivered and saved by Christ's death from their sins and from destruction **receive this favor solely from God's grace**—which God owes to no one—given to them in Christ from eternity.

1. Those who receive by faith the atonement of Jesus as their own (and show faith's effect by their lives), are saved.

Christ's died in your place. He fully propitiated God's anger. He fully expiated your sins. He fully reconciled you to his Father. There is no other way to be saved. **Your neighbor might be really nice, but she is not saved except through Christ's atonement.** She could give money to charity, help orphans around the world, dig wells, and raise her children well, but without the atonement, she will go to hell.

2. But you are not to take credit for the fact you believe and are saved by Christ's atonement, because, after all, even your ability to believe comes from God.

It is a gift. It is not in you. It is not natural. You are a natural rebel without God.

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Apostle Paul put it bluntly to the Corinthians: They were useless without Christ.

1Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, **why do you boast as if you had not received it?**

3. More important that digging wells and caring for lepers is the need to bring the message of Christ's vicarious atonement to a lost world.

This must be your priority. **If you think like Arminians, however, your emphasis will be on improving living conditions with the hope that people will get morally better and then choose Christ when they have a life of ease.** (This is provably false.) This ignores that nature of the sinful beast in man without Christ. This is the view of liberal Christians. They want equal pay, an end to racism, improved economic opportunities, after-school programs for youths, even preferential treatment, as if these were magical pills that would make the sinful hearts better. But throughout history the church thrived when isolated from businesses, when justice was denied, when they were poor, when there was slavery, and when there was political upheaval. So while it is good to have some of those social issues fixed, they are not the Gospel!

Do you see how doctrines can influence missions and missions' strategy? This is why missions have changed so much in churches with weak doctrines. And when one combines poor doctrine with ill-equipped people, like the student missionary movement of the 1800's, weak churches arise...and less praise goes up to heaven. We then minimize the work of Christ's vicarious atonement!

Conclusion:

Some do not get the benefits of Christ's atonement because they don't want it. But many get the benefits of Christ's atonement when they receive it by faith – a faith that God gives through the hearing and believing of his Word. This atonement, once received, can never be diminished or removed. It saves forever.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. What wondrous love...what wondrous love God has shown to you in the atonement of Jesus Christ!

2. How then do you respond? Love him. How do you love him? You obey his laws with heart, mind, and strength! You worship him. You pray to him. You teach others about him.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, I warn you: There is no hope without the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. May this warning cause you to call to God in heaven to accept Christ's atonement as yours. Then you will have eternal life.