

Text: Psalm 130, Hebrews 10:1-18, HK Lord's Day 5

Theme: Reconciliation with God is only possible through complete satisfaction.

5 Why all the questions of Lord's Day 5?

It all sounds so logical. Man, with his mental reasoning, seems to be leading the way here.

As if with our logic, we want to invent and work out the path of salvation.

10 As if man, via his human logic, would have to get to the Christ.

Everything follows each other logically?

Is that why Lord's Day 5 asks and answers all the questions?

15 No. Lord's Day 5 is a confession, not a wise argument.

This is our confession, the confession of believers.

The questions are posed by people who already confessed in Lord's Day 1:

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My only comfort is that I belong with body and soul to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

So we don't get to Christ via our human reasoning.

We start from Christ, also in Lord's Day 5.

But then why all the questions?

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Starting from the Christ, we want to discover which path God has followed in his love.

Not to satisfy one's own curiosity or logic, but to praise God in his works.

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The catechism draws deeply from the Scriptures from the beautiful lines and structure of God's redemptive work.

We see that in his redemptive work, God did not act arbitrarily.

Nor hard-hearted and loveless.

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No, the very love of God led him to follow this unprecedented path.

Thus, the majesty of our unchanging, faithful Covenant God shines.

40 The questions and answers of Lord's Day 5 keep us from a cheap
religiosity and from a humanistic hollowing out of the gospel.

For many people, salvation has indeed become a cheap
affair.

How many people there are who don't take serious what
Scripture says about the road and the price of salvation.

45 They don't want to know about it.

Let the theologians just pick it out and fight it out, it
is sometimes said.

Among the theologians, one hears the strangest and
most contradictory thoughts about it.

50 In their confusion and indifference, many people
have learned to simply read and imitate Scripture.

The saviour became inexpensive and cheap.

People no longer see how miraculous God's
redemptive work is.

55 They also no longer realize the majesty of
our faithful Covenant God.

Therefore, full of wonder and worship, let us follow the unprecedented path of our Creator and Savior.

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HC Lord's Day 5 teaches us: reconciliation with God is possible only through complete satisfaction

We have to pay: it's the justice of God's love

We can't pay: it's the depth of our inability

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God himself takes care of payment: it's the miracle of God's grace.

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The answer of the first question seems very disappointing.

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We are asked how we could escape from punishment and be accepted back into grace.

In the answer, we are referred only to God's righteousness.

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"God wills that His justice be satisfied; therefore, we must make full satisfaction to that justice, either by ourselves or by another."

Whatever way, we must pay.

Someone must pay.

Isn't that hard and unloving?

80 A lot of people want to make us believe that.

They just want to hear of a dear Lord. God is love, is the slogan.

After all, a God who is one and all love cannot be angry, wrathful and punishing?

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Yet the full payment has everything to do with God's love.

This is the justice of God's love.

Do not think negatively about compliance or payment.

90 Already in paradise, therefore, before the Fall, there was talk of payment.

Compliance means that, in a covenant, the parties of the covenant wants to give to each other over and over again what the other has a right to.

95 As in a marriage. You give love to each other over and over again.

So compliance is that you keep the agreements, that you give the other what is due to him or her.

That you make each other happy, satisfied.

100 In the covenant, it is a matter of love and reciprocal love.

So it's nothing negative.

It's not a question of coercion.

In the covenant God pays us what is due to us according to his promises and we must then give to God what is his due. This is
105 just and right.

This is the love service to which both parties of the covenant have committed themselves to in love.

God gives Himself in love. He unlocks his heart.

We may plead on the word of love; we may also demand
110 love as well.

But for his part, God himself also asks of us reciprocal love.

True love asks for love in return.

So the payment in the covenant is nothing negative. It's a positive,
115 glorious affair.

Both parties fulfill their love obligations.

God demands that we pay.

After the Fall, the right and justice of God's love remained the same.

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Only, the demand has become much heavier for us.
We made the debt.

The debt now also must be paid.

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Therefore, after the Fall, it is not sufficient that we show only the love of God again, we must also settle the debt by bearing the deserved punishment.

We broke things. We must restore the scorned right of God's love, and pay it in full.

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We should not think that we can be delivered in such a way that God who is love wants to forgive everything by Himself.

All the talk about mercy without considering the scorned right is nonsensical. God is the hurt party.

I reproached His love.

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Now, if I had inflicted violence on His love, would God

Himself have to do violence to it, by applying grace to justice?

Our God who loves with eternal love is thankfully different.

140 He stays true to His word.

The redemption, then, cannot be contrary to his right and justice.

Zion will be redeemed by righteousness, says the Lord.

145 If God were to declare the culprit righteous, by overlooking the guilt, then God would no longer be God, He would rather be like a sinful, unfaithful son of man.

150 No, the reconciliation can only take place along the path of compliance.

If you want to be in covenant communion with God again, then you will first have to lay on the table exactly what God's love demands.

155 You will have to settle the debt and give the reciprocal love.

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Here, then, are we, brothers and sisters, before that depth of our inability.

We cannot pay for ourselves.

160 Yes, that's easier said than that it's actually experienced by us.

The answer of the Catechism sounds so familiar and self-evident:

165 Can we pay by ourselves? No, not at all; We are increasing our guilt every day.

Was it just so obvious in our life.

Our natural desire is to each pay for ourselves.

170 How easily we fall into the pitfall of thinking that we ourselves can contribute to our salvation.

After a sad failure, we decide to do our best to win God's favour again, as if I could be accepted back into grace by my religiosity, my good works, my zeal and effort.

175 How easily we do not rely on ourselves, on our inputs and achievements?

We can sometimes seem such self-confident beings that it seems that we are always doing everything right, as if Christ is not needed, as if we can indeed pay for ourselves.

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Just look at how I am and what I've done!

At the same time, we can be so judgmental and harsh on others.

Condemning others is easy.

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Yet let me take a look at myself in the light of God's word. And hear God's judgment on myself.

Do we not confess according to Scripture that we cannot pay by ourselves at all?

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We are increasing our guilt every day.

So I can't pay for myself, but I make my debt even bigger every day.

Is this reality for you?

Do you believe what you profess?

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The history of humanity is characterized by the efforts to solve the problem of sin itself.

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The Old Testament people of God repeatedly relied on the temple, on the sacrifices, on their rituals, on their lineage instead of on God.

The Pharisees set up a rigorous help-yourself-program for salvation.

Saul thought he was gaining the favour of God by persecuting the Christians with full zeal and all his might.

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Later, by God's grace, he learned to exchange his own righteousness for the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

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In the days when the Heidelberg Catechism was being drafted, the Reformers had to protest against the church's misplaced reliance on good works as a means of salvation.

In our time, there is the gospel of self-improvement.

It is held that positive thinking can overcome our sin and weakness.

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There are techniques we could learn that would bring us peace and happiness.

However, brothers and sisters, boys and girls, every form of do-it-yourself religion will fail.

We are spiritually dead by nature.

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Can a dead person bring himself to life?

All the efforts we ourselves have devised to pay for our sins never get off the ground.

If God were to leave us to ourselves, we would continue to pile up even more debt each day.

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Thus the question returns: Can we pay by ourselves? Can we pay for ourselves the debt that God's right demands?

Those who refuse to take their sins seriously think: Yes, of course, we can pay for ourselves. We're right.

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The true believer confesses: No, not at all; We are increasing our debt every day.

We can't pay our own bill.

We cannot buy ourselves into the kingdom of God.

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Any good things I do are ultimately the work of God Himself.

Without his grace, I could never have done good works.

And how often do I spoil the good things God works in my life?

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The writer of Psalm 130 knows the depth of his own inability.

The Psalm is a penitential psalm, a psalm of humiliation.

The author calls from the depths.

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"Depths," these are all the places where man sinks away, all the situations we can't handle, all the places where we can't find any solid ground beneath our feet.

It is like the writer of Psalm 69 exclaims:

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"Deliver me, O God, for the waters have come to my neck. I sink into bottomless mud where there is no stand....Rescue me from the mud and do not let me sink; let me be saved from my haters and from the depths of water. Let not the

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*stream of water run over me, nor the depths
devour me, nor let the well shut its mouth above
me!"*

In other words: the writer feels himself hopelessly lost; he sinks ever deeper into the misery.

It's like he was executed in quicksand.

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If the LORD does not intervene and pull him out of misery, he is lost.

Psalm 40 describes such a salvation by the LORD in a pictorial way:

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*"1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure." (Psalm 40:1-2).*

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So, on the one hand, there are the depths into which one sinks.

On the other hand, there is a rock on which one stands.

God gives solid ground under your feet again.

275 The writer of Psalm 130 cries out to the Lord from the brokenness
of his existence.

What, then, is worst for the Psalmist?

Not the brokenness of his life, the sickness, the pain and
grief,

280 but his sinfulness, his iniquities.

In the brokenness he sees the hand of the LORD that brings
him into the depths because of human guilt.

So he cries out: "³ *If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?*"

285 For the Psalmist the deepest depth, is the depth of sin
and guilt.

Daniel also prayed from the depths of guilt.

How deep did God's people not sink then? Bottomlessly deep
290 was Jerusalem's fall.

What was all this due to? What else but to Israel's
iniquities?

They sank into a quagmire of injustices. God's curse came upon them.

295 So Daniel confesses: "⁷ *To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, ... because of the treachery that they have committed against you.* ⁸ *To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.* " (Daniel
300 9:7,8).

"Because we have sinned against you," yes whoever confesses this, knows that he has sunk deeply,

he also knows that if the LORD keeps in mind the iniquity, it is done.

305 Then the pit of perdition closes above everyone's head, then everything and everybody sinks away into the lake of perdition.

Thus we hear the writer of Psalm 130 saying: *If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?*
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Here the writer does not play only with the thought.

Here he acknowledged the majesty of the Covenant God.

If Thou, faithful God, keep the injustices in mind, then it is done with each of us.

315 Thou are the God of life and death.

 Woe to me if Thee continue to hold my sins
 against me.

The psalmist realizes his sinfulness and guilt, that is profound for him.

320 He faces the abyss of his own inability.

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What's it like with you, brother and sister?

325 Are you still fully aware of the depth of your guilt?

Do you still realize your total inability to save yourself from the pit?

 Through the brokenness of life, God keeps reminding me.

330 Or do I no longer hear God's voice in it?

 Or has it become insensitive and superficial?

Or have I become so accustomed to sin that I don't even see my guilt and inability anymore.

335 Let's apply it:

How sensitive are we to our sin?

Is there still with you the feeling of guilt and unhappiness when you realize that you have transgressed against the holiness of the LORD?

340 Or have we gotten dulled? Have we de-sensitized our consciences?

Let God, through His words and works, make you aware of the depth of your guilt and inability.

345 Just look at the great wonder of Christ's redemptive work.

It does have to permeate one with his own guilt and inability.

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350 The final thought of Lord's Day 5: God Himself takes care of payment- that's the miracle of God's grace.

We have to pay, it's the right of God's love.

But we can't: that's the depth of our inability.

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But can't any other creature pay for us then?

That road is also cut off.

The faithful Covenant God cannot punish another creature for the guilt made by man.

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Man was set as God's viceroy, his under-king over all creatures.

After all, you can't punish a subject for what the king did wrong?

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After all, you're not going to punish a servant for what his boss did wrong?

This would be contrary to God's justice and truth.

Man has sinned, man must pay.

370 Besides, every other creature remains but a creature after all. And
no creature, not even the faithful angels, are capable of bearing
the burden of the eternal wrath of God against sin and redeeming
other creatures from it.

375 Yes, a creature can indeed undergo wrath, but to pay, the
creature must also accomplish it; that is, bearing fully —
experiencing all the wrath of God in its complete fullness.

No creature can satisfy that.

No mere creature can bear eternal wrath.

380 Why, then, did God prescribe all the animal sacrifices in the Old
Testament?

Just think of the sacrifices on the great day of atonement that
were to make atonement for the people.

All those sacrifices could not truly reconcile.

385 They were merely reminders of sin and pointed to
the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God who had
come to take away the sin of the world.

All ways from below are therefore excluded.

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Salvation can only come from above, from God Himself.

The Psalmist had already sung of it:

*⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.*

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*⁸ And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.*

Yes, he himself will deliver Israel from all
its iniquities.

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Here the Old Testament believer already beautifully confesses that
salvation is exclusively the work of the LORD Himself.

The LORD Himself will work it.

With the strident conviction, the psalmist ends.

He puts an exclamation point behind God's
promises.

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God lets His word of salvation be heard.

Therefore: "⁵ *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;*"

God will make His word come true:

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Therefore: He Himself will deliver His people from all their sins.

Dear ones, this became full reality in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.

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Where the human sacrifices could not possibly take away sin, there God sent his Son, and there the Son offered himself:

"Behold, I come—in the scroll it is written of me—to do thy will, O God."

He took on our flesh and blood, truly became human, one of us.

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Zion will be redeemed by justice.

Man must pay. Look, here is the Man who can pay.

God and man in one person. God who appeared in the flesh.

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By the law of intercessory atonement, He can pay for you and me.

One for all.

As also before the fall Adam acted as one for all.

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So now Christ acts as the second Adam as one for
all who belong to Him.

In this way Christ's payment is my payment.

He has fulfilled the justice of God's love.

He paid it in full.

As our mediator and saviour.

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What a miracle of grace!

Who wouldn't be amazed?

Worship and adore your faithful Covenant God.

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Honour Him in His wonderful way of salvation, through
justice.

The unprecedented became truth.

The impossible, possible..

Not from below, but from above, from God Himself.

Soli Deo gloria!

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Glory to God alone!

AMEN