

New City Catechism

Question 19: Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?

Answer: Yes, God reconciles us to himself by a Redeemer.

Isaiah 53:10-11

There are two words in today's answer that we may not understand very well, even if we have heard them before, which two do you think they are? ("*reconciles*" and "*Redeemer*").

Let's look at the word "*reconciles*" (have someone look up the word in a dictionary and report the meaning). The word means bringing two parties together who were previously enemies, angry with each other or in a conflict of some kind.

In our question, who are the ones in conflict with each other that need to be reconciled? (*God and us*).

It is perhaps easy for us to understand that God would be angry with us because we have often disobeyed him. But have you ever been angry with God? When and why?

Read James 4:4 and Romans 8:7. Do you think these two verses ever describe you? (*They do, in fact. We demonstrate our hostility toward God every time we disobey him*).

Before we look at the word "*Redeemer*," who is the one in today's answer taking action to provide escape from punishment? (*God*). Who is the one doing the reconciling? (*God*). Who is being reconciled? (*us*). And who are we being reconciled to? (*God reconciles us to himself*).

Now review Q&A 18. Who is the one who will punish our disobedience and idolatry? (*God*)

So, God is the one we are in conflict with, who stands ready to punish our disobedience and idolatry and today's answer tells us God is the one taking action to provide an escape from punishment. Why do you think God would do this? (*Because he loves us and doesn't want to punish us*).

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Now let's look at the word "Redeemer." In biblical times the word was most often used in the slave market. To "redeem" meant to release a person from captivity or slavery. Usually this was done by paying a price—the market price of a slave was the cost of purchasing their freedom. Sometimes slaves could work and earn enough money to purchase their freedom. Other times someone else would purchase their freedom for them.

But to a Jew—a Hebrew, one of the "sons of Israel"—the word "redeemer" was part of their national heritage. If a "redeemer" was one who purchased freedom for slaves, what great story from the Old Testament would the word "redeemer" bring to their minds? (*The Exodus—where God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt*).

Read Isaiah 44:21-24. Who is called "Jacob" (*Israel. Jacob was the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. The man Jacob was also given the name "Israel"—thus the "sons of Israel" are, literally, the "sons of Jacob" and sometimes the whole people are all called "Jacob" as in this passage*).

Who is called Jacob's "Redeemer"? (*The LORD, who made all things [v.24]*).

Do you think you need a "redeemer"? Why or why not? (*For further study, see Galatians 3:13 and look at what Christ has redeemed believers from—note the connection to the law, which we have broken and so are under its curse*).

Read our Q&A again. What do you think the next question in our catechism will be? (*Who is the Redeemer?—which, of course, it is! But we will look at that next week*).

Pray and thank God that he took action to reconcile us, who were his enemies, to himself and thank him for providing a Redeemer for us.

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