

Of Christ the Mediator (Part 4)

Heb 10:1-18; WCF 8.4

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 9 June 2019, 16:30

(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)¹

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The WCF 8.4 is almost an exact copy of the middle section of the Apostles' Creed!

Yes, it summarises for us articles 4 through to 7 of the creed – those articles that deal with our Lord Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and return!

Well, from these, I have gleaned five points to study & reflect upon.

Here's the first one...

Willing Mediator

My brother & sister, here's a question: Was our Lord Jesus *willing* to be Mediator between God and us? Did the Son of God *willingly* come into our world – born from a woman, and to ultimately suffer that horrible physical & emotional pain? Did He do this *willingly* and with a *clear understanding* of all the pain He would bear for all God's loved ones?

You see, if the Son would not have willingly filled this office of Mediator between God and man – but if it was forced upon Him against His will – then where would heart conviction and love for God have come in? Yes, where would the second Adam's own will have come in – His own will to, from His heart, do what the first Adam was unable to do – i.e. to not show mere cold robotic obedience to the Law of God, but to obey God because you want to – and want to do that willingly and from your heart?²

So, did Christ *willingly* take up the office of Mediator?

Well, the answer is, "Yes, He *did* it willingly and with full understanding of all the consequences – and out of a loving obedience for His Father; and out of love for you & me!"

But where does the Bible tell us that He was so willing & so understanding of the cost?

Well, our NT passage makes it clear, doesn't it?

You see, Heb 10:5-12 interprets for us the meaning of Psalm 40!

Do you remember what Ps 40 says?

Well, with the light of the Holy Spirit, the author of Ps 40 came to the conclusion that the ongoing sacrifices offered daily in the temple were not sufficient. This he says in Ps 40:6.³

¹ In writing this sermon, I am greatly indebted to my two main sources whose guidance I appreciate: 1) Van Dixhoorn, Chad. 2014. *Confessing the Faith: a reader's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Carlisle, PA : The Banner of Truth Trust. 484p.

2) Sproul, R.C. 2006. *The truth we confess*. (In: Sproul, R.C. ed. *Truths we confess: a layman's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith – in three volumes*. Vol. I (chapters 1-8 of the Confession) Phillipsburg, NJ : P&R Publishing. 279p.).

Many words & phrases I have written, I have gladly borrowed with great thankfulness from this source.

² A.A. Hodge says that Christ had to take up this office voluntarily, "1) Because otherwise, being absolute God, it could never have been imposed upon Him. 2) Because otherwise, obedience and suffering could not have vicariously availed us. 3) Because otherwise, the execution of the law upon Him would have been outrageously unjust..." (Hodge, A.A. 1961. *The Confession of Faith: a handbook of Christian Doctrine expounding the Westminster Confession*. London : The Banner of Truth Trust. p.144)

³ Ps 40:6 ***In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.*** Note that Ps 40:6 says, "...You have given me an open ear..." while Heb 10:5 says, "...but a body You have prepared for Me." These two versions are in perfect harmony, because both mean *obedience to God*. The person in Ps 40:6 says that God has given him an open ear (i.e. obedience), and

Then, suddenly, someone whose coming had been long-promised now comes and says in Ps 40:7-8 that *he* is coming, and that *he* would obey God; in fact, that he would *delight* to do God's will!⁴ What's more, this person whom the author of Hebrews identifies with Christ, also adds that, in order to do God's will, God had prepared for Him not just a willing *ear* (as the psalmist had said), but a whole willing *body* which He would employ in doing God's will!

Says the author of Hebrews: "...*when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'*"

See how the Son was *willing* to be Mediator between God and man? See how He knew that God did not desire ongoing burnt offerings, but that God had prepared for Him a human body⁵ to be the ultimate, complete & final sacrifice?

So, it's clear: the Son was willing and He knew the full consequences of His office as Mediator!

Remember also how His willingness shone forth in what He said in Jn 10:17-18, "*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.*"⁶

See why the WCF 8.4 says, "*This office the Lord Jesus most willingly undertook...* "?

But then the WCF 8.4 adds, "...*and in order to discharge its obligations (the obligations of this office) he was born under the law and perfectly fulfilled it*"?

Indeed, the Bible does say – in Gal 4:4 – that the Son of God was "born under the Law."⁷ Wow!

Do you & I understand what this means?

Just think with me: Is it not so that, from all eternity past, the *moral* law was designed to reflect God's (and the *Son's*) own perfect character!?! Yet now, the Second Person of the Trinity comes and places Himself under all the obligations of this moral law. And it is not as if He placed Himself under this law just in His *divine* nature! No, He placed Himself under this law even in His frail *human* nature with all its limitations – limitations like the need for sleep, the need to be fed; the reality of feeling pain and sadness! So, Jesus placed Himself under the *moral* law!

But what about the *ceremonial* law – yes, all the food laws re uncleanness, all the laws re washing & purity, all the laws re feasts and festivals and re sacrificial practices?

the person in Heb 10:5 says that God has given him not just an open ear (not just one single obedient part of the body), but a whole body to give obediently to the service of God. On this explanation, cf. e.g. KISTEMAKER, S.J. 2004. Exposition of the epistle to the Hebrews (In: Hendriksen, W. & Kistemaker, S.J. eds. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books. p.275).

⁴ Ps 40:7-8 *Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."*

⁵ Which would of course also include a human a soul

⁶ Emphasis mine

⁷ Gal 4:4, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...*

Well, amazing! The One who is wisdom itself, now willingly accepts the instruction of the *ceremonial* law! What's more, the One who was life itself, submitted to the curse and horror of the *sacrificial* law – seeing it in the temple, and ending it on the cross!⁸

So, our willing and gracious Saviour perfectly fulfilled God's law through all His life on earth!

Where do we see samples of His obedience to the law?

Well, firstly, there where He insisted to be baptised by John the Baptist⁹ – not as a sign of the washing away of *His* sins, for He had no sin, but as a sign of the washing away of the sins of all His loved ones – yes, all their sins which He had willingly taken upon Himself!

Do you want to see another sample/example of His perfect fulfilment of the law? Well, then remember that moment on the cross when He said, “It is finished/accomplished!”¹⁰ In other words, everything re the whole Law of God has now been fully kept by the last Adam!

He did what the first Adam did not do – keeping the Law of God! But the last Adam did more, for He also paid for the sins of all God's loved ones!

See the words & actions of the Perfect Mediator!?

Suffering Soul & Body

The WCF 8.4 reminds us that *He endured most grievous torments in his soul and most painful sufferings in his body; he was crucified...*

My brother & sister, Christians have long realised that, even before the Sanhedrin slapped Jesus in the face, and before the soldiers used their whip with all its metal hooks on Jesus' back, and before they hit Him in the face, spat on Him and put the crown of thorns on His head; yes, before the soldiers drove the nails through His hands & feet, and before He suffered the pain & shame of hanging naked on the cross – yes, before all these, the suffering of our Lord's *soul* had already in all earnest begun the night before! And that's a pain which no human being could/can see or gauge. Yes, already in the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord *began to groan under an invisible pressure greater than the fear of death!* Indeed, it was already there that He discovered *the agonising pangs of the penalty reserved for sinners!*¹¹

And these torments of the soul came out in His words to the sleepy disciples (in Mt 26:37-38), “**My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me**”¹² – also where He fell on His face and prayed, “**My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.**”¹³

See? Yes, it was indeed *on the cross* that Jesus finally cried out in anguish, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” But it was already in the *garden* that *the hell of eternity*

⁸ MY adaptation of the words of Van Dixhoorn (ibid:117)

⁹ Mt 3:15, **But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.**

Also cf. Mt 5:17, “**Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**”

¹⁰ Jn 19:30 τετέλεσται – a Perfect Passive Indicative 3rd Person Singular, of the verb τελέω: to bring an activity to a successful finish—‘to complete, to finish, to end, to accomplish’ (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 657). New York: United Bible Societies).

¹¹ Words well-chosen by Van Dixhoorn (ibid:117)

¹² Mt 26:37-38 **And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”**

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 26:39). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

*entered in time, for God was punishing the sinless Saviour with the punishments that our sins deserved!*¹⁴

No wonder that John Calvin, thinking of the words of the Apostles' Creed, called this Christ's "*descent into hell.*"¹⁵

Wow! What does this do to you & me?

Well, don't we in horror cringe before God's display of justice as we see it in the untold suffering of our Lord in His body & soul!?

On the other hand, aren't we blown away and moved by God's immense love for us – a love-deed that, from the deepest parts of our cold hearts, just pulls out our heartfelt love-response to God?

The WCF 8.4 reminds us that Jesus *died, and was buried*, and that *He remained under the power of death, yet His body did not undergo decay!*

Indeed, even though our Lord's body did not remain so long in the grave as to decay, *His living body had become a lifeless corpse.*¹⁶ But it did not undergo decay!

And so, do you remember which Psalm's words were fulfilled in this manner?

Psalm 16:10 *For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.*¹⁷

Risen

Last week (through the sermon on WCF 8.3), we were reminded that the Bible connects death with sin. If there was no sin, there would not have been death!¹⁸

And so, seeing that Jesus, in and of Himself, had no sin – and seeing that the Father was now fully satisfied that the Son had paid the penalty for the sins of all His loved ones, so that the Son no longer carried even the sins of others – there was, therefore, no reason anymore for Jesus to stay dead.

¹⁴ My adoption of the words of Van Dixhoorn (ibid:117)

¹⁵ On John Calvin's position re keeping the words "descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed, cf. e.g. the article by Mark Jones, **Keeping "Christ's Descent Into Hell"** at <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2015/01/keeping-christs-descent-into-h.php>

¹⁶ Van Dixhoorn (ibid:118)

¹⁷ Also cf. Acts 2:23-27 *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* ²⁴ *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* ²⁵ *For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption."*

And also Acts 13:36-37 *For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,* ³⁷ *but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.*

¹⁸ For Bible verses making this connection, cf. Gn 2:17 "...*but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*" Clearly, death followed upon sinful disobedience to God!

Also cf. Rm 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

And cf. also Js 1:15 *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

So, as Paul says (in 1 Cor 15), it is not just a matter of first importance that Christ *died* for our sins, but it is also a matter of first importance that He was *raised* on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.¹⁹

And here's the beauty: God not only raised Jesus from the dead – no, He also provided *witnesses* for us to testify to this mind-bending event!

Yes, God cared for it that the risen Christ appeared to the small circle of *women* who supported His ministry;²⁰ also to the *apostles*.²¹ Then, for your & my sake, God even so worked it that *Thomas* was not present the first time when the risen Christ appeared to the other apostles. Thus God gave you and me the chance to place ourselves in the shoes of doubting Thomas²² so that we could experience an even more convincing view of our risen Lord!

Then, says Paul, did the Lord also appear to *more than five hundred people* at one event – most of whom were still alive around 20 years later when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.²³

Last of all, even *Paul* saw the risen Christ – and that while Paul was still an enemy of Christ!²⁴

Thus were there many witnesses to the fact that Jesus did rise from the dead!

Well, remember: for the likes of you & me, Christ told Thomas, “***Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.***”

²⁵

Ascended

It was in that same body – that resurrected body – that, 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus walked to the Mt of Olives and, from there, ascended back to where He had come from in the first place!²⁶

Wow! Was not that move in itself clear evidence that Jesus was who He claimed to be!?! Imagine someone, without the help of a kite or rockets or propellers, just rise up from the earth – up, up, up until finally he is out of sight! Would not that convince anyone watching!?! And here is the neat thing: Jesus did not stop working on that day that He ascended into heaven! No, just as He first made a pathway for you & me to heaven, He now prepares *us* for heaven and *heaven* for us!

Besides, there where He is now (in His glorified human nature & His divine nature), there He *intercedes* for us with the Father (Rm 8:34).²⁷

¹⁹ 1 Cor 15:3-4, ***For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...*** (For “in accordance with the Scriptures,” cf. e.g. Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:10; [Acts 2:25–32; 13:33–35; 26:22, 23]).

²⁰ Cf. e.g. Jn 20:1-18

²¹ Cf. Jn 20:19-23

²² Cf. Jn 20:24-29

²³ 1 Cor 15:5-8 “***...and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.***”

²⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 15:8 (at previous footnote)

²⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:29). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

²⁶ Cf. Jn 6:61b-62 “***Do you take offense at this? ⁶² Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?***”

²⁷ Rm 8:34 ***Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.***

Yes, here is the comfort: *In spite of your & my daily failings, and in spite of the accusations of our enemy (enemies), our Mediator is there to quieten our consciences, to encourage our prayers, and to accept us and our works!*²⁸

Indeed, our risen Lord is able to silence our accuser, for in heaven – more than on earth – it is a known fact that *“there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”*²⁹ and that nothing *“can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!”*³⁰

Return

My brother & sister, in many places the Bible tells us that, one day, this same Jesus will return to judge those who are still alive and all those who have already died!³¹

Says our Lord (in Mt 13:40-43), *Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

Well, what’s the main point regarding Jesus’ return?

Is it not at least the following two things...?

- That we should not busy ourselves with judging *one another*. The *Lord Himself* will do this for us!
- That we should *prepare ourselves* for that day by receiving Jesus Christ – God’s provision for our sins – as our Saviour & Lord!

Have you yet done that?

AMEN (2313 words excluding footnotes)

²⁸ My adaptation of the well-said words of Van Dixhoorn (ibid:118)

²⁹ Rm 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

³⁰ Rm 8:38-39 *“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

³¹ Cf. e.g. Mt 13:40-43 *Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.*

⁴¹ *The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

⁴³ *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

Also Acts 1:11 *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

And Acts 10:42 *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.*

Also 2 Pt 2:4-10 *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶ if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷ and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.*

And Jude 6-7 *And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*