The Christian Catechism For Family Devotions

Based Upon
The Heidelberg Catechism

The Covenant of Peace
School of the Holy Bible

Week 1- The Week of April 25, 2016

QUESTION 1: What is your only Comfort in life and in death?
ANSWER: That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, Who with His precious Blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the Will of my Father in Heaven not a single hair can fall from my head; and all things must work together for my Salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of Eternal Life, and makes me heartily willing and ready to continually live unto Him.

The Exposition for Family Devotion: The question of "Comfort" is placed, and treated first, because it embodies the design and substance of the entire Catechism. The design is, that we may be led to the attainment of sure and solid Comfort, both in life and death. On this account, all Divine Truth has been revealed by God, and is especially to be studied by us. The substance of this Comfort consists in this, that we are *engrafted* into Christ by faith. And that through Him we are reconciled to, and beloved of God so that thus He may care for and save us eternally.
Concerning this Comfort, we must enquire:

1. What is it?
2. In how many parts does it consist?
3. Why is it alone solid and sure?
4. Why is it necessary?
5. How many things are necessary for its attainment?

1. WHAT IS THIS "COMFORT"? Comfort is that which results from a certain process of reasoning, in which we oppose something "Good" to something "Evil", that by a proper *consideration* of this Good, we may *mitigate* our "Grief", and patiently *endure* the Evil.
The Good therefore, which we oppose to the Evil, must necessarily be great, and certain, in proportion to the magnitude of the Evil with which it is contrasted. And as consolation is here to be sought against the *greatest* Evil, which is sin, and Eternal Death, it is not possible that anything short of the Highest Good, can be a sufficient remedy for it. Without the Word of God, however, to direct and reveal the Truth, there are almost as many opinions entertained as to what this Highest Good is, as there are men.
The Epicureans place it in "sensual pleasure"; the Stoics in a "proper regulation" and moderation of the affections, or in the habit of virtue; the Platonists in ideas; the Peripatetics in the exercise of virtue; while the ordinary class of men place it in honors, riches, and pleasure.
But all these things are transitory, and are either lost already in life, or they are at best interrupted and left behind in the hour of death. But the Highest Good after which we seek never fades away no, not in death. It is true, indeed, that the honor of virtue is immortal, and, as the Poet says, "survives men's funerals"; but it is rather with others than with ourselves. And it has well been said by a certain one,

that “virtues cannot be considered the highest good, since we have them witnesses of our calamities”.
Hypocrites, both within and without the Church, as Jews, Pharisees and Mohammedans, seek a remedy against death in their own merits, in outward forms and ceremonies. The Papists do the same thing. But mere external rites can neither cleanse nor quiet the consciences of men; nor will God be mocked with such offerings. Therefore, although philosophy, and all the various sects, enquire after and promise such a Good as that which affords solid Comfort to Man, both in life and death, yet they neither have, nor can bestow, that which is necessary to meet the demands of our moral nature. it is only the Doctrine of the Church that presents such a Good, and that imparts a Comfort that quiets, and satisfies the conscience; for it alone uncovers the Fountain of all the Miseries to which the human race is subject, and reveals the only Way of Escape through Jesus Christ.
This, therefore, is that Christian Comfort, spoken of in this question of the Catechism, which is an only and solid Comfort, both in life and death—a Comfort consisting in the Assurance of the free Remission of sin, and of Reconciliation with God, by and on account of Christ, and a certain expectation of Eternal Life, impressed upon the heart by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, so that we have no doubt but that we are:

- ✔ The property of Jesus Christ
- ✔ Beloved of God for His Sake
- ✔ Saved forever, according to the declaration of the Apostle Paul:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress,” etc. (Rom. 8:35)

2. OF HOW MANY PARTS DOES THIS “COMFORT” CONSIST? This Comfort consists of six parts:

1. Our Reconciliation with God through Christ, so that we are no longer the enemies, but the sons of God; neither are we our own, but we belong to Christ. (**1Corinthians 7:23**)
2. The manner of our Reconciliation with God through the Blood of Christ, that is, through His Passion, Death, and Satisfaction for our sins. (**1Peter 1:18; 1John 1:7**)
3. Deliverance from the miseries of sin and death. Christ does not only reconcile us to God, but He also delivers us from the Power of the devil; so that sin, death, and Satan have no power over us. (**Hebrews 2:14; 1John 3:8**)
4. The constant preservation of our Reconciliation, deliverance, and whatever other Benefits Christ has once purchased for us. We are His property; therefore, He watches over us as His Own, so that not so much as a hair can

fall from our heads without the Will of our heavenly Father. Our safety does not lie in our own hands, or strength; for if it did, we should lose it a thousand times every moment.

5. The turning of all our Evils into Good. The righteous are, indeed, afflicted in this life, yea they are put to death, and are as sheep for the slaughter; yet these things do not injure them, but rather contribute to their Salvation, because God turns all things to their advantage, as it is said: **"All things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:27)**
6. Our full Persuasion and Assurance of all these great Benefits, and of Eternal Life. This Assurance is obtained:
    a) From the Testimony of the Holy Spirit working in us true faith, and conversion, bearing witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God, and that these blessings truly pertain to us; because "He is the earnest of our inheritance;"
    b) From the effects of true faith, which we perceive to be in us; such as true penitence, and a firm purpose to believe God and obey all His Commandments; for we are assured of having true faith when we have an earnest desire of obeying God; and by faith we are persuaded of the Love of God and Eternal Salvation.

This is the foundation of all the other parts of this Consolation which we have specified, and without which every other comfort is transient and unsatisfying amid the temptations of life. The substance of our comfort therefore is briefly this: That we are Christ's, and through Him reconciled to the Father, that we may be beloved of Him and saved, the Holy Spirit and Eternal Life being given unto us.

3. WHY IS THIS "COMFORT" ALONE SOLID? That this Comfort alone is solid, is evident, first, because it alone never fails—no, not in death; for **"whether we live, or die, we are the Lord's;" and "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 14:8; 8:85)** And, secondly, because it alone remains unshaken, and sustains us under all the temptations of Satan, who often thus assails the Christian:

1. *But you are a sinner*. To this, Comfort replies, *"Yes, but Christ has satisfied for my sins, and redeemed me with His Own precious Blood, so that I am no longer my own, but belong to Him".*
2. *But you are a child of Wrath and an enemy of God.* Answer: *"Yes I am, indeed, such by nature, before my Reconciliation; but I have now been reconciled to God, and have been received into His Favor through the Merits of Christ".*
3. *But you shall surely die*. Answer: *"Christ has redeemed me from the Power of Death, and I know that through Him I shall come forth from Death unto Eternal Life."*
4. *But many evils, in the meantime, befall the righteous*. Answer: *"Yes, but my Lord defends and preserves me under them, and makes them work together for my Good."*

5. *But what if you fall from the Grace of Christ? For you may sin, and faint, for it is a long and difficult road to Heaven.* Answer: *"Christ has not only merited and conferred His Benefits upon me, but He also continually preserves me in them, and grants me Perseverance so that I may neither faint nor fall from His Grace."*
6. *But what if His Grace does not extend to you, and you are not of the number of those who are the Lord's?* Answer: *"But I know that Grace <u>does</u> extend to me, and that I <u>am</u> Christ's; <u>because</u> the Holy Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God; and because I have true faith. Because this Promise is general, extending to all who believe."*
7. *But what if you have not true faith?* Answer: *"I know that I have true faith from the effects thereof; because I have a conscience at peace with God, and an earnest desire and will to believe and obey the Lord."*
8. *But your faith is weak, and your conversion imperfect*. Answer: *"Yes, but it is nevertheless true and unfeigned, and I have the Blessed Assurance that "to him that has shall be given." "Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief.""* **(Luke 19:26; Mark 9:24)**

In this most severe and dangerous conflict, which all the children of God experience, Christian Consolation remains immoveable, and at length concludes:

Therefore Christ Himself- with all His Benefits, pertains even to me!

4. WHY IS THIS "COMFORT" NECESSARY? From what has been said, it is clearly manifest that this Comfort is necessary for us:

- On account of our Salvation, that we may neither faint nor despair under our temptations, and the conflict in which we are all called to engage, as Christians.
- On account of praising and worshipping God; for if we would glorify God in this, and in a future life, (for which we were created) we must be delivered from sin and death; and not rush into desperation, but be sustained, even to the end, with sure consolation.

5. HOW MANY THINGS ARE NECESSARY FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS "COMFORT?" This proposition is considered in the following Question of the Catechism, to which we refer the reader.