QUESTION 2: How many things are necessary for you to know so that you may live and die happily in this "Comfort"?

ANSWER: Three things: first, the greatness of my sin and misery. Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery. Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such Redemption.

The Exposition for Family Devotion: This question contains the statement and division of the whole Catechism and at the same time accords with the division of the Scriptures into the Law and Gospel, and with the differences of these parts, as they have already been explained.

1. A knowledge of our misery is necessary for our Comfort, not that it of itself administers any consolation, or is any part of it, (for of itself it rather alarms than comforts) but it is necessary:

A. Because it excites in us the desire of Deliverance, just as a knowledge of disease awakens a desire of medicine on the part of the sick. Where there is no knowledge of our misery, there is no deliverance sought, just as the man who is ignorant of his disease never inquires after the physician. Now if we do not desire deliverance, we do not seek it; and if we do not seek it we will never obtain it, because God gives it only to those who seek, and knock, as it is said—"To him that knocks, it shall be opened." "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden." "I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Matt. 7:6; 5:6; 11:28; Isaiah 57:15) That now which is necessary for the purpose of exciting in us a desire of Deliverance, is also necessary for our Comfort. But a knowledge of our misery is necessary for the purpose of creating in us the desire of Deliverance. Therefore it is necessary for our consolation; not, indeed, as being in its own nature the cause, but as a motive, without which we would not seek it; for in itself it terrifies, yet this terror is advantageous when it leads to the exercise of faith.
B. So that we may be thankful to God for our Deliverance. We should be ungrateful if we did not know the greatness of the evil, from which we have been delivered; because, in this case, we could not correctly estimate the magnitude of the Blessing, and so would not obtain Deliverance, since this is granted only to such as are thankful.
C. Because without the knowledge of our sinfulness and misery, we cannot hear the Gospel with profit; for unless, by the preaching of the Law as touching sin and the Wrath of God, a preparation be made for the proclamation of Grace, a carnal security follows, and our Comfort becomes unstable. Sure consolation cannot stand in connection with carnal security. Hence it is manifest that we must commence with the preaching of the Law, after the example of the Prophets and Apostles, that men may thus be cast down from the conceit of their own righteousness, and may obtain a knowledge of themselves, and be

led to true repentance. Unless this be done, men will become, through the preaching of grace, more careless and obstinate, and pearls will be cast before swine to be trodden under foot.

2. A knowledge of our deliverance is necessary for our Comfort:

A. So that we may not despair. A knowledge of our misery would lead us to despair, did not a way of deliverance present itself to us.
B. So that we may desire this deliverance. An unknown good is not desired; because what we have no knowledge of, we cannot desire. If we be ignorant, therefore, of the benefit of our deliverance, we will not long after it, and of course will not obtain it. Yea, if it were even offered to us, or we were to fall upon it, we would not embrace it.
C. So that it may comfort us. A good that is not known, cannot impart any comfort.
D. So that we may not devise another method of deliverance, or embrace one invented by others, and thereby cast a reproach upon the name of God, and endanger our salvation.
E. So that we may receive it by faith; but faith cannot be without knowledge. Deliverance is also obtained by faith alone.
F. So that we may be thankful to God; for as we do not desire an unknown good, so we neither appreciate nor feel thankful for it. But the benefit of deliverance is not given to the ungrateful. God is pleased to confer it only upon those in whom it produces its proper effect, which is gratitude.

For these reasons, a knowledge of our deliverance, what it is, in what manner and by whom it is effected, and bestowed, etc., is necessarily required, that we may enjoy true and solid comfort. This knowledge is obtained from the gospel, as heard, read, and apprehended by faith; because it alone promises deliverance to those that believe in Christ.

3. A knowledge of gratitude is necessary to our Comfort:

A. Because God is pleased to grant deliverance only to the thankful. It is only in such that his purpose is realized, which is his glory and gratitude on our part. Gratitude is, therefore, the principal end, and design of our deliverance. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” “He has adopted us to the praise of the glory of his grace.” (1 John 3:8; Eph. 1:4)
B. So that we may return such gratitude as is acceptable to God, who will not have us to be grateful under any other form than that which he has prescribed in his word. True gratitude is, therefore, not to be rendered according to our own notion, but is to be learned from the Word of God.

C. So that we may know that whatever duties we perform towards God and our neighbor, are not meritorious, but are a declaration of our thankfulness; for that which we do from gratitude, we acknowledge we have not deserved.
D. So that our faith and comfort may be increased; or, that by this gratitude, we may assure ourselves of our deliverance, as we are made acquainted with the causes of things from their effects. Those who are grateful, acknowledge and profess that they are certain of the good which they have received. We may learn what true gratitude is, in general, from the gospel, because it requires faith and repentance in order that we may be saved, as it is said, "Repent, and believe the gospel, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (Mark 1:15) In the law, however, it is taught particularly, because it distinctly declares what works, and what manner of obedience is pleasing to God. We must, therefore, necessarily treat of thankfulness in the catechism.

Objection: It is not necessary to teach that which follows of its own accord. Gratitude naturally follows a knowledge of our misery and deliverance. Therefore there is no necessity that it should be taught.

Answer. There is here an incorrect course of reasoning, in supposing that to be true generally, which is so only in part; for it is not a just inference that because gratitude follows a knowledge of our deliverance from misery, that the manner of it must also necessarily follow. We are, therefore, to learn from the Holy Scriptures, the nature of true gratitude, and the manner in which it should be expressed, so as to be pleasing and acceptable to God. Again; the major proposition is not universally true; for that also which follows of its own accord, may be taught for the purpose of increasing our knowledge and confirming us therein. And it is in this way, that is, through the revelation and knowledge of his Word, that God awakens, increases, and confirms in us, true gratitude.