

LORD'S DAY 1

1. Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?
- A. That I am not my own,¹
but belong with body and soul,
both in life and in death,²
to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.³
He has fully paid for all my sins
with His precious blood,⁴
and has set me free
from all the power of the devil.⁵
He also preserves me in such a way⁶
that without the will of my heavenly Father
not a hair can fall from my head;⁷
indeed, all things must work together
for my salvation.⁸
Therefore, by His Holy Spirit
He assures me
of eternal life⁹
and makes me heartily willing and ready
from now on to live for Him.¹⁰

1. **1 Corinthians 6:19,20** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

2. **Romans 14:7-9** For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

3. **1 Corinthians 3:23** And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Titus 2:14 ...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

4. **1 Peter 1:18,19** ...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

5. **John 8:34-36** Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Hebrews 2:14,15 Inasmuch then as the children

have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

1 John 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

6. **John 6:39,40** "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 10:27-30 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. ³⁰ I and My Father are one."

2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

1 Peter 1:5 ...who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

7. **Matthew 10:29-31** "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Luke 21:16-18 "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head shall be lost...."

8. **Romans 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.
9. **Romans 8:15,16** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God....
- 2 Corinthians 1:21,22** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,²² who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

2 Corinthians 5:5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Ephesians 1:13,14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

10. **Romans 8:14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

2.	Q.	What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort?
	A.	First, how great my sins and misery are; ¹ second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery; ² third, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance. ³

1. **Romans 3:9,10** What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.¹⁰ As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one."
- 1 John 1:10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
2. **John 17:3** "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
- Acts 4:12** "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- Acts 10:43** "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."
3. **Matthew 5:16** Let your light so shine before men,

that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Romans 6:13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Ephesians 5:8-10 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

1 Peter 2:9,10 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.



The first Lord's Day serves as an introduction to the Catechism. The Catechism, in turn, serves as an introduction to, and a summary of, God's Holy Word. For this reason we can say that the first Lord's Day is one which sums up the whole gospel. The Catechism is the message of the gospel in a nutshell.

If this is what the Catechism does, then why does the Catechism speak about *comfort*? Why doesn't the first question read: "*What is the summary of the Bible's message?*"

In the first place, we should realise that one of the purposes of the gospel is to give us comfort. In Romans 15:4 we read that the Bible is not only meant to instruct

us, but also to encourage and comfort us by giving us hope. *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”* The Bible is therefore a book of comfort. The Catechism reflects this purpose of Scripture, for it too, endeavours to give us comfort.

Furthermore, the time in which the Catechism was written also gives us a clue to why it begins with a reference to our comfort. The greatest jewel of the Reformation was the comfort which the church had long lost because of doctrinal heresy. As long as God's children were burdened with the doctrine of *“work salvation”* (earning your salvation by means of your good works), they had no real comfort, no rest for their souls. For just as we know today, so the genuine children of God knew then how great their sins were. They also knew how great God's demand is, which they could never fulfil because of their sinfulness. They knew that if salvation depended upon their own works, they could never have real assurance of their salvation, for they could never be sure whether they had done enough to be saved. Thus they could never have comfort or rest for their souls.

Another reason lies in the political and religious climate of the time. The early years of the Reformation were times of persecution. That was especially true for the Huguenots in France, many of whom lost their lives because of their faith. The news of this persecution would reach the ears of all the Reformed. How fitting for Ursinus and Olevianus to begin with a word of comfort in such trying times.

How do we define *“comfort?”* Comfort is ***the peace of mind that arises out of God's promised mercy, which eases fear, anxiety and sorrow.*** What causes this fear in us? What arouses this anxiety? From where does this sorrow arise? From our fall into sin! Our sin arouses the wrath of our holy and jealous God. And the consuming wrath of God makes us tremble in fear. Furthermore,

our sin is punished with God's curse. And the effects of this curse, such as pain, sickness and death, all give birth to sorrow.

As we mentioned in our definition, comfort arises from the mercy of God. That is clear from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 1:3, where Paul describes God as *“the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”* The only source of comfort lies in the mercy of God which He has shown to us in Christ Jesus. That is why the Catechism says, *“What is your only comfort?”* There is no other comfort than that which comes from our gracious God, through the forgiveness of our sins and the righteousness of Christ. In Isaiah 40:1, we read *“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned.”* Israel's comfort was based on God's promise that her punishment would come to an end, because God would pardon her sins.

The unbeliever who is ignorant or who rejects the comfort that arises from God's grace looks for another source of comfort. Nevertheless, the most they can find in this life is some temporary respite from the miserable consequences of sin. They might be able to amass some wealth, so that they can enjoy some physical comforts, such as a nice home and good food. They do not have the discomfort of being left out in the cold, nor the discomfort of hunger pains. They might be able to make advancements in medicine, which alleviate some of the pain and suffering which man would otherwise experience. Yet such “comforts” only affect the outward body. The believer, however, enjoys peace of mind. His soul is quieted within him.

The Catechism describes our comfort as belonging to Jesus Christ. What does it mean to belong to Jesus Christ? It means that we become His responsibility. He has made Himself our Saviour, our Redeemer, our Protector, our Provider. One might compare it to a child. In a room full of children someone might ask a mother,

"Which child belongs to you?" Parents have the responsibility to provide for their children's needs, to guide them and protect them from harm, to look out for their well-being. The life of an orphan in a third world country where there is poverty and famine is not a good life. He does not belong to anyone. Yet he is not able to stand on his own and provide for himself. Can you imagine what joy he would feel if he were adopted by loving parents who could provide him with what he needed for life? How comforting it would be for him to know that he belonged to someone, that someone was willing to be responsible for his life, his well-being. That is what it means to belong to Jesus Christ. We were like orphans - or worse! We had sold ourselves to Satan through sin. We had become his children. Yet Satan did not seek our well-being; he sought our ruin. How wonderful to belong to Jesus Christ!

The Catechism says that I belong with body and soul to Jesus Christ. That means that I belong completely to Him. All of me belongs to Christ. Not just my soul is His, but also my body. He owns me completely, totally. Paul wrote, "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's," (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).*

Then the Catechism says that I am His in life and in death. This means that I belong to Him always. I don't belong to Christ just in this life. Even when I die I still belong to Christ. In every situation, at all times, I belong to my Redeemer. Nothing can separate me from Him. Paul wrote, "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,"* (Romans 8:38,39).

Since we belong to Christ, we are brought into a special relationship with the Father. The Catechism speaks about "my

Heavenly Father." On account of what Christ has done, the Father adopts us again as His children. That means that we are now under the care of our heavenly Father. He will look out for our good. Not a hair can fall from our head without our Father's will. And even if it sometimes seems as though evil things happen to us, yet we may be sure that everything that happens to us is working towards our salvation, even if we cannot understand how that is possible. God is much wiser than we are.

How does one come to belong to Christ? Christ bought us. He paid the price of our sins. Not with gold or silver, but with His precious blood. He bought us through His suffering and death. That was the price that had to be paid in order to release us from the bondage to sin and death. And now that Christ has released us, He continues to watch over us lest we should come under bondage to sin again. For Satan tries to gain power over us, wanting to enslave us as before. Yet Christ preserves us and will not allow us to come under Satan's dominion again. He will cause us to persevere and to remain faithful to the end.

Belonging to Jesus Christ does not mean that we are free in the sense of being able to do whatever pleases us. "*I am not my own*," says the Catechism. We are free from the grip of the devil, and we belong to Christ. Satan once ruled us, but now we are ruled by Christ. He rules us by His Word and Spirit. Now we must do what He tells us to do. We must obey Him. He is our Lord, our Master, (cf. Romans 6:15-23).

Of ourselves we are not willing to do so. By nature we are rebellious and we want to do our own will. And our sinful nature can alarm us. Will we submit ourselves to Christ's rule? But here, too, we are comforted. For Christ promises to work in our hearts with His Holy Spirit, so that we are heartily willing and ready to obey Him. As Paul wrote, "*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do [or work] for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13).

In order to experience the comfort of belonging to Christ, it is necessary for us to know three things.

We must come to know how great our sins and misery are. There is no comfort in the knowledge of our sin and misery itself. It only makes us feel very bad about ourselves. The knowledge of our sin and misery only serves to frighten us. Yet this knowledge is necessary, for it incites us to look for healing. Unless we know that we are sick, we seldom go to a doctor. In like manner, no one will look for redemption from sin and misery unless he first comes to know his sin and misery.

The Catechism says that we have to learn how great our sins and misery are. We do not go running to a doctor if we have a cold or some other minor ailment. We only go if we have something quite serious, and something that won't go away by itself. This is what the Catechism will teach us: that our sin is very great. It will lead to eternal death. Furthermore, the Catechism will teach us that our "ailment" will not go away by itself, or by our ministrations. We need a spiritual physician.

It is no comfort to know that we are horribly sick and are going to die. In fact, some doctors are reluctant to tell their patients how serious their illness is if there is no cure. For this knowledge won't benefit them. In some ways, ignorance is bliss. The only time that such knowledge would really be of any benefit is when there is a cure.

It is the same with our knowledge of our sin and misery. If there was no forgiveness of sins and no redemption, then we could just as well remain ignorant about our spiritual condition. Yet if there is a cure, we want to be told about our disease so that we might go to the physician who can heal us.

Thus the knowledge of how great our sins and misery are will only be of comfort to us if we at the same time are told of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Thus the second aspect of that knowledge, which is necessary to have as comfort, is

the knowledge of the deliverance, which is in Christ Jesus our LORD.

The Catechism says that our comfort also hinges on the knowledge of how we are to show ourselves thankful for such deliverance. The reason is two-fold.

- a. First, we who have been redeemed by God are required to show our thankfulness to Him by walking according to His will. God is angry with those who continue to walk in sin. But by nature we don't know God's will. We don't know how to show ourselves thankful to God for His grace. God must teach us what is good and acceptable in His sight. We can only have the comfort of knowing that God is pleased with us if we know we are walking according to His will.
- b. Second, God promised that we who have been redeemed from sin through Christ will also produce fruits of thankfulness through the Spirit. These two go hand in hand. Christ's work of redemption and the spiritual fruits of thankfulness are inseparable. If we see the Spirit producing fruits of thankfulness in our lives, then we have the comfort of knowing with certainty that Christ has redeemed us. But we need to know what these fruits of thankfulness are so that we can recognise the Spirit's work in us.



Questions:

1. What is one of the first purposes of the gospel?
2. Why would we say that "*comfort*" was the greatest jewel of the Reformation?
3. In what way did the religious and political climate of the day prompt the authors of the Catechism to begin the Catechism by speaking about our "*comfort*"?
4. What is comfort?
5. Why does the Catechism speak about our "*only*" comfort?
6. Why doesn't the Catechism mention wealth or medicine as sources of comfort?
7. How does the Catechism describe our comfort? What does that mean?
8. To what degree do we belong to Jesus Christ? When do we belong to Him?
9. How does our relationship to Jesus Christ affect our relationship to God the Father?
10. What is the comfort of having God as our heavenly Father?
11. How does one come to belong to Jesus Christ?
12. Can anything or anyone separate us from Christ?
13. To belong to Jesus Christ also means that Christ is our Lord and Master? What does that imply?
14. Are those who belong to Christ willing to submit to Him and live in obedience? How is this possible?
15. What three things are necessary in order for us to experience this comfort?
16. Does the knowledge of our sins and misery itself give any comfort? Why must we know about our sins and misery, then?
17. Will the knowledge of our sin and misery itself comfort us? What else must we know?
18. Why does our comfort hinge on the knowledge of how we are to show our thankfulness?