

## Heidelberg Catechism 2&3 – Comfort Starts with God’s Words

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I hope you now understand and agree that everyone wants comforts. The problem comes with how to get that comfort. The Bible, God’s authoritative and true Word says that to gain comfort you must look at the law of God -that is -the Bible – the Bible and the Bible alone. And details of what specifically you need to know from the Bible for your comfort is what God will tell you today!

Our headings are: What do you need to know to get true comfort, and How do you get to know what you need to know to get this true Comfort?

Our goals are: That you may be thankful to God for his Words that directs us in truth so that you may know your sin, know how to be saved, know how to serve the one who saved you, and receive his comfort. And I hope you are also moved to study God’s Word more.

### What do you need to know to get true comfort?

2 Q. WHAT MUST YOU KNOW TO LIVE AND DIE IN THE JOY OF THIS COMFORT? A. Three things: first, how great my sin and misery 痛苦 are; second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

1. There are 3 things you need to know in order to enjoy the comfort that you know you need. First, you need to know that you are sinful and are hopelessly imprisoned by your sinfulness. Freedom, and therefore your comfort, is nothing more than an elusive dream-something you never reach.

Your comfort is elusive because you look to every other thing except the real means of freedom.

Romans 3: 9 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; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God."

The Apostle Paul frequently pointed out the sinfulness of all men – even those who had direct communication with God and in covenant with God. So no one must claim Divine rights – like kings often did. You can only claim Divine judgments. Consider the certainty of your sinfulness.

1 John 1: 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Romans 3:13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

You were so sinful that God could not bear to look at you... How can you know that? When Jesus was on the cross God turned away from him because he was guilty with your sins. And note 1 Jn 1:10 – the reason you sin is because God’s Word is not in you.

2. You need to know the means of your freedom from a soul enslaved and condemned in sin and deep misery. The Door of freedom-Jesus Christ.

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."

And this is not just for New Testament times. This was for all times. Even the Old Testament prophets believed in Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Jesus himself confirmed this, showing that all prophets spoke of his work of redeeming mankind from sin and death by his death, burial, and resurrection.

Luke 24: 19 And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

20 "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.<sup>21</sup> "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. <sup>25</sup> Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!<sup>26</sup> "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"<sup>27</sup> And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

**3. You need to know how you are to respond when you are set free from your slavery to sin.** You must live lives of obedient faith so that your God is glorified and others may find the way of salvation.

Matthew 5: 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

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

You must fight against the desires of the flesh also. Paul uses the word "mortify" 克制 the flesh. This is therefore an ongoing battle in you. Sin wants to reign in your life, but by the Word of God and the Spirit of God in you, you must dethrone 废黜 it.

Romans 6: 12 Therefore do not let sin reign 支配 in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.<sup>13</sup> 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.

Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

And there is one more specific thing that you must show as a child who has been set free, who has been given an interior change, and who has a royal name: You are to worship God.

1 Peter 2:9 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;<sup>10</sup> who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

### **How do you get to know what you need to know to enjoy this comfort?**

**3 Q. HOW DO YOU COME TO KNOW YOUR MISERY? A.** The law of God tells me.

**1.** Now you have already started to see the source of the knowledge of your sin, how you are set free from your sin, and how you are to respond to your salvation. In sum: The law of God tells you!

**2.** But what is the law of God? **Specifically**, the 10 commands are the law of God. The laws are summarized in this phrase: Love God, and Love your neighbor. **Generally**, the whole Bible contains God's law and explanations of the law of God – the full intent of the law. So the more you read God's Word, the more you will learn of your sin, your salvation, and your service. The less you read God's Word the more you will think you are better...and that you have to fix all your spiritual problems. How many people stay Arminian if they really study God's Word? Arminian scholar is like an oxymoron.

**3.** What are some specific parts of the Bible that teach that you need the law to see your sins?

Romans 3: 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness 贪婪 unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

Without the 10 commands, how would you know what is wrong? You may have some sense that some things are wrong because you have the image of God – like someone in a tiny island in the Pacific might know it is wrong to kill – but you wouldn't know the full extent of your sins.

You wouldn't know the full extent of your sins because the image of God in you is tarnished 玷污.

You would not know the broadness of the commands – the things required, the things forbidden, and how you may sin by thoughts, words, and actions. So you need God's law.

4. So the purpose of the law was not to show man how he could be saved, but the **purpose of the law was to show man that he needed to be saved because of his sinfulness.** No one could be declared righteous by obeying the law because no one could obey the law. Remember, obeying the law outwardly 表面上 is more reachable, though it is not fully reachable, but you are required to obey the law with the perfect motive in the heart also. The trouble is, the heart is sinful. Your outward actions, though they may seem good, are reprehensible in God's sight. He condemns those who try to earn his favor by obedience. That is why every other religion on earth is false and every other person other than a true Christian will be condemned by God and sent to hell.

5. There is no other book anywhere that speaks of the full extent of man's sinfulness and the essential saving work of Jesus Christ. All other books that pretend to tell about how to be saved are books of evil spirits. They hide the truth and tempt 诱惑 men to take the easy way out...and tempt men to look for their salvation elsewhere. Usually these books from the Devil tempt men to find their salvation in themselves or in some outward work. But consider what the Apostle Paul wrote:

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

According to the Bible, if Christ were not condemned for you, you will be condemned for yourself. Which other books tells you it is impossible for you to save yourself? Which other books tells you that you get not a single merit with God for all the good you may do in this world? Only the Bible! I believe the Devil smiles when someone believes that his works, or pilgrimages 朝圣, or lighted candles, or his charitable giving pleases God. The Devil probably smiles because he has another soul trapped in hell for eternity. The Devil, by his deceit, makes them think they are religious and so they feel comfortable – like a fish who swallows a bait – until there is a jerk on the line. But you, brothers and sisters, have the true Words of God.

### **Conclusion:**

You need to know 3 things in your head and in your heart to enjoy true comfort in your soul: Your sin, how you are set free, and how you are to show your thankfulness to God. Two out of three will not do. Each one is dependent on the other to accomplish the task of giving you true comfort.

And then remember the first of the 3...you must come to know your sin and misery. You don't come to know your sin and misery in any other way than to examine the fullness of God's law. You are miserable in your thoughts, your words, and in your actions. There are things you don't do that you should and there are things that you do that you shouldn't. You are miserable from the time of your conception – even before you knew you were miserable. You add to your misery every day by your personal sins. But God has come near you...and made you his child by his life and death. That is your greatest and only comfort. And you see this comfort portrayed for us in the Lord's Supper. Eat. Be comforted!

Finally, some people are under the impression that they are Christians because they have friends in church and they themselves may go. But if you don't know these 3 things: Your sins, how you are set free from your sins, and how you are to respond to God, then you are still in your sins. You need to be saved. You need to call upon God to make you his child – to change you from the inside. May you do that today.