

OUR ONLY COMFORT

Heidelberg Catechism

Lord's Day #1

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What is your comfort in life? In death?

Comfort is something that everyone wants to have in life. To have peace of mind, to be relieved from misery, to possess contentment and inner calm -- certainly everyone desires that!

But comfort is something few people possess. For some, comfort is when things go well in life, when I have all that I want, good health and few problems. Others would say that comfort is the ability to brush away the bad, to have a strong will, to take the bitter with the sweet. Still others say that comfort is to escape the realities of life, whether that be done by vacations, pills, or liquor.

Comfort is something we need. Take, for instance, if someone is in the hospital suffering from the pain of cancer. If you were to ask such a person, "What is your comfort?" then he might answer that his friends have overwhelmed him with gifts and visits, or that he has the best doctors money can buy. What would you say to comfort this person:

"Things could always be worse?" "Cheer up, there will be better days ahead"?

Take another example: a funeral home. What words of comfort would you speak there? Some say that comfort is looking at all the good the person did in his life. Others might say that death is natural, and what matters is only that we enjoy life and use it while we have it. And still others, weighed down with sorrow, would frankly admit to you that there is no comfort to be found in this life, no place where men do not weep. What consolation would you give to someone who said that?

In opposition to all worldly ideas of comfort and man's attempts of consoling a person in grief, the Christian,

no matter what his life may be, has the *only* comfort in both life and death. His comfort rests upon the Bible, the Word of God. One could even say that the Bible is God's word of comfort to His people. Isaiah the prophet is commanded to proclaim God's word in [Isaiah 40:1](#) and 2, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." There the comforting word is that Jerusalem's iniquity is pardoned, her warfare is over, for she has received from God the forgiveness of her sins. Isaiah voices that same soothing word in chapter 52:9, "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem." There, again, the Scripture identifies comfort with redemption, that is, with the forgiveness of sins by the grace of God. The apostle Paul in [II Corinthians 1:3](#), 4 gives us the same message of comfort, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." There God is identified as the "God of all comfort," that is, all comfort proceeds from Him and is to be found only in fellowship with Him. He is the one able to comfort us in *all* our tribulation. And the purpose for which God comforts us is that we might be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.

If we were to summarize what the Bible teaches about comfort, we could give the following definition: Comfort is knowing that I am not my own but belong in body and soul to Jesus Christ, Who has purchased me with His blood so that my sins are forgiven and I am given eternal life.

That is comfort! How wonderful! That I, in life or in death, belong to Jesus, or as [Romans 14:8](#) puts it, "For

whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

That comfort which proceeds from God consists of two parts. First, Christian comfort is the knowledge that I am not my own. I am neither independent nor self-reliant. Paul writes in [I Corinthians 6:19](#), "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost that is in you, which ye have of God, and *ye are not your own?*" That means that the child of God does not rely upon himself or any product of man's wisdom for his comfort. This is, of course, contrary to what we would like to think. In pride we can think at times that our own mind or strength will be able to see us through our troubles. But Christian comfort is the confession, "I am not my own." For you see, if I were my own, then I would be personally responsible for an enormous debt of sin which I could never wipe out but only increase daily.

Secondly, true comfort is the knowledge that I *do* belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. This is true because Jesus purchased me with His blood shed on Calvary where He redeemed me from my sins and made me His possession. [I Peter 1:18, 19](#) says this so beautifully: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Because Jesus by grace purchased me with His blood upon the cross, I belong to Him.

What does it mean to belong to Jesus?

Belonging to Christ means that I am united inseparably to Him by faith. It means that I am His property, that He owns me and is also accountable for me, both body and soul, in life and in death, in time and eternity. It implies that He is responsible for every part of me, and He must keep me and lead me to the eternal glory of His kingdom. More, it means that He rules me by His Spirit and grace, and as my Lord He gives me all that I need for body and soul. I may, therefore, rely upon Him, casting all my cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for me ([I Pet. 5:7](#)). Belonging to Jesus means that I may say with the inspired Paul in [Galatians 2:20](#), "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." All things are now controlled by Christ Who is at God's right hand, and all the events of my life are used by Christ for my good and spiritual profit. All the problems and pains of this present life cannot crush me or sever the blessed union that Christ by grace has established with me. It was in the full consciousness of belonging to Jesus Christ that caused Paul to utter the beautiful words in [Romans 8](#), "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? 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 creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

Notice two things in conclusion. First of all, this is an *exclusive* comfort. There is nothing else in the whole world that can comfort you. It is not the *highest* comfort, or the *best* comfort, or the *chief* comfort. But it is the *only* comfort. Comfort is not that I belong to Jesus and that I am healthy, wealthy, or strong. Comfort is not that I belong to Jesus and have a good insurance policy. To have anything along side this exclusive comfort is to forfeit this comfort. The *only* comfort is to belong completely to Jesus in life and in death.

In the second place, this is also an all-sufficient comfort. It is sufficient for every circumstance of life and for all the horrors of death. No matter what evil may enter my life, belonging to Jesus means that He comforts me and sends it for my profit. Comfort is knowing that I am never out of the hands of Jesus and that all things serve, in one way or another, my good. No, we don't always know how that is, nor can we always explain how the evil is for our good. Comfort is to *believe* it! When evil things befall us, comfort is knowing that God sent it for our good, and, in Christ, also gives us grace to bear it in thanksgiving. This is what the Holy Spirit means in [Romans 8:28](#). "For we know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

Is your only comfort found in this, that you belong not to yourself but to the faithful Savior Jesus Christ? Then sincerely live unto Him in thanksgiving all the days of your life!