HC LD 1; Isaiah 40:1-2; Rom. 14:7-9; The Source of all Comfort I. This Exclusive Comfort II. This Extensive Comfort III. This Enduring Comfort

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning we begin our series in the HC and as we begin we start by considering comfort. To understand the purpose and theme of the Catechism, we have to consider it as a book of comfort. So what is comfort? Comfort comes from two Latin words meaning “with strength.” Having comfort is to have strength, encouragement and rest. But how do we get comfort? Well, Wikipedia says that we get comfort by doing familiar things, sitting in a comfortable position, thinking pleasant thoughts or by consuming comfort foods. I found out that there is a whole genre of music called “Comfort Songs.” But is that it? Is comfort simply doing familiar things, singing familiar tunes and eating junk food? The fact that we are still talking about comfort all these years later after the catechism was written is instructive. The need for comfort is one that all people share. We share this need with those living in 1563. It is the common pursuit of man- to find and maintain comfort! It applies to those living in Germany- in Heidelberg- and it applies to those living in the US. It applies to all positions as well. From the seminary professor like the authors of the catechism to the lay person sitting in the pew today. So this need crosses both time and borders. We begin our series through this book of comfort by considering this theme: those who belong to Jesus are united to the source of all comfort.

**I. This Exclusive Comfort**

In our first point we consider that the comfort we receive is an exclusive comfort. Promising comfort assumes that comfort is needed. The question asks us- what is your comfort? It is assumed- you need comfort! To illustrate this point, a crying child is comforted when their mother embraces them. If the child was not crying, there would be no need for comfort! So what is wrong with us? Why do we need comfort? We need comfort because we are uncomfortable. Now this sounds a little weak- we are uncomfortable. Someone who is uncomfortable usually needs to get up and stretch or change their position in the chair. Being uncomfortable is something that is usually easy to fix. If our shoes are uncomfortable, we get new ones. But the uncomfortable state of humanity is much deeper than this. We have a hardship, trials and grief that is much deeper! The fact is, we are born in sin and in our sins, we are enemies of God! We are born in slavery to the devil and heir of the curse. Of all the comfort that can be found, there is only one kind of comfort that can deal with this desperate need! You see, the comfort of belonging to Jesus Christ is a comfort unlike every other comfort! The comforts of this world are temporary, superficial and passing! This kind of comfort we find in belonging to Christ is unique- one of kind! It is the only comfort that deals with our sin and misery- the only comfort that lasts forever and applies to our entire being as we will see. You have comfort because you belong- you have been purchased and paid for! Your sins have been pardoned. We need comfort because we live in the presence of pain, suffering and loss! We find grief, loss, peril and pain all around us! This comfort- rather this comforter- is the only one who addresses these needs! The comfort that we find here in the gospel- revealed in God’s word- is the comfort of belonging to a Savior! Jesus is unique in this role- unique in His ability to comfort and save! There is only one name under heaven given to us by which we can be saved- as Acts 4 states! Jesus is the exclusive one who can give us the comfort we need! He alone can dry our tears, calm our fears, raise the dead, and grant us eternal life!

Notice as we read in Isaiah 40- comfort my people! To comfort means to consol- to ease the mind of a person. This comfort is reserved for the people of God- spoken to them by their loving Lord! Instead of harsh words, our God speaks tenderly. To comfort is to refrain from speaking in wrath, but rather to speak kindly and tenderly. To assure a person of peace! For Israel in Isaiah 40- the comforting truth is that their warfare is over, their iniquity is pardoned, and her sins are held against her no more! So what is the content of this comforting message? Well, the war is over! Specifically, the war of an angry God whose curse is upon the sinful, rebellious people! God is at peace with us! The comfort is found in the satisfaction of God’s justice! Reconciliation has taken place! We have been pardoned- our iniquity atoned for! This is the comforting truth- God’s people are forgiven by their God! This is an exclusive claim- true and lasting comfort is only given to those who are in Jesus Christ! It is spoken only to those of Jerusalem- those who are residents of the holy city! So this comfort is exclusive- it is not shared with everyone! Only those who are God’s people receive this comfort- those outside of Christ do not receive this good news! This comfort is my comfort- since I belong to my faithful Savior! But not only is this comfort exclusive because it is applied to God’s people only, it is an exclusive comfort because only those who trust in Christ alone receive it! In other words, if you trust in something or someone along side of Christ, you will not enjoy this comfort! That is why QA states- what is your only comfort? Your singular and exclusive source of comfort will be found only if you trust in Christ alone! You are saved by Christ and in Christ alone! Trusting in something along side of or in place of this one true source nullifies the comfort! To look to another savior invalidates your claim of comfort! This is a statement of faith- my only comfort is this- I belong to Jesus! So the exclusive nature of this comfort is seen in both a corporate sense but also in an individual sense. The catechism is very personal- dealing with us as we are. Jesus is my only Savior- He is the only one that I look too- the only source of hope and salvation that I trust! And because I trust in Him alone- He is to me my only comfort!

**II. This Extensive Comfort**

Now that we have considered the exclusive nature of this comfort, in our second point we consider how this comfort is extensive. In other words, to what does this comfort apply? As I said before, the comforts of this world apply only to the body- and perhaps to the mind. You can be comfortable as you sit in an easy chair and think happy thoughts. But the comfort we have in belonging to Jesus applies to our entire being- I belong to Jesus- both my body and my soul have comfort in belonging to Him. All of you- your entire being is covered! The whole person of your humanity- body and soul- has been fully purchased by Jesus Christ! As I Peter 1:19 puts it, you were ransomed with the precious blood of Christ! Jesus has bought you- the whole you! The totality of your person belongs to Him! When Jesus purchased you, you became His by right! He is now your Lord and master! Your body and soul have been redeemed- you belong to Him fully! You might be asking, why is this good news? Why is it comforting truth that you belong body and soul to Jesus? Well, belonging to Jesus means that He has the right of ownership as well as the responsibility for you! You can take comfort in the fact that Jesus will- must- take care of you because you belong to Him! He will care for your body and your soul- He will protect and provide for your body and soul- because you are His! We understand that we have a responsibility to care for the things we own. For example, we wash and change the oil in our cars because we know that they belong to us! We don’t smash our own cars on purpose because we have paid for them- right? We want to protect our investment! Well, Jesus has invested in you! He has paid for your body! Having paid for your body means that Jesus will give you what you physically need. And one day, He will raise and glorify your body because you belong to Him! He has also paid for your soul. You have already been spiritually raised up and He will give you spiritual food as is necessary. So Jesus takes responsibility for you- to provide but also protect! This too is a reason for comfort! Jesus does not leave you alone to face your enemies. He will protect you- since you belong to Him! You are lovingly and completely kept in the hands of your good shepherd! Or as Rom. 8:31 asks, if God is for us who can be against us? What can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus? The fact is- nothing can separate you from your God- none can snatch out of His hands! This is a comforting truth- you are lovingly protected and provided for because you belong to Jesus- in body and soul! This is the extent of the comfort that belongs to you! Not one hair can fall from your head without His will! Not one of your enemies can touch you! Nothing falls outside His prevue- you belong to Him in body and soul. Another application flows from this point- if you body belongs to Him- what you do with you body is part of your worship! No part of your life is your own- belonging to Him is not only a comforting fact it is also a sobering fact! No one lives to himself as we read in Rom. 14- we are to live to the Lord!

**III. This Enduring Comfort**

Yet there remains one more aspect to this comfort. We have seen the extent of this comfort in that it applies to our body and soul. In our final point we see that this comfort extends over our entire life- we have comfort in life and in death! Here again we build on our reading from Rom. 14- whether we live or we die, we are the Lords! We belong to Him always- and the comfort we have also endures forever! From birth to death, and even after death, I am His! I am safe and protected- even after I die and my body rests in the grave! So the comfort we enjoy as God’s people covers all of life- in the good times and the bad. In the joy and in the sorrow- I belong, I am safe, I have comfort! Here again we see the uniqueness of this comfort. Not only does this comfort apply to our souls- it abides for eternity! As Psalm 23 puts it, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me! Your rod and staff- they comfort me! No other earthly comfort can claim to be eternal comfort! Imagine for a moment that you are trapped in a room that is on fire. There are two doors and no windows. One door leads to a brick wall, the other door leads to an emergency exit and safety. Which door will you choose? How will you flee the coming wrath? Choose wisely where you look for comfort! Consider carefully where you go for relief! Jesus clearly speak of the eternal comfort that He gives when He spoke to His disciples in John 14. Before He ascended, He promised His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans, but rather he would send them another helper- or another comforter. Not only is Jesus our advocate and comforter in heaven, He has sent His Holy Spirit to be our comforter within! He will never leave us without comfort! This is what makes QA 1 so beautiful. If you look at the answer, you will find the Father, Son and Spirit all present and active in this work of comfort! The Father in creation and providence, the Son in redemption and deliverance, and the Spirit in our sanctification and assurance. Notice also that QA 2 asks- what do I need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort? I can live- and even die in the joy of this comfort! We can have a joyful, happy and comfort filled life! In all this, God people have comfort for body and soul- in life and in death! Being comforted changes how we act and live! Just as a crying child stops crying when they are comforted, so also those in Christ are to have peace, assurance and joy in light of this comforting truth! Comfort also spurs us on in worship! As thanksgiving arises from a heart that is filled with peace! It is this lasting comfort that mitigates grief and helps us endure sorrow ass we look forward to a good future!

As we close, we have seen that true and lasting comfort is something that only God can give! And this gift of comfort is pronounced upon His people because their sins are forgiven! As I Cor. 1 says, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. Those who belong to Jesus are united to the source of all comfort. So may we go forth in this comfort with confidence of children who are now at peace with God!