

LD 1; Rom. 8:1-11; Rom. 14:7-9 “The Comfort of Belonging” I. The Need for Comfort II. The Source of Comfort III. The Extent of Comfort

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you like to fit in? Do you desire to belong- to have a place where you are comfortable and accepted? Well, humanity, as a whole, desires to belong- to have a place where they know they will be accepted. To be part of a group or movement gives us purpose- we have shared identity. We considered this fact in our Men’s Book Study last week- that the lure of group identity or mob mentality can easily become an idol. We start to form our alliances and draw our lines around our identity politics. I am a card-carrying member of this group or I identify with this that association. Although this identity politics has become an idol for many, the fact is God has given us a desire to belong! It was not good for man to be alone! The problem is that we seek our identity in the wrong places- we look for alliances with the wrong groups. There is only one group that provides lasting comfort! There is only one body which we can belong to that will give us a hope that endures! This morning we begin our series again on the HC- which is known as the book of comfort. As we consider these QA together, my plan is to use the book of Romans as much as possible to guide us in this pursuit of lasting comfort. So this morning we consider that Jesus Christ secures our only lasting comfort by purchasing us.

I. The Need for Comfort

In our first point, we consider the need that we all have- the need for comfort. As you may know, sheep will only graze when they are at peace. If the flock is harassed or frightened, they will not feed nor lie down. If there is the threat of attack, the sheep are restless. If the flock is sick or plagued by bugs- there is no comfort! In a similar way, mankind by nature is restless. But the reason we are restless is not recognized and confessed by all. Even many unbelievers will say that we are in need of comfort. But the reason that we are in need of comfort is because something is wrong- there are enemies without and enemies within! There are wolves and lion- there are biting flies and disease. But what are these enemies that keep us from comfort? What are these foes that harass the flock of humanity? It is not what most

people think. Our source of woe and discomfort is not any social ills, injustice or prejudice. No, the problem with humanity- the source of our discomfort- is that we are fallen sinner! Being rebels, God is angry with both the sin that we are born with and the sins that we commit! Our biggest and deepest need is to find forgiveness so that we can have peace with God- because without peace we remain strangers and enemies of God! We remain sinners in the hands of an angry God- and it is fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God while in your sins. So we could say that it is right and proper for us to be uncomfortable! We are as Rom. 3:9 put it- all under the power of sin. There is none who are righteous- all are ungodly- all have turned away from God- no one seeks after God and none do good! In fact, we are all born slaves to sin! We are born citizens of the kingdom of darkness- living under the tyranny of the devil. As we read in Rom. 8:6- the mind that is set on the flesh is death- hostile to God- and cannot please God! So we are slaves to sin- living under the thumb of the most cruel tyrant Satan- born dead in our sins and estranged from God who is the only good! Added to this, our lives are short. We are going to meet an angry God soon! Is it any wonder that there is so much anxiety in our world! But there is another reason why we need comfort. This comes from the fact that we are living in a fallen world with fallen bodies that bear the marks of original sin. Even while we live, we face the prospect of sickness- there is disease that stalks our ranks. The need for surgery- the unexpected call in the night- the uncertain prognosis and the difficult waiting for results and the slow wait of recovery. All of this proves the fact that we all need comfort! Anxiety, fear and the unknown keep us awake at night. We bump up against our own limitations- I do not know what the future holds- and concerning my sin I can do nothing to remedy it! There are no meds that I can prescribe you that will calm your soul- no earthly physician can give you lasting comfort! It is not just that we as humans are uncomfortable at times- like when a rock gets stuck in your shoe. No- we are comfortless! Without hope in ourselves and in dire need! But praise God, this is not the end of the story! How can it be that you can go and visit someone in the hospital and be struck by their sense of comfort? Or when you visit someone at the funeral home as they stand by the open casket of a loved one-

and yet they are comforted! In one of the most uncomfortable and scary times of life- to see someone who is at peace? How can that be? What is this source of lasting comfort?

II. The Source of Comfort

Well, as we move to our second point, we find that the source of lasting comfort comes from first of all- not belonging! There is good news in the fact that I am not a member of these groups anymore. First, we note that I no longer belong to myself. I rest not only my own understanding- I am not my own- I am not limited to my own understanding. I do not live for myself- I am not a slave to my own passions and pleasures. I do not see my body, my, life and my times as my own. Nor do I belong to this world- I am not a citizen of this passing world- my hope is not found in earthly princes and presidents. I am not, first and foremost, a US citizen, a member of the NRA or a Republican or a tax paying member of the state. This is not where I draw my hope from- neither is it where I see my identity! By the way, this is one of the major problems with the various movements in our day and age. People get their identify from groups and politics first! I am pro this and anti this; but that does not give us lasting comfort! Neither do these groups deal with our most pressing need! So I do not belong to myself- and I do not belong to these human organizations either. Neither do I belong to the Devil. I am not a child of Satan- that ancient snake, liar and murderer. Praise God I am not longer part of his family nor in the chains of his kingdom! He is a wicked tyrant- the cruellest despot you can imagine! Praise God I am not in his grasp! But that is not to say that I am a free agent. Everyone belongs to someone! But the only true comfort is found in that I belong- I do have a place, a home, a family and a kingdom to which I belong. I belong to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ! Our text in Rom. 14:7, none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live for die, we are the Lord's! Note- we are the Lord's! We belong- we have been placed in His hands as John says. Wonderful words- we belong! We are the Lord's! But how is it that we belong- what does this mean? Well, we belong because we have been purchased. We have been paid for- as I Cor. 7 says, you were bought at a price! Jesus has paid for you- that is what the word "ransom" means. He bought you- he paid for you with

His blood! We are born in line for judgement- the same that Satan will receive- but we have been set free- our debt has been paid! As our QA continues- we are paid for, delivered and also watched over. We are protected and cared for by the gracious Savior who has become our King! We belong to a faithful Savior- My Faithful Savior- Jesus Christ! The work that Christ did was to purchase a people- the precious blood of Jesus is of such worth that it has covered our debt. We now belong to Him- fully as we will see in our next point. As Isaiah 40 starts, Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Her war has ended and her iniquity is pardoned. That is the good news of the cross- that the blood that was shed was precious blood- purchasing blood- the blood of redemption! Now we are part of a new family! God is now our heavenly Father. The church is made up of my brothers and sisters. I belong to a family- a spiritual community is where I find my home and my identity! I am in His loving care- I am the object of His constant love. All because I belong! It is good to belong to a family like this! A blessing to have been purchased! Comfort- what a wonderful word. It means- with strength! Comfort is stability in an unstable world! Comfort is shelter from the storm. Comfort is an orphan finding a loving home! Comfort is knowing that you belong to a faithful Savior! Comfort is not just a head thing- something to know. It is also a heart issue- I feel this comfort in my inner being. My head reminds my heart what is true! I know that I belong! I know I am His- because He loves me and I love Him! This is something that you must know- that Jesus is your Savior. And if He is, then this comfort of belonging is yours!

III. The Extent of Comfort

But just how long will we belong- and to what extent does this benefit of comfort apply? Well, returning again to our text from Rom. 14- we note that we belong to the Lord- always! As Rom. 14:8 says- if we live and if we die, we are the Lord's! So this comfort of belonging is for us always- while we live and even when die. In life and death- we are His! In other words, it is a lasting comfort that endures forever. There is no end to this comfort. It also applies to our entire being- our body and our soul. This comfort covers our entire person. And here is where the comforters of this world wear out. The comfort blankets of this

world are thin- they may cover your body to keep you warm for a night- but what can they do for your soul. The comradery of belonging to a social group or action committee- of surrounding yourself with like minded people- does little for you after death! No, the comfort we have in belonging to Jesus both in life and in death- for our body and our souls- is so much better and lasting! And I would add here- that the comfort we have in Jesus applies to us both in sickness and in health. When times are good and when times are bad- even now- you have a lasting comfort! The comfort, peace and protection we have- that Jesus redeems, delivers, watches and protects us- is eternal. As Rom. 8:1 said, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. We are set free from the law of sin and death. No condemnation, no slavery and no ultimate death! Nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God which is ours in Jesus Christ! This is truth that you and I need to hold- need to remember! This is the highest, the best, the chief and only enduring comfort! The application is right here- you can be comforted! You can be like the sheep who lay down beside quiet waters- who feed in green pastures. Why can you have this peace? Because the good shepherd is watching, leading and protecting you! Why is Jesus watching over you? Because you belong to Him! You are His sheep- He is your shepherd and the overseer of your soul! This is the only source of lasting comfort! All other comforters prove vain and empty! Our God is the only one who can help us in this life by His presence and He will wipe away all our tears in the life to come!

To close, listen to these words from I Cor. 6:19-20. You are not your own, you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. As our Catechism QA closes, it says- because I belong, the Spirit makes me ready and willing to live for Him! A life of belonging leads to a life of obedience. Being comforted changes us- as it does with sheep! We receive peace so now we can live in joyful liberty. At rest! Liberated to glorify our God who ransoms and redeems! Comfort matters! When you are in the hospital or you get that unexpected call- knowing that you belong to a faithful Savior makes the world of difference! Jesus Christ secures our only lasting comfort by purchasing us. So if you belong to Him, embrace and rejoice in the comfort that is yours!