

LD 22; John 11:17-27; I Cor. 15:35-49; Comforted by the Resurrection I. A Comforted Soul II. A Comforted Body III. A Comforted Today IV. A Comforted Tomorrow

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how good is your comfort? I mean, to what extent do you enjoy comfort in your life? As you know, the Catechism is written as a book of comfort- as QA 1 says- comfort for our body and our souls- a comfort in life and in death. In a world of conflict and chaos- plagued by disease, decay and day- what good news do we as Christians have to offer this world? What blessings did Jesus' purchase for us? Are they gifts for the future only or are they presently enjoyed as well? Well, today as we return to the HC we continue to confess that we believe in the Holy Spirit- the church and the communion of saints. We believe that we have been forgiven of our sins as we saw last week- and today we consider that we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ comforts His people with lasting resurrection blessings.

I. A Comforted Soul

In our first point we consider the comfort that Jesus has secured for our souls. By way of reminder, in the beginning God made Adam to be a soul/flesh unit. He formed the body of Adam from the dust of the ground- and He breathed into the nostrils of Adam and made him a living spirit. The Bible teaches that we are body/soul unit- and our God has power over body and soul. The soul, then, is the internal and non-physical part. Your personality- our identity and being if you will. It is the part of you that continues on after your body dies. Contrary to many people's thoughts, the benefits of Jesus Christ are not reserved for the hereafter. Rather, there are present realities to works of Christ- specifically our souls have already been raised from the dead. We are already now united with Christ- living in communion with Him- and enjoying in our souls the first fruits of Christ's work as well as the presence of the Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus says in John 11 that those who believe in Him live- because we are already spiritually alive! Our souls are no longer dead in slavery- but rather we have been raised with Him. But the focus of this QA 57 builds on this truth- it is true that we are already spiritually alive in Christ. But what happens when we die- do our souls die along with our bodies? Can physical death end the spiritual life we already have? The answer is no. As Jesus continues in

John 11:26- everyone who believe in me lives and shall never die. We are dealing with what is called the intermediate state. After your body dies, your soul is brought up to be with Jesus immediately after death. There is no soul sleeping- no purgatory- no wondering around looking for a home- we do not ceasing to exist. No, as Jesus promised to the thief on the cross- today you will be with me paradise. Even as Jesus prayed on the cross, Father, into you hands I commit my spirit. In a moment- as you take your last breath on earth- the angels carry your soul up to be with Jesus in glory- in the heavens. Paul called this the 3rd heaven- or the highest heaven. It is the place that God dwells in the fullness of glory- where the saints who have gone before and the angels now reside. This truth is the foundation of our lasting comfort- our souls are already now living and will always live with Jesus. It is well with my soul- I can have peace like a river- because my soul is already now raised to new life. Having been born again in Christ, you already have conquered the grave! Death has no hold on you. As Jesus told the sisters of Lazarus- we already live and shall never die! Death cannot and will not break the spiritual communion and fellowship that we have with Christ- a union that we already enjoy. We are now, already alive in Him. Our God is the God of the living- and those who believe in Him are already now raised to a new life. So Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still living- alive and well in their souls- with God in glory! This truth is a comforting truth that endures- regardless of the day and situation- if you live by faith, you are spiritually alive and well in Christ. No matter what happens to your body- or what is inflicted on your flesh- your soul is clean and will live on with your Savior!

II. A Comforted Body

But this truth is not meant to imply that your body is somehow less important. No, the dualist would have you believe that the flesh is bad or unimportant. That the mind is much more important that matter. But the works of Jesus do not apply only to our souls- while neglecting our bodies! So as QA 75 continues, not only do our souls continue on after death being united with Christ. No, also our bodies- this very flesh- will enjoy the same life that our souls now enjoy! My body will be raised- this flesh will not be forgotten in the grave! Or as Job said, in my flesh I will see God! So we believe that my body that had once died will be raised and reunited

with my soul- so that my being may be complete once again! The intermediate state will give way to the perfected and final state of glory! So your body will be raised- but that body will be changed and made better and new as well. We will be made like Christ's glorious body- it will be the same body but not the same in every way. It will be like comparing an acorn to an oak tree. The seed that is planted in the ground when we die will be brought forth perfectly glorious and fruitful! Being made like Christ. We can learn from the appearance of Christ after He rose. The body He had could be recognised- it was a visible body that could even be touched and felt. He could stand in their midst and eat a piece of fish. But it was different- better- able to appear and then disappear. There was no weakness or brokenness in the body that Jesus received. His first body was not still laying in the tomb- for that body was raised! Why do you look for the living among the dead, the angels would ask the women. So the body of Jesus was raised was and is still His body- but it is better. So we will be raised and our bodies will be made glorious like Christ's. There will be no weeping and no pain- because the causes of weeping and pain will have been removed from our bodies. Our reading from I Cor. 15 illustrates what our new and improved bodies will be like- they will be raised imperishable, glorious, powerful- a spiritual body. Not fleshly and fallen- but no longer able to fall- not able to die- not able to get sick or weak! As I Cor. 15:49 stays- we shall bear the image of the man of heaven. This is a comforting truth- the bodies of your loved ones- and your own body one day- will not be lost, forgotten and left in the grave! But when your body is raised, whatever is ailing you will afflict you no more! The pain of broken bones- the ache of aging joints. The suffering caused by cancer and its treatment- no more to be seen! What was lost will be restored- what was broken will be mended- what was wrong will be made right! In fact- think of all the professions that will no longer be needed! No more oncologist- no doctors needed at all! No more ophthalmologist- our eyes will clearly see as we will be seen! No more phycologist- we will know and be fully known! No more dentist- there will be no decay! No more morticians- there will be no death! No crutches, wheelchairs or even medicine! That is the glorious future that God's people have to look forward to! When you see Him, you will be made like Him! Thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

III. A Comforted Today

Now that we have considered the work of Jesus Christ applied to our bodies and our souls, in our third point we focus in on the timing. When should we look for benefits- when should we expect blessings from the hand of our Savior? As we transition to the next phrase of the AC- I believe in life everlasting- you may be surprised to see QA begin with today. Believing in Jesus Christ and confessing that you acknowledge that Christ will give you everlasting life does not mean that your joy and peace must wait until Jesus comes back and your body is raised! No, as our catechism explains, I already now experience the joy of eternal life. Or as Paul said, to live is Christ! Or as Jesus prayed in John 17- to know God is to have eternal life. In other words, if you know God as your Father and Jesus as your Savior, you already have eternal life. Therefore, the joy of having begun to live eternally is one that we currently have! God's people are already citizens of the Kingdom of God- already in possession of the lasting inheritance. Since we already have the Holy Spirit living with us, we already have and always will have peace and joy as Rom. 14 states. The Kingdom of God is of righteous and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. So if you have the Holy Spirit, you already have righteousness, peace and joy. Being righteous means that we are justified- our status as adopted children cannot be lost. We are declared righteous and fully accepted! We have peace- peace that passes understanding. We do not have worldly peace- but our God's peace! Spiritual and lasting peace- true shalom! Peace and tranquility of the heart- let not your hearts be trouble! Jesus tells us these things so that we might have peace! The peace of God dwells richly in your hearts. And we have joy- the joy of the Lord is our strength! Rejoice in the Lord, always. Joy that comes from a heart at peace with God- joy that knows we are firmly in the hands of our Good Shepherd. So to make this point clear- we do not need to wait until we die before we can have joy and peace! Do you have the Spirit of God living within you- then you already have every reason for joy and peace today!

IV. A Comforted Tomorrow

So we can live out our lives here below with the joy, hope and peace that endure- that weathers every storm- because we have the comfort of belonging to a faithful Savior in life. But also have a comfort that lasts in and through death- for we believe in the resurrection and the life everlasting! Death is not the end- after Jesus

returns, I will enjoy a perfect blessedness! I am comforted today- and I will be comforted tomorrow! To live is Christ- but to die is gain! It is better to die and be with the Lord- but far better to be with Jesus when He returns and makes all things right and new! When Jesus comes back, He will usher in a blessedness that is beyond what we can imagine. As I Cor. 2:9 says-, greater than any eye has seen- even greater than any mind can comprehend! If you can imagine it- heaven will be greater- better- than any concept your mind can fancy. The best food on earth is tasteless in comparison to the feasts that are to come. The most anticipated event here below- boring compared to the glorious future. Children, I want you to think of the best thing- the most enjoyable time you have ever had! Was it a party or a vacation? Perhaps some of you are looking forward to getting married or having a child- whatever the mountain top experiences this world has to offer- they are not even worth comparison! Middle aged members- perhaps you are looking forward to retirement. They all pale next to the glories that will be revealed to God's people! Here there will be no more tears because there will be nothing to cry about! No reason for tears as all pain, hostility and conflict will be removed! No more wars, no more famines and fires. No conflict and no fighting- just perfect peace! No injury and no law breaking- only obedience! There will be no police, no judges and no jails! No guns needed to defend yourself- no FEMA and no Red Cross! What a glorious day that will be!

As we close, the thought of the future should not fill us with fear and dread- but rather hope and expectation! Knowing what is coming- what will happen to our bodies and our souls- should fill our hearts with joy and peace! Jesus Christ comforts His people with lasting resurrection blessings. On that day we will see the New Heaven and Earth- we enter the Heavenly Jerusalem- walking on streets of gold. We will experience the fulfillment of God's promises to His people- a perfect happiness and lasting peace! Unending glory- where we will praise God with unhindered voices forever and ever! I believe that after this life there will be another life- an eternal one in which the church is exalted and her God glorified. World without end. Come- Lord Jesus.