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**THE TRUE BELIEVER'S COMFORT:
RICH BENEFITS THAT FLOW OUT OF
BELONGING TO JESUS CHRIST (1)**

(Lord's Day 1, Question 1b)

Psalter 116:1, 2, 3

Scripture: Luke 1:39-56

Psalter 83

Psalter 71:1, 2

Psalter 429:2, 4

Dear congregation,

We ask your attention a second time for Lord's Day 1 of our Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1.

Question 1: What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

Last time we have considered: "That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." Now we want to consider the middle part — "who with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil." The Lord willing, in the future we hope to consider the remainder of this beautiful answer."

With God's help, we now hope to consider a second time the theme of:

The True Believer's Comfort

We hope to see this comfort in:

The Rich Benefits that Flow out of Belonging to Jesus Christ

Last time we saw that true comfort essentially consists in belonging to the faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Now we want to focus on the first two of five benefits that flow out of that belonging:

1. Satisfaction For *All* My Sins: "who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins";
2. Deliverance From *All* the Devil's Power: "and delivered me from all the power of the devil";

I repeat: Satisfaction for All My Sins; Deliverance From All the Devil's Power.

I. Satisfaction for All My Sins

The portion of Lord's Day 1 that we are called to meditate upon today, congregation, is written in very strong, comforting language. It is written not from the perspective of the believer's doubts and fears but from the perspective of what he possesses from God's side in the fullness of the benefits that flow out of belonging to Jesus Christ. Perhaps you have noticed in my points that I have stressed that little word "all." I have done so because our instructor has done so. In both phrases he uses in the middle of this question, he uses the word "all": "He has fully satisfied for *all* my sins"; "He has delivered me from *all* the power of the devil." Thus, what he wants to do right at the very outset of the Catechism is tell us that those who belong to Jesus Christ have a full Savior who does all for them, who is not only perfect and entire and all their salvation Himself but whose benefits are all-consuming, all-encompassing, all-delivering.

Thus, when our instructor begins to expound what it means in terms of saving benefits to belong to Jesus Christ, he uses language in its strongest degree: "Christ," he says, "hath fully satisfied for all my sins." "Fully" and "all" mean fully and all. Full is full, and all is all, congregation. What our instructor says is that my comfort is that there is not one sin that I have to pay for on my own account. There is nothing I have to accomplish. There is nothing I have to add to the sewn robe of Jesus Christ's pure and white righteousness. It is all done, it is all finished on the cross, and it shall all be applied to my soul from the right

hand of the Father. He hath fully satisfied with His precious blood for all my sins.

The blood of Jesus is exceedingly precious. You say perhaps, "What is it exactly that makes that blood so precious?" Many things. In the first place it is this blood that is the means of atonement. The word "atonement" may seem like a hard word to some people but it actually is quite an easy word because it comes from three words: "at one ment." "Ment" means "with." So "atonement" means "to be at one with." Jesus makes God and sinful man to be *at one with* each other by His precious blood. It is His satisfying blood that brings a holy God into communion with an unholy sinner so that God can look upon a sinner and say, "I accept the satisfying blood of Jesus on your account, and may deal with you as if you have paid with your own blood forever in hell for all your sins," yes, more, for Jesus also obeys the law perfectly for that same sinner. By His obedience to the law, and by His payment for sin, being God-Man, having an infinite value in all that He does, God can look down upon a sinner through Christ's atonement, be at one with him, and say, "It is for the sake of Christ's blood that I and a sinner may be brought together."

Secondly, Christ's blood is so precious, congregation, because it is the blood of a perfect, real, righteous Man who has given His life for sinners. It is the blood of the Christ-child who was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, who paid in our very nature that which God's justice demanded be accomplished in our nature. Angels could not be our mediator because they do not have our nature. The same nature that has sinned, our human nature, must give satisfaction for sin. What makes Jesus' blood so precious is that it is not the blood of bulls or goats or of our own human sacrifice, but it is the blood of the infinite God-Man.

Thirdly, Christ's blood is precious because His humanity is inseparable from His divinity. He is not two Persons. He is not divine Person *and* human Person. He has a human nature, but that nature is assumed to His divine Person. He is one Person. Thus, though He did not suffer in His divine nature, Peter feels free to say that the Church of God was purchased with the blood of the Son of God. It is this that gives infinite value to the blood of Jesus. One drop of His blood is sufficient, congregation, to wipe away the deepest of iniquities because He is divine. There is no end to the value of Jesus' blood, not just

because He was and is Man but also because He was and is God.

Fourthly, Christ's blood is precious because it is acceptable to the Father in heaven. Through this blood the attributes of God can be harmonized in the salvation of the elect. Through this blood God realizes, as holy Judge, His eternal purposes and His sovereign will of love to His own. Through this blood the angels could sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Fifthly, this blood is precious in the experience of believers. You see, congregation, whatever is precious to God, God makes precious to the hearts of believers, so that they may say, "The precious things of God are the precious things for my soul." God wins and woos them to the blood of His well-begotten Son. He teaches them that that blood is the blood of their great High Priest, the blood of their Shepherd, their Elder Brother, their Kinsman, their Friend, their Redeemer. All their hope, all their refuge, all their salvation is attached to this precious blood.

The Bible makes mention of this repeatedly. Let me read to you a few texts. Romans 3:25, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood"; Romans 5:9, "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him"; Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"; Hebrews 13:12, "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate"; Revelation 1:5, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood"; Revelation 7:14, "And I said unto Him, Sir, Thou knowest. And He said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; Hebrews 13:20, 21, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will." So you see, congregation, their justification, their redemption, their sanctification, all flows through the blood of Jesus. A bloodless Christianity, congregation, is no Christianity at all. Take away the blood of Jesus and you have no comfort in life and in death.

Thus, what does it mean to belong to Jesus Christ? What does it mean to get comfort out of belonging to Jesus Christ?

Our instructor begins right away with "who, with His precious blood." I cannot get comfort anywhere else. I cannot get comfort from my tears or my experiences. I cannot get comfort from anything I produce. I can only get comfort from God's provision, from God's great kinsman, from God's satisfaction, from the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This blood is precious because it is the only way to be just with God. It is the only way that God can take over my case and justify me in heaven's courts. It is the only way of salvation. There is no other way, my dear friend. We are all sinners. We have all come short of the glory of God. We are either saved by Christ's blood or we perish in our sins.

Come and reason with me just a moment. Is there anyone here who dares to say, "I have never sinned"? We would all say, "No." Is there anyone here who dares to say that God is not perfectly holy? We would all say, "No." Is there anyone here who would dare to say that God did not make us perfectly holy? I hope we would all say, "No, we do not dare to say that." Is there anyone here who would dare to say that God has somehow made us unholy, somehow influenced us to sin? No, we would not dare to say that. Thus, who changed us from being holy to unholy? We did, and we do. Now, my friend, think about it. This is both biblical and reasonable.

God is perfectly holy. He cannot lower the demands of His holiness to accept sinful man. God would cease to be God if He would accept that which is not holy. The only way for God to accept a sinful man was for God to find a way of satisfaction for His justice. Someone has to pay for sin. And since the wages of sin are death in the eyes of a holy God, someone has to die and shed his blood. That either has to be us, which would mean that we would have to pay eternally in hell because we are mere men, or it would have to be someone who is also God, who could give infinite value to that satisfaction so that God could look down upon a sinner through the substitute and say that that sinner is holy in the satisfaction given by that substitute. That is what God did. He gave His only-begotten Son. He "so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son."

In salvation God looks upon the perfect obedience of the sinless Mediator, Jesus Christ. Through that Mediator He

gazes upon His people and sprinkles the precious blood of Christ upon the doorposts of their conscience. He then says unto their souls, "When I see the blood upon the doorposts of your heart, the angel of death shall pass you by, for your sins have been paid in full by the precious blood of Jesus."

Oh congregation, how precious that blood is when it is applied by the Spirit to the soul! Then God's people are given to embrace the benefit of the blood of Jesus with a believing heart, and to appropriate what the Spirit applies. They may drink of the fountain and its cleansing power and experience a peace that passes all understanding. All their guilt and all their sins are then pronounced forgiven and forgotten in the sea of eternal forgetfulness by God the Father as holy Judge on the basis of Christ's blood.

It is precious the first time in the lives of God's people when they experience inward peace by Christ's blood, but it is also precious in their sanctification when they feel the reality of the daily efficacy of this blood. What do I mean by daily efficacy? I mean this, that when they feel their own unbelief and their own wicked depravity and sinful lusts, but have learned to treasure the blood of Jesus, oh, they may then flee by Spirit-worked faith to that open fountain of Christ's blood again and again, there to find fresh forgiveness for fresh iniquity.

You cannot separate Jesus from His blood. Some of God's people have been known to be confused about this. They say, "Jesus is precious but I don't understand the preciousness of His blood." Well, they are viewing it wrongly. When we speak of "the blood of Jesus," we mean Jesus in His full atonement, Jesus in what He is, Jesus in what He gives, Jesus in what He has done. The blood of Jesus and Jesus are one.

This blood, this Jesus, this blood-shedding Jesus is precious. He becomes my only hope, my only refuge, my all and in all. Would to God that more of us would learn more of that preciousness. Thomas Shepard said in his diary, "Do not lay your pipe short of the Fountain." What he meant to say was that as he stretched out in prayer to God, and tried to exercise faith (faith is often called the pipe between God and us, or an instrument by which Christ is received), "Oh, that I would not stop short of

that open Fountain of blood for cleansing, but that I may lay the pipe right by that Fountain, for I need that blood again and again. I need that blood in its fresh cleansing power."

Finally, congregation, this blood is also precious as it is spread out in the courts of heaven. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11-12). What the apostle to the Hebrews is saying is this, that Jesus' blood is precious to the Father in the courts of heaven. That blood is, as it were, spread before the countenance of the Father as a continual reminder that salvation is accomplished. So there is blood in heaven, there is blood on the cross, and there is blood sprinkled on the conscience of the believer. This is our comfort because Jesus made matters right between God and us on Calvary by blood, and Jesus keeps matters right at the right hand of the Father and in our conscience by His blood.

Thus, it is a bloody Christianity that the Scriptures present. I say that word with reverence, "a bloody Christianity." By nature that is offensive to us, congregation. We want to be saved without blood. But the Bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin with a holy God. Do you need a blood-shedding Christ-child who began to shed His blood already as a few days old? In circumcision the fountain of His blood was opened, but He would give all His blood on Calvary's cross. Oh, if you want to see the price that sin cost God, you must go to the cross and there you witness that Christianity is terribly bloody. There the crown of thorns caused the blood to drip down His head, and the nails in His hands and His feet drew blood. He was scourged upon His back which no doubt bled profusely, and a sword was driven into His side which brought forth blood and water. From head to toe Prince Emmanuel, Son of God and Son of man, was bloodied. He gave His all for His Church.

Oh congregation, this is the astonishing comfort of the living Church, that Christ so loved His Church that He gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5). He held nothing back. He emptied Himself; He humbled Himself to the death of the cross. This is

love beyond all other love — the love of the Father, the love of the Son, and the love of the Holy Ghost. Christ's dying on Golgotha was the pure love of a triune God — a giving Father, a giving Son, and an applying Holy Spirit.

Oh, what a glorious comfort, that He "with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins." Congregation, you don't need to add anything to Jesus' blood. God will not require a double payment. "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" (Isa. 40:1-2). Jesus' satisfaction is infinite. His blood is efficacious. It is efficient only for His people, but it is sufficient to save ten thousand worlds. This is my comfort, that this blood is all that I need for time and for eternity. By this blood, Paul writes to the Romans, we have peace with God, and there is therefore now no condemnation for them which are in Christ Jesus. To the Ephesians he wrote, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." And again to the Romans he wrote, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33-34). Do you see what Paul is saying? He is saying, as it were, "Who shall condemn the chosen of God?" His answer is, "It is Christ who has died and has shed His blood. That takes away their condemnation, and makes them acceptable in the sight of God."

Oh, what great comfort, congregation — the comfort of an Elder Brother, the comfort of a sealing Spirit, the comfort of an everlasting Father — flows out of the blood of Jesus Christ. God who is well-pleased with that blood makes His people well-pleased with that blood also. That gives them a desire, a burning desire, to lay down their lives and to be willing to shed their blood, not out of merit — oh no, they know there is no merit from their side nor need there be — but they are willing out of gratitude to give their all unto this precious Savior. When His blood becomes precious, then they are willing to say, "I am glad I do not belong to myself"; the sinner will then say, "I am a marked man, I am a marked woman, and my only purpose in life is to live — and oh, would to God I could do it always, but this is my only purpose — to live to the honor, and the glory, and the

praise of a precious, triune God."

Do you know something of these things, congregation? I don't ask you if you know them all in the depth that you desire to know them. Many of God's people miss much of what I have mentioned. But do you know that inward longing after fresh applications of the cleansing blood of Jesus to justify you, to free you, and to set you among the children of God at the table of God, in the family of God, so that you may go forward asking Him, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? How can I live to the honor and the glory of Thy precious Name as a fruit of tasting the power and the sweetness of that precious blood?"

Dear friend, "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" Can you say, "That I belong to this faithful, blood-shedding Savior."

Let us sing before we go further from Psalter 71:1-2.

II. Deliverance from All the Devil's Power

My comfort is not only in the precious blood of Jesus who satisfies for all my sins but also, says our instructor, "who delivers me from all the power of the devil." This too is a remarkable, I would say miraculous, benefit that flows out of belonging to Jesus and being partaker of His bloody satisfaction. The devil is usually underestimated wherever God is underestimated. If God is real in our lives, we shall know that the devil is real also. But where God is not real, where the Scriptures are not burning realities, then often we minimize and talk casually about Satan. But our instructor is not one who will talk casually about Satan. He knows that Satan is powerful. He says, "Jesus will deliver me from all the power of the devil." He has experienced the devil as a roaring lion, seeking to devour him. He has experienced the devil as an angel of light, seeking to deceive him. He knows that the devil has great power. The devil, congregation, is a fallen angel. He is mighty — not almighty, like the Son of God — but he is mighty. He is mighty to destroy. In one night one angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians. The devil will gain the victory over us every time if we fight him without the Word of God and without the Son of God. He is stronger than we are.

The comfort of the true believer is that his Head and King is stronger than Satan and will deliver him from all the power of the devil. He will conquer Satan in the believer's heart. He will conquer Satan initially in the moment of regeneration, which is the time when Jesus comes and casts out the strong man armed within — Satan — and takes up His own abode and kingship in the soul. Satan is defeated in principle already in the moment of regeneration. Having received the name of each elect sinner from His Father from the stillness of the eternal counsel of peace, Jesus comes to claim His rightful possession. Thus, the king of death is replaced by the King of life, and the convicted sinner then begins to feel that he has a devilish heart, begins to experience the reality of a dethroned Satan and an enthroned Savior. The sins he loved to engage in before he now hates, and the things he hated before, the things of God, he now begins to love.

There is a holy war that goes on in the soul of that sinner, a holy war that shall be won by Captain Jesus who girds His sword on His thigh. Jesus goes forth, riding upon His white horse, we read in the book of Revelation, shooting His arrows into the hearts of His elect vessels, causing them to be sorely wounded. He conquers not only Satan but in conquering Satan He conquers the sinner's own devilish heart. That is what that convicted sinner begins to experience when he is regenerated by the grace of God. He begins to feel the chains of sin with which he is bound. He begins to groan under the lusts of sin. He begins to plead for King Jesus to take full mastery of his soul. He tries to resolve his own spiritual problems, he tries to gain the victory over Satan himself, but he discovers his weakness, his dependency, his own unrighteousness and his need for the righteousness of the Son of God.

But oh, how heavy and how thick the battle between Satan, the soul, and Christ can become! It is a heavy, holy warfare, and in that warfare the sinner learns to know his own depravity, congregation. He learns to know that from his flesh no good thing comes forth. He learns to experience that he is full of corruption. He learns to write bitter things against himself. He learns that he is full of poison. He learns that most of Satan's accusations are true. He *is* too unbelieving, he *is* too wretched, too hardhearted and too cold, too inconsistent and too fickle, and too much of everything he should not be. Thus, that soul comes

to need a better king, a better savior, a better lord than himself. He learns to cry out in the thick of battle, "Take me out of the battle, for I am sore wounded." But the miracle and the comfort of grace are that Jesus takes up His seemingly, fatally wounded soldier and brings him into His hospital care as heavenly Physician. He pours into his wounds the blood balm of Gilead. Christ is his Physician and fills him with His strength. Then He sends him back out to battle, giving him hands to fight and fingers to war in the strength of the Lord God, causing him to make mention of Christ's righteousness, even of His only (Ps. 71:16). Jesus is almighty King and He will make conquest not only of Satan but also of the believer's own devilish heart.

What does He do, congregation? Jesus speaks with authority. He wins and woos the hearts of His people with divine authority as King of kings and Lord of lords. You remember, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when His captors came to take Him, that He said, "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth," and He said, "I am He," and they all fell backward in a moment to the ground. The torches, the weapons, the spears they had flew out of their hands. They were helpless before the authority of this King. Thus, when Jesus comes in the hearts of His people and they cry unto Him, "We seek Jesus because we are sore wounded," and when He says not with repelling authority, but with drawing authority, "I am He," then all their torches and weapons and works fall to the ground. But, instead of falling backward to the ground like the enemies, they fall forward to Jesus, being drawn by the words of the King who says, "I am He." They then bow in adoration and surrender their lives, thoughts, words, actions, plans, future, sins, unbelief, yes, all into the hands of this King. They surrender all to His power. It is then, congregation, when they lose their own lives, that they experience, "When I am weak, then am I strong." It is then that they experience that King Jesus is almighty, that He is Lord of lords and King of kings, that He destroyed with His death him who had the power of death, even the devil, and crushed the authority of the archenemy of God. Christ is captain of captains! He is potentate of potentates!

What must the believer confess? He confesses that Christ is almighty. He says, "My comfort is that He not only became a spectacle of humiliation on Calvary's cross, but He is also a spectacle of glorious exaltation as He reigns and rules

from the right hand of His Father as almighty and exalted King of kings. My comfort is that He is not only the suffering Lamb of God, but also the Lion out of the tribe of Judah who has delivered and does deliver and shall deliver me again and again from the clutches, the power, and the devices of Satan. That is my comfort."

Christ is not only a blood-sprinkled Mediator on Calvary, but He is also sword-wielding captain at the right hand of the Father who has earned the victory, who has risen from the dead, and who says, "I am Alpha and Omega. I was dead, but I am alive and have the keys of hell, death, grave, and Satan in My hand, and no man, no Satan, shall pluck My people out of My hand." This is my comfort, that Jesus Christ has the right, the divine warrant, to my soul, that He has the keys which unlock the chambers of my heart, that He owns me, that He is my Lord, my possessor, and that I am possessed of Him. This is my comfort, that He has conquered all the power of the devil and delivers me from his power. No, that does not mean that in this life I will have no more trouble with the devil, but it does mean that He delivers me already in this life from the *dominion* of the devil. In Romans 6:11-12, Paul tells the Roman Christians how they are to view themselves now that they are subjects of Jesus Christ, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Thus, the true believer is to view himself as dead unto sin by the power of the Son of God. Not that he is no longer tempted to sin, nor that he is not grieved by his own weakness, but he is to flee to the Son of God. It is in Him, in his Head, in his strength, in his captain, that he finds power to resist the temptations of the devil, and in whom he finds comfort to believe that Satan, though he is a roaring lion seeking to devour, will never be a devouring lion — a roaring lion, yes, but never a devouring lion. And why not? "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me. No man shall pluck them out of My hands." Jesus shall keep His people, that not one hair of their head, as we shall hear next time, shall fall to the ground without the Father's will.

Oh congregation, the devil is defeated already in principle. He is on the chain of King Jesus, but one day he shall be defeated in full. One day this shall be my comfort in full, that He shall deliver me forever from all the power and devices of

Satan. One day He shall be crowned by me Lord of all and I shall have no more trouble with the devil, no more trouble with my devilish heart, and no more trouble with anything of time and sense. One day Christ shall always be all and in all, and I shall cast the crown at His feet, crying out, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thee be all glory, and honor, and dominion paid."

Congregation, I want to leave you with a final question of examination, and that question is this: If you and I were to meet this Judge Jesus today on the clouds, and we were all to be gathered around His throne and we were to hear Him speak, "I am He," would you bow toward Him with holy delight, saying, "Here is my King, the One whom I love, the One who with His precious blood has satisfied for all my sins and delivered me from all the power of the devil," or would you fall backward as a stranger of Him, backward into everlasting damnation, and hear His voice, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I have never known you"? Dear friend, which shall it be? Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess Him to be Lord. But shall you do so as your only comfort or shall you do so out of compulsion? Amen.

Psalter 429:2, 4