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“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.”

Psalm 46:1

“Our Refuge and Our Strength”

Psalm 46:1-11

I. This Psalm has been a great comfort to believers throughout the ages as it reminds us that the Lord controls all things:

1) Nature (1-3)

2) History (4-6)

3) The future (8-10)

II. Our response:

1) Find refuge and strength in God alone (1), through faith in Jesus, as He is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6)

2) Lay your fears on the Lord (2), since He promises to be with all who believe in Him (7, 11; Romans 8:28-39)

3) Be still, and know that the Lord is God, and rules over all (10)

“Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” - Matthew 5:37

“Let Your ‘Yes’ Be ‘Yes!’”

Matthew 5:33-37

I. The Quakers, and some other groups, take these verses as a prohibition against all oaths (34-36).

II. In the Bible, oaths are used frequently:

1) By people (Genesis 14:22-23, 21:24, 24:3,9; Romans 9:1, 2 Corinthians 1:23)

2) By God (Genesis 9:11-16, 15:1-19; Psalm 132:11; Hebrews 6:16-18)

III. These verses teach us that:

1) We are not to take frivolous or evasive oaths (34-36, Matthew 23:16-22)

2) We are to speak the truth (37a), doing so in love (Ephesians 4:15)

3) Our tongue, left uncontrolled, is a source of great evil (37b, James 3:6)

IV. Application: Let your words be few and thoughtful, from a pure heart (37; Psalm 141:3, Proverbs 4:23, 10:19, 18:21; Luke 6:45; Ephesians. 4:29)

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil... He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” - Revelation 12:7-9

“The Creation and Fall of the Angels”

Ezekiel 28:11-19; Belgic Confession, Article XII:b,c

I. God “created the angels good” (Article 12; Ezekiel 28:15) but many fell along with Satan (Revelation 12:4,9). Thus we recognize:

1) Elect angels (1 Timothy 5:21) who do God’s will (Psalm 103:20)

2) Fallen angels who as demons are “enemies of God and every good thing... watching to ruin the church and every member thereof.” (Article 12; Rev. 12:7-9)

3) Angelic warfare between elect and fallen angels (Ephesians 6:12) which can cause:

a) A delay in answer to prayer (Daniel 10:12-14)

b) Corruption in governments (1 Kings 22:19-23)

c) A variety of schemes against Christians (Ephesians 6:11)

II. Applications from Article 12c:

1) We are not to follow the error of the Sadducees, who deny the spirit realm (Acts 23:8), as many people today also do.

2) We are not to follow the error of the Manicheans who deny the creation of angels (Colossians 1:16), esteeming them as eternal as God, “wicked of their own nature without having been corrupted.” A popular equivalent is in the teaching of “Yin-Yang,” the Taoist belief in an eternal dualism in which we seek a harmonious balance.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” - Matthew 5:43-44

“The Cloak and the Second Mile”

Matthew 5:38-48

I. We are to love, not only our neighbor, but enemies as well (44, 46-47), by:

1) Not retaliating when wronged (38-39)

2) By going the second mile in all things (40-42)

3) By praying for those who persecute us (44)

II. This type of love is like the love of God, who:

1) Gives common blessings to all people (45)

2) Blessed us while we were yet sinners (45; Romans 5:8)

III. Although in this life we fail to gain perfection in loving both God and our enemies, such love must always be our goal (48; Philippians 3:12)

*“This man (Jesus) was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge;
and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross...”*
Acts 2:23

“Providence: A Doctrine of ‘Unspeakable Consolation’”

Acts 2:22-28; Belgic Confession, Article XIII

I. The doctrine of God’s providence is, in the words of the Belgic Confession, “a doctrine of unspeakable consolation” because it teaches us:

1) God controls all things, yet is not the author of sin (23, James 1:13)

2) Nothing happens to us by chance (23, Proverbs 16:33); our heavenly Father’s oversight extends to every area of life (Matthew 10:29-31)

3) The devil and our enemies cannot hurt us without permission (23; Job 1:12, 2:6).
Whatever God allows, He also turns to our eternal benefit (24; Romans 8:28; Acts 7:59)

II. Providence is related to God’s secret and revealed will. We are to trust His secret will and obey His revealed will (Deuteronomy 29:29).

“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” - Matthew 6:1

“The Life Your Heavenly Father Sees”

Matthew 6:1-18

I. In these verses Jesus addresses three “*acts of righteousness*” (1): helping the needy (2-4), prayer (5-15), and fasting (16-18). He teaches us that His Father sees what we do and knows our motives (Hebrews 4:13).

1) If we do our “*acts of righteousness*” for the praise of others, that will be our only reward (2, 5, 16).

2) Righteous living, done for the glory of God, results in eternal rewards (4, 6, 18).

II. Applications:

1) The Christian life must be balanced (1, 6; Matthew 5:16; Daniel 6:10)

2) We are not to judge by external standards (1-18; 1 Corinthians 4:5)

3) The most important thing in this life is not your image, but your relationship to the Lord (1-2, 5-6, 18; 1 Corinthians 4:3-4).

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...’” - Genesis 1:26

“All have turned away...there is no one who does good, not even one...” - Romans 3:12

“The Creation and Fall of Man”

“From the Heights to the Depths and Back”

Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 3:10-18; Belgic Confession, XIV

I. Article 14 follows the Scriptural teaching that:

1) Man is the highest of created beings having been made in God’s “own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy,” able to do God’s will, and given dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26-28).

2) Adam “willfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse” as he:

a) “Separated himself from God” (Genesis 3:8)

b) “Corrupted his whole nature” (Romans 3:10-18)

c) “Lost all his excellent gifts,” retaining only enough to leave humanity without excuse (Romans 1:20)

II. The Confession concludes: “Therefore we reject all that is taught...concerning the free will of man,” because since the fall:

1) We are, by nature, slaves to sin (John 8:34; Romans 8:7)

2) Only God can save us (John 3:27, 6:44; 1 Corinthians 2:14)

3) Apart from the Lord, we can do nothing (John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Philippians 2:13)

“...When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you... ...your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” - Matthew 6:6...8

“Principles of Prayer”

Matthew 6:5-15

I. How we are to pray:

1) To the Father (6), through the Son (John 14:6; Hebrews 4:14-16) by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 6:18)

2) With thoughtful brevity (7-8), yet living life as a prayer (Rom. 12:1; 1 Thess. 5:17)

II. What we are to pray for:

1) God’s glory, kingdom and will (9-10)

2) Our needs, spiritual and material (11-13)

III. How it affects our lives: Being in the presence of God molds us more after His character (14-15).

“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” - Romans 5:17

“Adam, Christ and Original Sin”
Romans 5:12-21; Belgic Confession XV

I. Historically three views have been held concerning the sin of Adam:

- 1) Pelagius taught that Adam’s sin is not imputed to the human race. We are born innocent and only sin as we imitate others.

- 2) Augustine refuted Pelagius with the biblical truth that Adam’s sin, - “Original Sin,” - is imputed to each one of us (12-19).

- 3) Others taught that Adam’s sin was imputed to all, (the biblical view of Augustine) but that man retains enough goodness to choose Christ and live as he ought by his own free will (the view of Pelagius). This “Semi-pelagianism” is the core of Arminianism and is the most popular teaching today, even though it is incorrect.

II. Article 15 teaches that original sin:

- 1) Is “a corruption of the whole nature and a hereditary disease” infecting “even infants in their mother’s womb” (Psalm 51:5)

- 2) The Confession compares the corruption of original sin to:
 - a) a root “vile and abominable”

 - b) a polluted fountain, which baptism cannot cleanse

III. Although Adam’s sin is imputed to us, those who believe in Jesus Christ, by grace through saving faith, are imputed with His righteousness, forgiven and granted eternal life (15, 17, 21).

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do... But when you fast put oil on your head and wash your face...” - Matthew 6:16-17

“When You Fast...”

Matthew 6:16-18

I. Fasting was done:

- 1) On the Day of Atonement, as commanded (Leviticus 16:29, 23:26), and at other scheduled times (Zechariah 8:18)

- 2) At times of repentance (1 Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 9:1-2, Daniel 9:3-5)

- 3) At times of great sorrow (Judges 20:26; 1 Sam. 31:13)

- 4) To commission people to service (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23)

- 5) For concentration in spiritual growth, especially prayer (Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 1:4; Luke 2:37)

II. Fasting consisted, most frequently, of abstaining from all food from sunrise to sunset (1 Samuel 14:24; 2 Samuel 1:12, 3:35).

III. Applications:

- 1) While Jesus does not specifically command us to fast, He does teach that fasting is important for our spiritual life (16, 17). Fasting focuses us past physical bread to Him who is the *“Bread of life”* (John 6:35).

- 2) As with financial giving (Matt. 6:2) and prayer (Matt. 6:5) our motives and attitude in fasting are crucial (Matt. 6:16-18).

- 3) Fasting can include not just food, but other activity (1 Cor. 7:5), including recreational activity. - How much more time would you have for Bible study, prayer, and helping others if you systematically “fasted” from TV, the Internet and other legitimate activities that consume your time?

“...I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” - Romans 9:15

**The Mercy and Justice of God
in
Eternal Election**
Romans 9:1-33; Belgic Confession Article XVI

- I. Because of Adam’s sin which we have inherited (Romans 5:12), and the acts of sin we commit (Romans 3:10), we all deserve damnation.
 - 1) God shows His mercy in that He saves His elect from their sin. His electing love:
 - a) Is a demonstration of His mercy and grace (16)

 - b) Is not dependent on our works (10-13)

 - c) Is not by foreseen faith (Romans 8:29-30)
 - 2) God reveals His justice by allowing those who do not repent of their sin and believe in Him to be condemned (18; 1 Peter 2:7-8)

- II. The biblical teaching of election is detested by unbelievers and denied even by many professing Christians (30-33), because:
 - 1) It is considered “unfair” by those who do not realize that grace truly is “unmerited favor” (14-21, 29)

 - 2) It totally magnifies God and totally humbles man (16-29)

 - 3) It is a stone of stumbling to those who stress the “free will of man” and underestimate the sovereignty of God. They stumble over verses like 1 Timothy 2:3-4 and 2 Peter 3:9 because they do not recognize the context (1 Timothy 2:7; 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1).

- III. Our response: Reverent and awesome praise for God’s electing love (23-24; Ephesians 1:4-6, 11-12) as we confess our unworthiness (Psalm 130:3).

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:21

“God, Money and Heavenly Treasure”

Matthew 6:19-24

I. The Bible frequently speaks about money and material possessions because the way we handle money:

1) Reveals where our heart is (21)

2) Reveals where our focus is (22-23)

3) Reveals who our Master is (24)

II. In order that our heart’s desire is on “heavenly treasure,” rather than earthly treasure (19-21) the Bible teaches us to tithe, meaning we give 10% of all that we receive to the Lord and His kingdom work:

1) Many Christians believe tithing is legalistic and was only for Old Testament Israel. They base their giving on passages such as 2 Corinthians 9:7

2) Other Christians see tithing as a continuing biblical command (Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:8-10; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 16:2)

III. Application: You can never out give God. (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

“... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head and you will bruise His heel.” - Genesis 3:15

“The Restoration of Natural Man Through the Son of God”

Genesis 3:1-24; Belgic Confession Article XVII

I. Article 17 points out that when Adam and Eve sinned:

1) They “threw (themselves) into physical and spiritual death”
(Genesis 2:17; 3:19)

2) They made themselves “wholly miserable” (6-19)

3) They “trembling fled from (God’s) presence” (8)

II. In “admirable wisdom and goodness” God “was pleased to seek and comfort” Adam and Eve (9) as He:

1) “Promised (them) that He would give His Son (who would be born of a woman) to bruise the head of the serpent...” (14-15)

2) Provided clothing for them (21), causing the first blood-shed and foreshadowing the righteous garments of Christ imputed by faith to all who believe in Him (Romans 3:21-24).

III. Applications:

1) There are two lines of humanity, the seed of the serpent and the seed who believe in the Son of God (15, John 8:31-47)

2) Although Adam failed to keep the Covenant of Works, God gave His Son, who perfectly obeyed His Father’s will, so that in the Covenant of Grace His people would be forgiven and credited with His righteousness (Romans 4:1-25; Galatians 3:6-4:7; 2 Timothy 1:9).

“... Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” - Matthew 6:34

“Worried?”
Matthew 6:24-34

I. Jesus commands us not to worry (25, 31, 34). When we worry:

1) We aren't trusting God's power to provide (26). Worry often springs from a lack of faith (28-30)

2) We aren't submitting to God's providential care (30-32)

3) We cannot praise God as we ought because often our focus is on earthly things (25) instead of heavenly treasure (33)

II. To overcome worry we are to:

1) Seek God's kingdom first, trusting Him to meet all our needs (28-33)

2) As God enables us, we are to use the means He provides to meet our needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

3) Pray (Philippians 4:6-7)

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel - which means ‘God with us.’” - Matthew 1:23

“The Incarnation of Jesus Christ”

Matthew 1:18-25; Belgic Confession XVIII

I. Of all the amazing events recorded in Scripture, no event is as great as the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Through the incarnation:

1) God Himself, through the second person of the Trinity, Christ, was born in human flesh, given by the Father through the Holy Spirit’s conception, thus fulfilling prophecy (22-23)

2) Christ took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7)

3) Jesus assumed our human nature, body and soul, being like us in every way except for sin (Hebrews 2:14; 4:15)

II. The incarnation has often been denied: by liberal scholarship today, Anabaptists in the time when the confession was written, and by Docetists, Gnostics, and unbelievers in the early, on-going and present history of the church.

III. Applications:

1) Because of the incarnation and what it led to, we are saved, both body and soul, by faith in Jesus. In the words of the confession: Jesus “did not only assume human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul... it was necessary that He take both upon Him, to save both.” (Hebrews 2:14-18)

2) Our belief in the incarnation affects our view of the world, of Scripture, and our view of Jesus Himself (2 Corinthians 4:18)

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” - Matthew 7:3

“The Speck in Your Brother’s Eye”

Matthew 7:1-6

- I. This passage is often misused as many say that it teaches us never to make judgments about others. In actuality, the passage teaches us:
- 1) We are not to have a spirit of condemnation (1-2), but we must use discernment (6, John 7:24; Gal. 1:8,9; 1 John 4:1).

 - 2) We are to examine ourselves before removing the “speck” from a brother’s eye because:
 - a) We are quick to see sin in others (3a; 2 Samuel 12:1-10)

 - b) We often minimize, - and fail to see, - our own sin (3b)

 - 3) When we show someone who sins against us their sin (Matthew 18:15-17), we must:
 - a) Examine ourselves (3-5)

 - b) Restore them gently (2, 5, Galatians 6:1)

“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:14

“The Two Natures in the Person of Christ”

John 1:1-18; Belgic Confession Article XIX

- I. We believe the Biblical teaching that Jesus is both human and divine. However, because we cannot fully fathom this “hypostatic union” there have been many heretical misunderstandings of how two natures, divine and human, can be in one person, Christ:
- 1) Eutyches taught that the divine nature far outweighed the human nature so that Jesus became almost a third entity

 - 2) Nestorius taught that Jesus was essentially two persons, God and man, rather than one person with a divine and human nature

 - 3) The Kenosis theory teaches that Jesus “emptied Himself” of many of His divine attributes when the Word became flesh
- II. Article 19 refutes heretical misunderstandings and also gives practical application to a deep theological subject:
- 1) When Jesus died, it was “a real human spirit departing from His body” (Psalm 31:5, Luke 23:46)

 - 2) Because He is “very God” He has power to conquer death (Hebrews 2:14)

 - 3) Because He is “very man” He perfectly represents us (Hebrews 2:17)
- III. The blessings that flow from the two natures in the person of Christ brings salvation to all who have saving faith in Him (John 1:12-13)

“Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” - Matthew 7:7

“Ask, Seek and Knock”

Matthew 7:7-11

I. These verses emphasize the importance of:

1) Prayer. Although God knows what we need before we ask Him (Matthew 6:32), He still teaches us to ask through prayer (7-8)

2) Actions. Prayer will affect our actions. We will not only ask, but seek (7b, 8b; Luke 15:3-10)

3) Persistence. We are to persist in prayer and in seeking God’s will. Knocking is done more than once (7c, 8c; Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8)

II. The promise: Our heavenly Father will give good gifts to all who ask, seek and knock (9-11; Luke 11:13).

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” - 2 Corinthians 5:21

“God’s Justice and Mercy Demonstrated in Christ”

2 Corinthians 5:21-6:2; Belgic Confession Article XX

- I. God’s justice is seen in that He “sent His Son to assume that nature in which the disobedience was committed,” so that:
 - 1) Satisfaction (payment) for sin would be made as Christ bore “the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death,” as God “*made Him who had no sin to be sin for us*” (2 Corinthians 5:21a)

- II. God “poured forth His mercy and goodness on us” even though we are “guilty and worthy of damnation.”
 - 1) He did this by “giving His Son unto death for us, and raising Him for our justification,” “*so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21b)

- III. Our response as we prepare for the Lord’s Supper:
 - 1) We are to examine ourselves to see that we truly believe in Jesus alone for salvation (6:1; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

 - 2) We are to reflect on the reality that “*now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation*” (6:2). The day will come when it is too late to believe (Matthew 7:22-23; Revelation 6:16-17)

 - 3) In the context of 2 Corinthians 5, we are to be “*Christ’s ambassadors*” urging others to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.”

Matthew 7:13

“The Golden Rule and the Narrow Gate”

Matthew 7:12-14

- I. Many people who are on the “wide road” (13b) believe they are saved by “the golden rule” (12).
 - 1) Because of sin none of us can perfectly live out the golden rule (Romans 3:10-20).

 - 2) As “*new creations in Christ*” (2 Corinthians 5:17), we are to make every effort to live by the golden rule (Matthew 22:39)

- II. In life there are only two roads: The broad road which leads to destruction and the narrow road that leads to life.
 - 1) The broad road portrays the world apart from Christ with its fleeting and unsatisfying desires (13; 1 John 2:15-17)

 - 2) The entrance to the narrow road is Christ. He is:
 - a) The gate (13a,14, John 10:7, 9 NIV)

 - b) The door (John 10:7, 9 ESV; KJV; NASB)

 - c) The way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)

- III. Applications:
 - 1) As with every crossroad, a choice needs to be made (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15; Jeremiah 21:8)

 - 2) That we make the right choice, and choose Christ, is a result of God’s grace (John 15:16; Ephesians 1:3-14)

“For it is declared: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’”
Hebrews 7:17

“Our Great High Priest’s Sacrifice for Sinners”

Hebrews 7:11-28; Belgic Confession XXI

- I. As we take the Lord’s Supper we visually see that Christ is our Great High Priest *“in the order of Melchizedek”* (Hebrews 7:17).

- II. As our great High Priest Christ offered Himself as the only suitable sacrifice for our sin. His sacrifice necessitated:
 - 1) “Offering Himself on the tree of the cross” (Galatians 3:13)

 - 2) “Pouring out His precious blood to purge away our sin” (Hebrews 9:11-14)

 - 3) Suffering all the agony of hell for us, as He was forsaken by His Father (Matthew 27:46)

- III. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper reminds us that:
 - 1) We are to count all things *“a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus...”* (Philippians 3:8)

 - 2) We do not need to “seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God,” *“for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12)

 - 3) Jesus, and Jesus alone, is our Savior from sin (Matthew 1:21)

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” - Matthew 7:15

“Watch Out”
Matthew 7:15-23

I. We are warned repeatedly to “*watch out for false prophets*” (15, Ezekiel 13; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude: 4-19) because:

1) The evil one works hardest in the church (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

2) It is relatively easy for wolves to masquerade as sheep (15)

3) Time is a test of teaching, for we know them “*by their fruit*” (16-20) which takes time to develop and often includes:

a) a denial of the “*narrow gate*” (13; Jeremiah 8:11)

b) preaching for personal gain (Ezekiel 34:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:10)

c) moral depravity (1 Sam 2:22; 2 Timothy 3:6; 2 Peter 2:18)

II. Applications:

1) The warning to watch out is given to everyone (15) but elders have a specific responsibility to guard the flock from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31)

2) God will judge false teachers for all the harm they have done (22-23; James 3:1; 2 Corinthians 11:15)

3) Doing the will of our heavenly Father is imperative for us all (21). The Father’s will involves believing in His Son (John 6:28-29; our justification), and then living holy lives (1 Thessalonians 4:3, Romans 6:19; our sanctification).

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...”
“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”
Romans 3:22...28

“Our Justification Through Faith in Jesus Christ”

Romans 3:19-4:5; Belgic Confession XXII

- I. Article 22 teaches that we are justified (made right with God) only through faith in Jesus Christ. This faith is not of ourselves (22, Ephesians 2:8-9), but “the Holy Spirit kindles (it) in our hearts.”

- II. Justification through faith in Jesus Christ is called “the main hinge on which religion turns” (John Calvin).
 - 1) If our justification is not through faith in Jesus Christ alone (27-28; Romans 4:4-5), then “Christ is not sufficient... hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior.”

 - 2) We are saved by the merits of Christ (24-25). “However,” Article 22 points out, “to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our righteousness.” (21-22).

- III. Application: Through faith in Him the merit and righteousness of Christ is credited to us. In gratitude we strive to keep God’s law (31), and do the good works He ordained for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

“... Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Matthew 7:24

“Building on The Rock”

Matthew 7:21-29

I. This passage teaches:

1) Christ is the only sure foundation (24, Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Ephesians 2:20; Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Peter 2:6,7).

2) By building our lives on Him we are able to weather storms (25; John 16:33)

3) It is crucial that we are not “sayers only” (21-23) or “hearers only” (26), but are “doers” of the Word (24; James 1:22), for faith without works is dead (James 2:17)

4) We can fully trust the teaching of Jesus, for all authority rests in Him (28-29; Colossians 1:15-20).

II. Application: It is imperative that we put the words of Jesus into practice in our lives (24).

“The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him (Abraham) alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” - Romans 4:23-24

“The Double Blessing of Justification and Our Response”

Romans 4:1-25; Belgic Confession XXIII

I. Article 23, as it follows Scripture, teaches us that there is a double blessing in our justification through faith in Jesus Christ:

1) Our sins are forgiven since “our salvation consists in the remission of sins for Christ’s sake” (7-8)

2) “God imputes righteousness to (us) apart from works” (3-5, 23-25)

II. The 23rd article teaches us to respond by:

1) “Ascribing all glory to God” (Romans 11:33-36)

2) “Humbling ourselves before Him” (2; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31)

3) Having “confidence in approaching God; freeing the conscience of fear, terror and dread” (Genesis 18:20-33; Hebrews 4:14-16)

“The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them”

Matthew 21:6

**Our Response to
The Triumphal Entry of Jesus Christ
Matthew 21:1-17**

I. The triumphal entry of Jesus:

1) Revealed His divinity (1-3)

2) Fulfilled Scripture (4-5)

3) Led to a public acknowledgment of His kingship (8-11), and to His crucifixion, and brought about these responses:

a) Many looked for a political king and prophet (9,11)

b) Others simply questioned who Jesus is (10)

c) The leaders were indignant (15)

II. Application: The right response to Jesus is obedience (6) which springs from saving faith (Romans 1:5; Acts 26:20).

“As you come to Him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” - 1 Peter 2:4-5

“Sanctification and Good Works”

1 Peter 2:4-12; Belgic Confession XXIV

I. Those who are truly justified through faith in Jesus will also be sanctified as the Holy Spirit “regenerates (us)... causing (us) to live a new life, and freeing (us) from the bondage of sin.” This new life includes:

1) Doing good works “out of love to God” not out “of self love or fear of damnation” (5, 9, 12; Galatians 5:6; Colossians 1:10)

2) Our good works are “of no account toward our justification” (6; Luke 17:10; Philippians 2:13; Titus 3:4-8)

3) “God rewards good works, but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts” (Matthew 16:27; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:10)

II. Application: “Though we do good works, we do not found (base) our salvation on them” for they are all polluted by our sin (Isaiah 64:6). Instead we always rely “on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior” (6; Philippians 3:8-9)

“At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, ‘Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Christ?’” - Matthew 27:16-17

“Barabbas or Jesus?”

Matthew 27:26

- I. The account of Barabbas is recorded in all four gospels. It is a key event for it demonstrates that Jesus took our place on the cross by “*substitutionary atonement.*”
 - 1) All events in history are governed by God (Proverbs 16:4, 33)

 - 2) The events leading up to the crucifixion were not done by happenstance (Acts 2:23), but rather were predicted in the Old Testament prophecies (Zechariah 9:9; Isaiah 53; Psalm 35:11, 69:21)

- II. The significance of Jesus taking the place of Barabbas:
 - 1) The name Barabbas means “*son of a father.*” Barabbas represents all the sons and daughters of Adam, - all humanity (Romans 5:12-14)

 - 2) Barabbas was a notorious lawbreaker, as is each one of us (Romans 3:10, 7:21-25; 1 Timothy 1:15)

 - 3) Jesus took not only the physical punishment Barabbas deserved on the cross, but the punishment you and I deserve for our sins (Galatians 3:10-14)

- III. Application: Just as Barabbas realized that Jesus took his place on Calvary, we must acknowledge, with true saving faith, that Jesus took our punishment upon Himself there as well (Isaiah 53:5-6).

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”
1 Corinthians 15:17

“Blessed by the Resurrection!”
1 Corinthians 15:1-19, 35-44; Lord’s Day 17

- I. Although the cross is central to our salvation, we could not be saved without the resurrection of Jesus Christ (14, 17, 19). Blessings of the resurrection include:
- 1) Through His resurrection Jesus enables those who believe in Him to share in His righteousness (Romans 4:25).

 - 2) Through the resurrection we who believe are now resurrected to a new life (Romans 6:5-11).

 - 3) The resurrection of Jesus guarantees our own bodily resurrection at the last day (Job 19:25-27; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 42-43).
- II. Applications:
- 1) Having been raised to new life we are to set our hearts on things above, putting to death the sinful impulses of our old way of living (Colossians 3:1-5).

 - 2) The resurrection of Jesus is a source of praise which gives comfort and assurance to all who believe in Him, even in the greatest trials of life (1 Peter 1:3-7).

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves...” “...These are a shadow of the things to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” - Hebrews 10:1a; Colossians 2:17

“Types, Shadows, and the Reality of Christ”

Hebrews 10:1-18; Belgic Confession XXV

I. The law of God has several categories:

1) The civil was given to Old Testament Israel to reveal the extent of God’s holiness (Exodus 20 and 21).

2) The moral law includes the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21) and is binding for all people at all times (Matthew 5:17-18).

3) The ceremonial law was given in Old Testament times as a type, or shadow of Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1-18), and is now abolished as “all the shadows are accomplished; so that the use of them must be abolished among Christians...” (Article 25).

II. Application: The 25th article points out: “...We still use... the law... to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honorableness to the glory of God, according to His will.” The moral law of God has three main purposes, as it:

1) Reveals our sin (Romans 3:20), leading us to Christ (Galatians 3:24)

2) Restrains sin in society (Romans 2:14-15)

3) Is a means of expressing our gratitude (Exodus 20:1-2; John 14:15)

*Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him,
my Savior and my God. - Psalm 42:5-6a; 11; 43:5*

“Downcast?”
Psalm 42:1-43:5

- I. All of us “sing the blues” at times because life, even for believers, has its share of sadness. In these Psalms, which in many Hebrew Bibles form one Psalm, we recognize that the author was sad as:
- 1) He was far from the temple, where people worshipped (42:1-2)
 - 2) People taunted him on account of his faith (42:3,10)
 - 3) His memories focused on better days, increasing his sorrow (42:4)
 - 4) Life, with its “*waves and breakers*,” had swept over him (7)
 - 5) It seemed as though God had forgotten him (42:9) and rejected him (43:2)
 - 6) The nation he lived in was ungodly (43:1)
- II. Instead of continuing to “sing the blues” we are to:
- 1) Find comfort and strength in the guidance of God’s Word (43:3)
 - 2) Consciously praise God by counting blessings rather than sorrows (43:4; Habakkuk 3:17-18; Philippians 4:8)
 - 3) Put our hope in God (42:5-6a, 11, 43:5; Colossians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:3)

