

# HRA Reformation Voice

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# LORD'S DAY 1

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# LORD'S DAY ONE- THE ONLY WAY TO COMFORT

by Wilbur Bruinsma

There is not a person in this world, including the child of God who is not in need of comfort. Life in this world of sin is filled with affliction, strife, hurt, and sorrow. It is indeed, as the Catechism tells us, a valley of tears. We have our good times along the way. We have those memories to which we cling that are good and bring a smile to our faces. It is not as if we do not have times of great joy and rejoicing. But God tempers these good times with bad times. Solomon wisely writes in Ecclesiastes 7:14, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him."

No one - not even the child of God - escapes the miseries of this present life. There are sicknesses, diseases, life-threatening illnesses, and death. There are "accidents" which leave us hurt or maimed. There are handicaps with which some must live. These are merely external pains and sorrows. Then there are also those afflictions that hurt us from within. There is the anguish of heart and soul caused by strife with self and with others. There is loneliness, bitterness, anger, or the sharp ache of death that rips us apart inside. Though this world seems to be filled with all kinds of joking and laughter, it is a place of misery and pain. Though there are times of laughter and joy, there are also many times of emptiness, restlessness, and sorrow.

All of this is proof that there is need of comfort. There is a craving need to find peace when the soul is restless, a need to be fixed and calm when everything is upside down. There is a need to be strengthened when in despair and perplexed. There is a need to be content when trouble in life can cause such discontentment. We need solace, peace, and quietness of heart and soul in a world that offers none of these.

Since this is a basic need of everyone in this world, every person sets out to find that peace and rest of soul as well. There were a couple of schools

of thought among ancient philosophers as to how this comfort and happiness in life can be found. The one school of thought was that of the Epicureans. These men were of the notion that happiness is found in indulging in the excesses of life. Their motto was, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." This is, no doubt, the hedonistic thought that has pervaded modern society.

Joy and happiness, it is thought today, is found in indulging in everything that brings pleasure to the senses. Man must give free reign to his sensual appetites, to his desire to live a life of irresponsibility

and pleasure. He must indulge in food and strong drink. He must use his riches to buy everything that his heart desires. He must throw himself into the entertainment of the bars and nightclubs, or leave the realities of life behind and lose himself in the fantasy world of entertainment. He must never

allow himself to think about the misery of life. From morning to night he must fill his life with pleasure. No time may be given for introspection. The philosophy of the Epicureans long ago has certainly won the day. Men indulge in the things of this life: its treasures, its pleasures, its sins in an attempt to find comfort - peace and joy to the soul.

Then too, there is also evident today the philosophy of the Stoics. These philosophers of old believed that a life of strict asceticism is the answer to joy and happiness. Indeed, we see that too. There are those who will refrain from the simple pleasures in life. They diet and exercise vigorously. They maintain a rigid schedule in life and refuse to step outside the bounds they have placed on themselves. They attempt to stay in peak physical condition. Time is consumed by hours of work and then intense physical training. They attempt to excel in business, intelligence and sports. Their moral life is decayed, but their physical life is that of the stoic. These too, however, find little peace of heart and mind and oftentimes are exactly the same ones who live on anti-depressants and tranquilizers.

*No one - not even the child of God - escapes the miseries of this present life.*

They push themselves to the limits, even becoming over-achievers. And it still ends up in misery.

Coupled together with these earthly ways to find comfort there is also the secularism and humanism of our society. Many believe that man does not need God. The belief in a god, in their minds, only adds to man's misery. Instead, man must look inside of himself to find his own inner peace and joy. This he can do through meditation or yoga or listening to quiet, contemplative music. There is a hero inside of each one of us, it is said. That hero is ourselves and our own desires and needs. Fulfill these and you will be happy and at peace with yourself.

All these are the vain and empty attempts of unbelieving man to find comfort in his misery. They are temporary fixes through which unbelieving man attempts to cope with life in this sinful world. After all, they need something to cope. And they find their something in the things of this present life. In this way, they get by. They do. They get by. But they do so without really finding any peace to their hearts and souls - not real peace - not real comfort.

You know why all the ways of wicked man are unable to comfort him? Because man is looking for that comfort in all the wrong places. Unbelievers think they are able to find peace within by looking to himself. Man in his unbelief thinks that comfort is found in the here and now. He can find it on his own. Comfort and joy are found in what he does, how he lives, the way in which he views himself. Man looks no farther than self. He does what he deems right in his own eyes all in the vain attempt to be comforted - to find joy and peace. This is why there is no peace in this world! Unbelief refuses to look to the one true God to find comfort from all the misery of this present life. He tries to find comfort in his sin.

This is reality: man cannot find his comfort in himself or the things of this world. Comfort can be found by looking outside of himself and beyond the things of this world that perish. Comfort can be found only by admitting: "I am *not* my own. Rather, I belong to Christ." He is comfort in life and in death! That attitude is the day and night difference between faith and unbelief. Unbelief finds its comfort in man. Faith

swallows all human pride and recognizes the horrible plight man is in. He therefore realizes that comfort is not going to be found in himself or in the things of this present world. Comfort must be found in Christ alone. He is the Way! A person's only comfort, whether that is in body or in soul, whether that is life or in death is to be found therefore in Christ alone. Christ is the way God has chosen to give peace, joy, and contentment. He is the way God has chosen to comfort His people.

Why Christ? Because He alone redeems from sin. Ah yes! What the world of unbelief does not understand because of its hardness is that all the trouble and misery of this life is caused by sin. Sin is the root cause of restlessness, pain, and sorrow of body and soul. Physical sickness, illness, even death itself is the result of the curse sin on this world and our lives in it. Terror, distress, sorrow, perplexity of heart and soul are all a result of sin in our lives and the lives of others. Strife, anger, hatred are all sin that affects the heart of man and these cause so much hurt and sorrow in our lives.

Not only in the lives of the unbeliever, but in the lives of believers too! The only difference between the believer and unbeliever is this: God has given us eyes to see the reason for our misery! We are given

to know the source of sorrow. And in this knowledge we are also given to see the way to find comfort in the midst of our sorrow. It is only because of what Christ has accomplished for you and me in His death that will give us comfort.

Consider what Christ has done for those who are given to believe on Him. He has with His precious blood fully satisfied for our sins. Our sins that have caused us all that misery in life are forgiven us by God. We who through sin had alienated ourselves from God, have now been brought back into God's favor. Christ has through His death reconciled us to God. Through the righteousness of Christ we have been adopted by God to be His very own children. That knowledge gives the believer the greatest assurance - a rock solid assurance. The great God of heaven and earth, who made all things and controls all things is for us. He is on our side. And if He is for us then there is no one in this world that can be against us! There is nothing in this world that can

***This is reality: man cannot find his comfort in himself or the things of this world. Comfort can be found by looking outside of himself and beyond the things of this world that perish.***

befall us, that can be against us! Not even the devil has power over us. Christ has delivered you and me from the power of the devil and preserves us. All the miseries of this present life can be heaped upon us, yet in them all we can have the greatest peace, the greatest confidence, the greatest joy and contentment because we know all these things are not against us but for us! And that gives to believers a peace in our hearts that passes all human understanding. There can be tears streaming down our cheeks because of the sorrows of this present life of sin - yet there is peace within. Even

death has no sting.

The one great need of all men is this: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we find comfort in this life. What a wonderful comfort it is too, that I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

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## WHAT IS YOUR ONLY COMFORT

by R. Scott Clark

The Heidelberg Catechism, building on the breakthrough of the first stage of the Reformation, is organized in three parts. Remarkably, as basic an insight as this is, it continues to elude nearly all evangelicals and many ostensibly Reformed folk. This should not surprise us because even when the catechism first appeared there was some confusion about how to interpret it. Zacharias Ursinus, whom Frederick III authorized to explain and defend the catechism, mentions some of the alternatives and then proceeds to explain that the catechism is in three parts: Law, Gospel, and Sanctification. He said:

*The chief and most important parts of the first principles of the doctrine of the church, as appears from the passage just quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews, are repentance and faith in Christ, which we may regard as synonymous with the law and gospel. Hence, the catechism in its primary and most general sense, may be divided as the doctrine of the church, into the law and gospel. It does not differ from the doctrine of the church as it respects the subject and matter of which it treats, but only in the form and manner in which these things are presented, just as strong meat designed for adults, to which the doctrine of the church may be compared, does not differ in essence from the milk and meat prepared for children, to which the catechism is compared by Paul in the passage already referred to. These two parts are termed, by the great mass of men, the Decalogue and the Apostles' creed; because the Decalogue comprehends the substance of the law, and the Apostles' creed that of the gospel. Another distinction made by this same class of persons*

*is that of the doctrine of faith and works, or the doctrine of those things which are to be believed and those which are to be done.*

*There are others who divide the catechism into these three parts; considering, in the first place, the doctrine respecting God, then the doctrine respecting his will, and lastly that respecting his works, which they distinguish as the works of creation, preservation, and redemption. But all these different parts are treated of either in the law or the gospel, or in both, so that this division may easily be reduced to the former.*

*There are others, again, who make the catechism consist of five different parts; the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Prayer; of which, the Decalogue was delivered immediately by God himself, whilst the other parts were delivered mediately, either through the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, as is true of the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Eucharist, or through the ministry of the apostles, as is true of the Apostles' Creed. But all these different parts may also be reduced to the two general heads noticed in the first division. The Decalogue contains the substance of the law, the Apostles' Creed that of the gospel; the sacraments are parts of the gospel, and may, therefore, be embraced in it as far as they are seals of the grace which it promises, but as far as they are testimonies of our obedience to God, they have the nature of sacrifices and pertain to the law, whilst prayer, in like manner, may be referred to the law, being a part of the worship of God.*

*The catechism of which we shall speak in these lectures consists of three parts. The first treats of the misery of man, the second of his deliverance from this misery, and the third of gratitude, which division does not, in reality, differ from the above, because all the parts which are there specified are embraced in these three general heads. The Decalogue belongs to the first part, in as far as it is the mirror through which we are brought to see ourselves, and thus led to a knowledge of our sins and misery, and to the third part in as far as it is the rule of true thankfulness and of a Christian life. The Apostles' Creed is embraced in the second part inasmuch as it unfolds the way of deliverance from sins. The sacraments, belonging to the doctrine of faith and being the seals that are attached thereto, belong in like manner to this second part of the catechism, which treats of deliverance from the misery of man. And prayer, being the chief part of spiritual worship and of thankfulness, may, with great propriety, be referred to the third general part.*

If you've been around churches that use the catechism you might have heard these parts expressed as "guilt, grace, and gratitude," or "sin, salvation, service." Those are all right, because they all say the same thing, though law, gospel, and sanctification gets to a basic Reformation truth that is widely misunderstood, denied, or confused: the distinction between law and gospel and the relations between those two categories and sanctification.

By this distinction, the confessional Protestants (e.g., Luther, Bucer, Calvin and the authors of the catechism) meant to reject the old patristic, medieval, and Roman doctrine that the Bible contains two kinds of law, old and new, and that under the new law (wherein Jesus is the "New Moses") there is more grace to keep the law. They meant to say instead that the Bible contains two kinds of speaking, "law" (do this and live) and "gospel" (Christ has done or shall do for you). These two ways of speaking are found throughout the history of redemption, throughout

God's Word.

This distinction was essential to the Reformation. It was the foundation for the doctrine of justification *sola gratia, sola fide*. The Reformation read the apostle Paul to be teaching just this distinction in the book of Romans. Indeed, the catechism itself is patterned on the book of Romans which is in three parts: law, gospel, and sanctification (the Christian life).

The pattern of the catechism is revealed quite clearly in the second question of the catechism:

Q2: How many things are necessary for you to know, that in this comfort you may live and die happily?

Three things: First, the greatness of my sin and misery. Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery. Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.

**you might have heard these parts expressed as "guilt, grace, and gratitude," or "sin, salvation, service."**

The question asks for a number in order to answer the question. The answer is: three (not two – no this isn't a Monty Python sketch! Some folks have tried to re-organize the Reformed as "grace and obligation." Such a move is incompatible with the Heidelberg Catechism).

There are three things that the Christian must know, 1) the greatness of his sin and misery; 2) how he is redeemed from the same; 3) how he is to be thankful to God for his redemption.

The third question makes this "law/gospel" reading of the catechism perfectly plain: "From where do you know your misery? A: Out of the law of God." It is not the gospel that teaches us our sins, it is the law. This is exactly what the confessional Protestants before and after the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism taught. This is what we have come to know as the "first" use or the pedagogical use of the law. In this use the law ("do this and live") acts like a school teacher (as they used to act in the ancient world) and beats us and demands perfection. There is nothing wrong with the law. As we shall see, the problem lies with us. This relentless and holy and righteous demand for perfection is an instrument in the hands, as it were,

of the Holy Spirit who uses it to drive his elect to see themselves as they really are, outside of Christ: under condemnation and unable to fulfill the law's demand.

The catechism doesn't turn formally to the gospel *per se* until Q.19, but the gospel section of the catechism begins in Q. 12 and continues through Q. 85. This is important, because some of the revisionists (covenantal nomists/moralists) write and speak as if Q. 86 was a summary of the gospel. It isn't. The gospel section ends with Q. 85. This distinction is important so that we do not slip back into the medieval/Roman/Socinian/Arminian confusion of law and gospel and of justification and sanctification.

According to the catechism (Q. 19) the gospel has been revealed throughout the history of salvation. The gospel is that Christ, as the righteous and holy One, has merited righteousness for his people, he has paid the penalty incurred by their sin, has suffered actively all his life in the place of all his people, died a horrible death for all his people, and has been raised for all his people. The good news is that all that the law requires for perfect righteousness has been accomplished and we benefit from it only by trusting, resting, and receiving Christ and his finished work for us as our own.

The catechism, however, does not stop there. From Q. 86 through 129, the catechism deals with the Christian life, with our new life in Christ, with dying to sin and living to Christ, the dying of the old man and the making alive of the new. The catechism is explicit, as we shall see, that we do not live this new life apart from grace, but in grace, and through faith. We do not live the new life in order to earn God's approval or in a state of probation or under the law's judgment. Rather, we live the new life in Christ, in grace, out of gratitude to Christ for his grace to sinners and his obedience for them, even unto the cross. We live the Christian life according to God's revealed, moral will.

Reformed folk call this the "third use" of the law, whereby the law serves as the norm of the Christian life. We cannot present ourselves to God either in part or in whole as law-keepers. To attempt that is legalism of the first order. The law doesn't sanctify or justify or save us, but that doesn't mean that we may dispense with it. Those who would do that are rightly called "antinomian."

The catechism follows the pattern of Romans very closely. Having been redeemed, we belong to Christ and we want to do his will, not to be just but because we are just in Christ and we are his grateful people.

Just as we are theologically confused in our time so we are morally confused. The catechism offers a brilliant exposition of God's law as the norm for our new life. As we meditate on the catechism may God renew our moral vision as the redeemed of the Lord.

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According to the catechism (Q. 19) the gospel has been revealed throughout the history of salvation. The gospel is that Christ, as the righteous and holy One

**Q2: How many things are necessary for you to know, that in this comfort you may live and die happily?**

**Three things: First, the greatness of my sin and misery. Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery. Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.**

# QUESTION TWO AND EVANGELISM

by Howard Sloan

When I was in college I was involved in Campus Crusade for Christ, which means that I became very familiar with the Four Spiritual Laws. But having spent time in the Heidelberg Catechism I have come to believe that there are three rather than four. Look at Question 2 of the Heidelberg.

*Q. 2. How many things are necessary for you to know, that you, enjoying this comfort, may live and die happily?*

*A. Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.*

Lots of time can be spent trying to learn different methods and techniques for presenting the gospel to the lost, but I believe that the writers of the Heidelberg have given us a simple yet versatile gospel outline in Question 2. Let us examine each aspect of Question two for its evangelistic use.

## HOW GREAT MY SINS AND MISERIES ARE

*“First, how great my sins and miseries are.”* Questions 3 through 11 discuss this in detail. This covers more ground than it looks like on the surface. It is a great statement regarding the origin and scope of the problem that the gospel solves. We could easily jump into a discussion of what sin is and what it deserves, but to do that would be jumping over a major point that I think is implied in the first part of Answer two – GOD.

Moses, the leader of Israel in the days following their being led out of Egyptian slavery, desired to know God in a better and more clear way. During His encounter with God, God revealed Himself to Moses in this way.

*Exodus 34:6-7 The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”*

Here is revealed in just a few verses, a snapshot of the character of God. It is a great verse to have memorized, not just for evangelistic purposes, but also to remind us constantly of what God is like.

I believe that the writers of the Heidelberg have given us a simple yet versatile gospel outline in Question 2.

The first set of characteristics sound good to our ears. He is a merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love, forgiving iniquity and sin. These make us feel like we have some hope in the judgment to come. After all He is a forgiving God. But just a few verses earlier we learn a vital lesson about God. He dispenses this mercy, grace, and forgiveness as He sees fit.

*Exodus 33:19 And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*

That means that God does these things on His terms and in His way. It also means that He does these in line with the rest of His character. His character is such that can not and does not clear the guilty. That leaves us to wonder. How do we know who is guilty and what happens to them?

Who is guilty? The simple answer is that we are because we do not live up to God’s standard of holiness. His standard can be found through out the entirety of the Bible, but very specifically in Exodus 20 in what is commonly called the Ten Commandments.

It can be valuable at this point to use the law

to demonstrate our guilt. In this standard we are told to have no other Gods, we are told not to make idols, not to take the Lord's name in vain, and not to misuse the day that is set aside for worship and rest. In short, we are to give God the worship, glory, and praise that He richly desires. We must worship the true God, not a man-made creation. We must give to Him what He is due.

The law continues to speak of our duty toward one another. We are told not to murder. We may think that we are clear of this charge, yet Jesus speaks to us of the murder in our hearts *"everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."* (Matthew 5:22)

The law tells us not to be adulterers. Jesus further explains that by saying, *"that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28). The law points out that we are thieves, and liars. The law also instructs us not to covet. This means we are not to long after the things that others have. God desires us to be content with what He has provided us.

Where does that leave us? With the same question of the Psalmist in Psalm 130:3 *"If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"* The answer is none of us, because *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"* (Romans 3:23)

What good is it to know the law? *Romans 3:20*

*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

If we are guilty, then what is our sentence?

*Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death,*

Death is more than just physical death. It is separation from God forever. It also involves eternal

punishment as we are *"liable to the hell of fire."* (Matthew 5:22)

## HOW MAY I BE DELIVERED FROM ALL MY SINS AND MISERIES

So how are we delivered from all our sins and miseries? In the person and work of Jesus Christ. Questions 12 through 20 cover this point. We begin by pointing to the first part of God's solution - to become man Himself.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:1, 14)

The Apostle John uses the term "Word" here

So how are we delivered from all our sins and miseries? In the person and work of Jesus Christ.

to refer to Jesus the Christ. Jesus was God in human flesh. *"in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,"* (Colossians 2:9) As man, Jesus was perfect and without guilt before God the Father. This made Him the perfect one to bear our sin. The Bible is clear that Jesus bore the penalty that we deserve. The following verses are helpful in demonstrating that.

*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that*

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.* (1 Tim. 1:15)

*even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (Matthew 20:28)

*just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.* (John 10:15)

Not only did Jesus lay down His life in sacrifice on the cross. He rose again from the dead three days later to prove that He accomplished what He set out to do.

We must then discuss how we receive the forgiveness and pardon that Jesus purchased for us. Let us look at Jesus own words.

and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15)

We are called to repent and believe. What do these mean? Repentance means that we are sorry for having offended God, and turn from our sins and to Him. In 2 Cor. 7:10 tells us the difference between true repentance and the sorrow of this world. "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." So often we see people that are sorry because they have been caught, not because they are sorry for what they have done. God desires a sorrow that is so sorry for having offended that it desires to put away that behavior for good.

We are also called on to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Question 21 is another good question to have memorized for evangelistic purposes.

**Q. 21.**  
*What is true faith?*

**A.**  
*True faith is not only a certain knowledge, by which I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Spirit works by the gospel in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.*

Romans 10:9-10 is a key verse in understanding the idea of true faith.

*because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

True belief involves knowledge and trust. It begins by believing that Jesus Christ is who He claims to be and did what is said of Him in the Bible. But it is more than just understanding of the facts. It is

an act of trust in Him to pay the penalty for us. It is trust that shows itself in the heart and with the lips. Questions 60-61 can also be of us in this context. All of this is implied in being delivered from our sins and miseries.

#### HOW I SHALL EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR SUCH DELIVERANCE

The third point of the gospel message is the gratitude of heart and life that each believer is to maintain. Question 32 is helpful here.

*Q. But why are you called a Christian?*

*A. Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and so am a partaker of his anointing; that so I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him: and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life and afterwards I reign with him eternally, over all creatures.*

There are a few points that I bring up at this point. The first is to live as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Jesus for his incredible mercies.

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living*

*sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)*

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Cor. 5:14-15)*

Paul's point is plain. If God has done all of this for us, then we ought to live lives of gratitude and love toward Him.

The second point is that we are to give up sin in our lives.

*Q. 89. What is the putting to death of the old man?*

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)**

*A. It is a sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more to hate and flee from them.*

*Q. 90. What is the enlivening of the new man?*

*A. It is a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.*

Scripture bears this out.

*Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” (Exodus 20:20)*

*Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. (Matthew 3:8)*

If our sin is what has caused us to deserve God’s wrath and judgment in the first place, then we

should want to be rid of it after we believe. Think of it this way; before coming to Christ, our sin is offensive to God and unforgiven. After coming to Christ, our sin is still offensive to God but we know it is forgiven. This does not give us the right to keep on sinning. It should motivate us to put away our sin out of love for the One who freed us from its penalties.

Sometimes we do not know where to begin when discussing the Jesus Christ with the lost. I hope that this provides some food for thought and a jumping off point that can be used for God’s glory and He brings others to Himself through our life and words.

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## Book Reviews

*By Grace Alone: How The Grace of God Amazes Me. By Sinclair Ferguson. 2010 Reformation Trust. Reviewed by Howard Sloan.*

Ferguson states in his preface, “Still, why a book on ‘How the grace of God amazes me? For one reason: not all Christians find it so amazing.” Ferguson does a wonderful job of causing the reader to be amazed once again, or perhaps for the first time, by the grace of God. The book is structured around a hymn of the church in Africa called “O How the Grace of God Amazes Me.” Each chapter reflects on one of the stanzas, of which there are seven, and draws on Scripture to discuss each point.

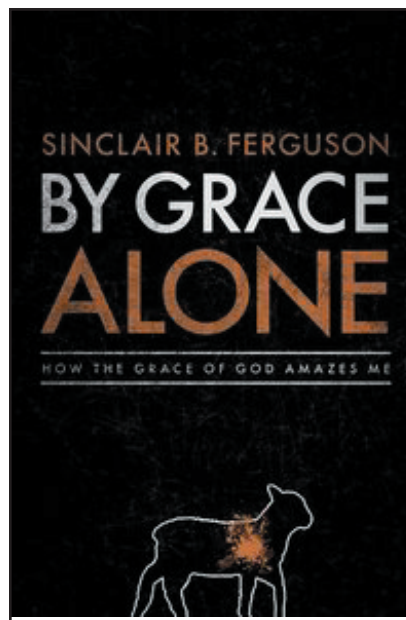
The first chapter is called “My Chains Fell Off” because the first stanza state that the grace of God “loosed me from my bonds and set me free!” The first part of the chapter focuses on the bondage that we find ourselves in because of sin. The second half of the chapter then focus on the

freedom that we have in Christ. The second chapter is “Unconditional Love.” In this chapter Ferguson looks at each player in the parable of the prodigal son to talk about the love and grace of God.

“At God’s Expense” is the title of chapter three. This chapter examines the work of Christ, particularly in his sufferings and death, on our behalf. Ferguson states “The third verse brings us to the theme of this chapter -salvation was costly to God.” (p. 31)

Chapter four is “A Great Exchange.” This deals with not only the sacrifice of Christ for our sins, but the removal of our guilt and the transformation of our lives. As reflective of this theme, Ferguson states “The marvel of the gospel is that it deals with our objective guilt. Then we begin to appreciate our new standing before God. At the point, God begins to transform our feelings.” (p. 56)

Chapter five called “Guaranteed Security” focuses on “Satan’s darts” and our safety and security in Christ by examining Romans 8. Chapter six called



“Delivered From Evil” focuses not on the darts of Satan, but on the art of Satan, that is Satan’s “ability to produce sinister thoughts in the mind of the Christian believer.” (p.84) The book of Job is used by Ferguson to point out Satan’s art and the believer’s response. Chapter seven is “True Freedom.” Ferguson discusses what it means to die to sin.

This book is not written to provide some new theological insights, it is written to cause us to reflect on the implications of the theology we should already know. I liked having the structure around this theologically rich hymn. The book is very devotional

in character, and lends itself to self-examination and reflection. How amazed by the grace of God are you?

*“Oh how the grace of God  
Amazes me!  
It loosed me from my bonds  
And set me free!  
What made it happened so?  
His own will, this much I know,  
Set me, as now I show,  
At liberty.”*

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## News, Notes, and Prayer Requests

### NEWS AND NOTES

- The theme of the October 2010 edition will be “Lord’s Day 2” All articles and reviews are due by September 15, 2010.

- The Executive Committee is suggesting that since many of our members are unable to attend meetings as a requirement of membership, the requirements ought to be broadened to include the following options as equally suitable means of fulfilling membership requirements:

- Contributing an article or book review to the *Reformation Voice*

- A financial contribution

- Distributing the *Reformation Voice* via printed copies and/or by linking to the *Reformation Voice* on one’s blog or website

- Attending an HRA meeting or HRA sponsored Conference.

Please offer any comments on this suggested policy to [pastorsloan@comcast.net](mailto:pastorsloan@comcast.net). This will likely become a constitutional revision at some time in the future.

- The 2011 Reformation Voice conference is tentatively scheduled for May 24-26, 2011 in Pittsburgh, PA. Details on cost and speakers are forthcoming. Check the website for updates.

### PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for the planning of the upcoming Reformation Voice conference. We are still working on speakers for the conference.

NEXT EDITION:  
OCTOBER 2010

LORD’S DAY TWO  
Q/A 3-5

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### Editorial Policy for the Reformation Voice

1. The Executive Committee shall serve at the editorial committee for the Reformation Voice. They shall have the right to select or reject any content for inclusion in the Reformation Voice.

2. Content may be submitted by members, pending members, or members of member churches. The Executive Committee may also solicit the right to (re)print articles from other authors or reviewers whose writings may be of value to the membership of the HRA.

3. In keeping with the purposes of the Association, books reviews in the Reformation Voice shall be reflective of the purposes and standards of the Association.

4. The Reformation Voice shall not be used as a platform to voice views and positions that are particular to a denomination or group. Rather, it should seek to promote those theological positions which are held in common by all who hold to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.