

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
June 8, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Introduction:

1. The New Testament give the Christian a mandate to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to make verbal confession of that belief to all who are in need of hearing the Good News. Over time the early Church began to compose creedal statements that held forth the key tenets of the Faith. The earliest creed that has been found simply states, "*Jesus is Lord!*" which stands in opposition to the required creed of all Roman citizens of the time, "*Caesar is Lord.*" Then creeds were expanded to become fuller accounts of the Faith: i.e. The Apostle's Creed (which was not written by the Apostles but embodied the teachings of the Apostles. This was also the early churches method of determining orthodoxy for its pastors and members.)
2. Reformed confessions like Westminster with the Larger and Shorter Catechism, the Belgic Confession with the Heidelberg Catechism, 2nd Helvetic (Swiss) Confession, and the canons of Dordt were a broader work of creedal confessions that more fully articulated the true faith in a world overcome with religious confusion. Also along this line came the First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1644/1646), the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1833/1853) all of which almost mirrored the Westminster in content.
3. These all taught adults and children the doctrines of the faith so that they might witness clearly to the true biblical faith. The Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms along with the Heidelberg Catechism and the Baptist Orthodox Catechism of 1680 and the Philadelphia Baptist Catechism of 1745 along with various Lutheran Catechisms came into being as a systematic approach to teaching the doctrines of scripture.

C. "NO CREEDS BUT CHRIST" was a popular statement from almost a generation ago now. What do you think of this statement?

1. Example: Central Church of Christ, Mt. Vernon, Ill. (may say it all!)
 - a. First thing you see on their website: *We believe God is the sole Creator of the universe. Jesus Christ in the flesh was both God and man. That Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified and died for payment of our sins, was buried and raised again on the third day and then ascended into heaven. We believe Jesus is coming again and that He alone can atone for our sins and provide eternal salvation because He alone is Lord.*
 - b. Next this is this: *Central Christian Church is a nondenominational fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ who have no creeds but Christ, no book but the Bible and no name but Christian.*
 - c. Next: *To honor God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - d. Lastly: *We teach the Bible is the Word of God, supernaturally inspired, inerrant, preserved through time and God's divine standard for life and eternity. We have no other books to follow except the Bible.*

2. Many of the current Church of Christ (Disciples) Churches like the one down the street have in their “doctrinal” statements “No Creeds but Christ” still. But given their current doctrinal beliefs we see how that is working for them since they are making it up as they go. Have there been abuses in confessional churches...sure there has but the benefit far outweighs small amount of abuse.
3. Recently, the motto “deeds over creeds” has once again captured the imagination of the evangelical world. As attractive as this may sound, there is a very steep price to be paid here. How so? According to this notion, it really doesn’t matter what your label is (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Pentecostal, or Baptist). All that matters, apparently, is one’s love for Jesus — everything else is of little concern. But as it turns out, creeds really do matter. Any unity like the kind now being urged on us that is formed apart from creeds and the need for them, is doomed to produce the kind of unity that is polluted by doctrinal impurity. It is the kind of impurity that in the final analysis ends up compromising the truth of the gospel. This is too steep a price to be paid for the sake of visible unity.

D. How would you answer these questions?

1. What are Creeds and Confessions?

- a. Latin word “credo” means *“I believe...”*
- b. At their simplest, they are statements of the Bible’s great doctrines and a list of its leading precepts.
- c. We can further add this: they are summaries and presentations of Gospel truth.
- d. Creeds and Confessions have been formulated throughout the life of the Church. See for example, “Jesus is Lord;” cf. Matthew 16:16 and 1 Corinthians 12:3. Later generations produced the Apostles’ Creed, the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds, through to the great Reformation and Protestant Confessions.

2. Why have Creeds and Confessions?

- a. They are the Means of Establishing Orthodoxy.
 - (1) They are the means of testing a man’s soundness in the faith. As hinted at above, history teaches us that tests of orthodoxy are a necessity.
 - (2) It was necessary to define themselves in light of Roman Catholic charges that they had left the true church and were following heretical teachings. They carried out this task as churches with careful and prayerful exegetical work through the entirety of Scripture in order to state coherently the major lines of its teaching on both doctrine and duty. Several synods in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries fulfilled this task with solid grounding on the Word of God written and in line with the traditional creeds of the first five centuries of Christian history.
 - (3) The Reformation saw a pouring forth of Protestant Creeds and Confessions. Men clung to them, in some instances to the death. Such were needed, then, in better days.
- b. They are a Means of Safeguarding Truth. As statements and summaries of the vital doctrines of the Bible, they take on the role of a guardian or protector. They help us to “contend for the faith”.
- c. They are a Means of Witnessing to the Truth. In adopting a Creed, we formally and openly declare our belief in Scripture and a clear demarcation is drawn between the believing and the unbelieving.
- d. They are a Means of Promoting Harmony and Peace. The Scriptures command us to think, believe and speak the same things. It is to this point that Creeds and Confession can help.
- e. They are a Means of Distinguishing between Christians.
 - (1) This was especially true amongst the different Protestant denominations of past years and still ought to be the case. Creeds are an honest attempt to let others know what we believe.

We say 'honest', because it is honorable to be open with each other, especially when a believer may consider joining with a company of God's people.

- (2) Besides, they can be a help in allowing Christians from different denominations to understand and fellowship with one another, even if they do not always agree on every point.
 - f. They are also a Means of Study. The reading of Creeds, Confessions and Catechisms has done much good down the centuries. Believers of today neglect them to their own detriment. A regular reading of a Creed and a Confession's contents will stimulate study, inspire faith and keep the Reformed doctrines alive in a believers' hearts.
 - g. They are a Means of Exhortation. Confessions and Creeds can challenge, rebuke, instruct and draw us closer to the Lord.
 - h. They are the Means of Last Resort.
 - (1) In the case of doctrinal dispute or discussion among believers the Confessions, Creeds and the catechisms having categorized certain doctrines of the scriptures can and will be a guide and a judge in these discussions.
 - (2) In cases of serious discipline they can be employed as a standard by which to act and judge.
3. Can you think of any biblical creeds and or confessions of faith?
 - a. 10 commandments
 - b. Peter's confession of Christ
 - c. 1 Cor. 13
 - d. Deut. 6:4; John 6: 68-69; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 8:4, 15: 3-7; Phil. 2:11; 1 John 4:2
 4. What might be some reasons not to have Creeds and Confessions?
 - a. Both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches invest such authority in the declaration of the institutional church that the church creeds can seem to carry an authority that is derived from the church's approval rather than conformity with the teaching of Scripture. Evangelicals are right to want to avoid anything that smacks of such an attitude... At the Council of Trent in the 16th Century the RC Church stated emphatically that the special revelation of God's truth is found in Scripture AND in the traditions of the Church...a dual source of ultimate authority that was confirmed again as late as 1950 in the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* ("Of Human Race"). (This has not been changed even up to today. See how Jesus feels about human traditions and manmade laws on the spiritual conduct of His people...(Matt. 5: 21, 27,31,33,38,43, 6:1, 15:1-9 just to name a few.)
 - b. As a society we are becoming more and more relativistic so anything that even suggests absolute standards gets us at the very least edgy.
 - c. We have lost our ties to history so we want to do away with anything "old".
 5. Standards as they apply to elders and deacons...to ordination of the office.
 - a. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?... Do You BELIEVE- states that these are what you live by, are shaped by and judge by. When I say that I believe I am stating that these words and these words alone have the authority to bind my conscience and to impose upon me an absolute obligation...for it is the very Words of God.
 - b. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?... Do you SINCERELY RECEIVE AND ADOPT- communicates that we ascribe to and accept what is written in this confession and catechisms as documents that best contain the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures...but the wording also recognizes that this is a manmade document so there can be room for disagreement...exceptions. Presbytery

would then determine if these disagreements are acceptable or if they go against the doctrine there in. they in no way rise to the level of Scripture and are always a subordinate document.

- c. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
- d. Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?
- e. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
- f. Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?

**Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
June 15, 2014**

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Since we have the Bible why do we need Creeds and Confessions?
2. What might be some reasons not to have Creeds and Confessions?
3. When looking at the ordination vows for officers in a PCA church what did we say was the difference between the I believe statement in the first vow and the I sincerely receive and adopt the WCF and the Larger and Shorter catechism of the second Vow? Here are the vows:
 - a. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?...
 - b. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?

C. Why does Doctrine Matter?

1. Look at I Tim. 1:3-7: *"As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship (good order?) from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions."* I Tim. 1:3-7
 - a. Why does Paul refer to doctrine as a "stewardship" of God's Word?
 - b. What does Paul mean by "speculations", and how do these undo proper stewardship of sound doctrine/God's Word?
 - c. Why do you suppose people today are skeptical of biblical doctrine?
 - d. How would you describe your own use of Biblical doctrine at this time? Would you say you are a student of sound doctrine? Or are you a bit put off by it? Explain.
 - e. What do I mean when I talk about the "doctrine of the sanctity of marriage"? Is this something we think of as a doctrine why or why not? What are ways people "speculate" about this doctrine? What is the truth...the sound doctrine concerning this?

- f. Is there any way that the Church can in good conscience and seeking to glorify God accept same-sex relationships and practicing homosexuals? How would you support your position doctrinally?
2. Now look at I Tim. 4:16: *“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching (doctrine). Persist in this, for by doing so you will be saved both yourself and your hearers.”* (I Tim. 4:16)
 - a. What is this passage telling us all?
 - b. What would you say are some of the main doctrines of Scripture? List them below, and give a brief definition of each?
 - c. How important are these doctrines? Can Christians afford to neglect them? Why or why not?
3. What are some of the important questions of life that are answered by Christian doctrine?
4. Do you agree that *some* form of doctrine is inescapable? Give some examples of the kinds of doctrines people embrace who do not accept Biblical doctrine:
5. How do non-Christian “doctrines” try to answer these questions? How does this help to demonstrate the importance of sound doctrine?
- D. WCF...Chapter 1- The Holy Scriptures w/ Shorter Catechism Q&A 1-3; and 88-90
 1. What is the chief end of man? Why is this important for us? What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify Him and enjoy Him? Why is this important?
 2. How many types of revelation are there? (Chapt. 1, Sect.1) How do they differ?
 3. What is meant by “inspiration of God” as stated, *“All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of life and faith.”* (Chapter 1, Sect. 2 and again in section 8)
 4. What is the evidence that the Bible is inspired that the confession speaks of? (See Sect. 5) Can you think of any Scripture texts that supports your claim?
 5. Speaking about how these books were chosen and of the Apocrypha, I hope you had time to look at the attachment I sent earlier this week called *Can We Trust the Bible*. This gives a “short” explanation on such matters.
 6. What are the divines saying in Chapt. 1, sections 4-6 and why is it important to us today?
 7. According to the Confession how do we prove/understand Scripture?
 8. Does the Holy Spirit speak apart from the Scriptures? Explain.
 9. Extra points: Why was it important for the divines to make the point over and over again that the Holy Spirit is the “voice” speaking through Scripture?

E. WCF- Chapter 2- God and the Trinity w/ SC 4-6

1. With the Bible in hand, what do you believe ...from your experience... that the average Christian understands about God?
2. Thinking of the catechism a minute. What is God?
3. How does the confession answer this question? (Chapt. 2, sect. 1) Why is the answer to this question ultimately important to us?
4. Have you noticed something about this explanation? There is not much about God's love spoken of in these sections. Why do you suppose that is?
5. What about this explanation is missing from your own understanding of God? How do you suppose reading the confession regularly can help you retain this/these?
6. What is meant by, *"He alone is all sufficient in and unto Himself, nor does He need any of His creations or derive any glory from them"*?
7. Describe in your own words God's sovereignty.
8. B.B. Warfield once said, *"No doctrine in the Christian Faith has challenged the intellect and believe of man more than the doctrine of the Trinity."*
9. It is interesting then that so little is said about it in the Confession. Why do you think that is?
10. For Augustine, love best illustrated the nature of the Trinity. *"Now when I, who am asking about this, love anything, there are three things present: I myself, what I love, and love itself. For I cannot love love unless I love a lover; for there is no love where nothing is loved. So there are three things: the lover, the loved and the love."*
11. Regis Nicoll has said this about the Trinity... *"If God is triune, it would be reasonable to imagine that tri-unity is reflected, to some degree, in the created order. Indeed, it is. At every level.*
 - a. *At the cosmic level, the universe consists of three things: space, time, and matter—each, themselves, having three integral components. Space exists in three dimensions: length, width, and height.*
 - b. *Time consists of the past, present, and future.*
 - c. *Matter is made up of three sub-nuclear ingredients: quarks, leptons, and bosons, each uniquely defined by three parameters: electronic charge, mass, and magnetic spin.*
 - d. *What's more, atoms contain three things: protons, neutrons, and electrons.*

- e. *And, if that's not enough, all protons and neutrons are made up of three quarks. Am I sounding like a broken record or what?*
 - f. *At the chemical level, water—the major molecule of biological life—is an example of matter with distinctive triune qualities. Consisting of three atoms (two hydrogen and one oxygen), water can exist in solid, liquid, or gas forms without changing its chemical makeup. Three forms, the same essence.*
 - g. *But wait! As explained by Einstein—you know, his $E=mc^2$ relation—matter is energy and energy, matter. And, you guessed it, energy comes in three varieties: the strong-nuclear, the electro-weak, and gravitational.*
 - h. *Finally, each of these grand components—space, time, and matter—are intricately woven and interconnected in the unified fabric of space-time. A single, integrated essence. Confounding, isn't it? Just like the Trinity.*
12. What do we mean when we say the persons of the Godhead are “the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties”?

"CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?"

A. Prayer

B. INTRODUCTION- How many books in the Bible?

1. The Bible consists of 66 books...
 - a. The Older Testament contains 39
 - b. The New Testament contains 27
2. Why these 66 books and not others...?
 - a. What about the additional books in Catholic versions of the Old Testament?
 - b. What about the so-called "lost books of the Bible?"
3. Such questions pertain to the canonicity of the Bible...
 - a. The word "canon" means a rule or standard for anything
 - b. For early Christians, it meant the rule of faith, what is accepted as authoritative Scripture
4. The inclusion of any book into the canon follows two basic steps...
 - a. Inspiration by God - God determined the canon by authoring it
 - b. Recognition by men - Man recognized what God revealed and accepted it as the canon
 - c. *"A book is not the Word of God because it was accepted by the people; it was accepted by the people because it was the Word of God."*

C. THE HEBREW CANON

1. RECOGNIZED BY JESUS...

- a. Anyone who accepts the authority of Jesus will accept what He acknowledged as Scripture
- b. He pointed people to the Scriptures - cf. John 5:39
- c. He spoke of the faithfulness of Scripture - cf. John 10:35
- d. Jesus recognized three major divisions of the OT, which included 39 books - cf. Lk 24:44
 - (1) The Law (Torah) - the five books of Moses (Genesis -Deuteronomy)
 - (2) The Prophets (Nebhiim) - "the former prophets" (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and "the latter prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and a book containing the 12 minor prophets).
 - (3) The Writings (Kethubhim) - three poetical books (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job), five rolls (the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, and Ecclesiastes), and several historical books (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles)
- e. Jesus followed the arrangement of the OT books that was customary among the Jews...we see this from His comments in Lk. 11:49-51
 - (1) There He speaks of the persecution of the prophets from the murder of Abel (Gen 4:8) to the slaying of Zechariah (2 Ch. 24:20,21)
 - (2) This arrangement is the one that is followed in the Hebrew OT today also...
- f. Jesus does not quote from every book of the Old Testament, but He does quote from all three of the main divisions, showing that He accepted the entire Old Testament as canonical." - Wilbert R. Gawrisch (How The Canonicity Of The Bible Was Established)

2. **RECOGNIZED BY THE APOSTLES...**
 - a. Paul acknowledged the Hebrew canon
 - (1) As written for our learning - Ro 15:4
 - (2) As written for our admonition - 1 Co 10:11
 - (3) As profitable for doctrine, etc.- 2 Ti 3:14-17
 - b. The apostles frequently quoted from those books in the Hebrew canon
 - (1) In their gospels - e.g., Mt 1:22-23; 2:17-18; Jn 12:37-41
 - (2) In their efforts to evangelize - e.g., Ac 17:2-3
 - (3) In their epistles - e.g., Ro 3:9-10; 4:3; 1 Pe 2:6
3. It is evident that Jesus and His apostles accepted the authority (canon) of the Hebrew Scriptures which include the 39 books in the Old Testament. But what of the extra books found in the Catholic Old Testament...?

D. THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

1. THE APOCRYPHA DESCRIBED...

- a. These books were written after Malachi (400 B.C), prior to the coming of Jesus
- b. These books include:
 - (1) The Wisdom of Solomon (30 B.C.), known as the Book of Wisdom
 - (2) Ecclesiasticus (132 B.C.), also known as Sirach
 - (3) Tobit (200 B.C.)
 - (4) Judith (150 B.C.)
 - (5) 1 Maccabees (110 B.C.)
 - (6) 2 Maccabees (110 B.C.)
 - (7) Prayer of Azariah (100 B.C.) placed at Daniel 3:24-90
 - (8) Susanna (100 B.C.) placed at Daniel 13
 - (9) Bel and the Dragon (100 B.C.), placed at Daniel 14
 - (10) Baruch (150-50 B.C.), placed at Baruch 1-5
 - (11) Letter of Jeremiah (300-100 B.C.) placed at Baruch 6
 - (12) Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.), placed at Esther 10:4-16:24
 - (13) 1 Esdras (150-100 B.C.), also known as 3 Esdras
 - (14) 2 Esdras (150-100 B.C.), known as 4 Esdras
 - (15) Prayer of Manasseh (100 B.C.)

2. THE APOCRYPHA ACCEPTED...

- a. The Council of Trent accepted the Old Testament Apocrypha as canonical in 1546
- b. With the exception of 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh
- c. While there are 15 total books in the Apocrypha, Roman Catholic Bibles count only 11 because they combine the Letter of Jeremiah with Baruch and omit 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh
- d. The teaching of 2 Esdras 7:105 teaches opposition to prayer for the dead may have led to its exclusion by the Roman Catholic Church
- e. Reasons suggested for the Old Testament Apocrypha as Scripture include:
 - (1) Some church fathers seem to have accepted these books (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria)...usually they were referring to historical accounts written in them and other journals not necessarily accepting them as canon altogether.
 - (2) The Syriac church accepted them in the fourth century
 - (3) The Eastern Orthodox church accepts them
 - (4) The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed them as canonical in 1546

- (5) The Apocrypha was included in Protestant Bibles, including the original KJV of 1611
- (6) Some have been found among other OT books with the Dead Sea Scrolls

3. THE APOCRYPHA REJECTED...

- a. Jesus and His apostles did not accept these books as part of the Scripture
 - (1) There are no NT references to any of the Apocrypha as being authoritative
 - (2) The NT writers quote not one part of the Apocrypha
- b. Judaism never accepted these books as part of the Scriptures
 - (1) Ancient Jewish leaders specifically rejected the Apocrypha (Josephus, Philo)
 - (2) While included in the Septuagint (Gr. OT), they were never accepted as canonical
 - (3) The New American Bible, the new Catholic translation, in a footnote to the Story of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon frankly admits: "They are excluded from the Jewish canon of Scripture..."
- c. While a few early church leaders appear to take some material from them, most were opposed to the inclusion of the Apocrypha into the canon of Scripture (Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Origen)
- d. The Apocrypha itself recognizes our OT canon as a distinct twenty-four books, which corresponds to the Hebrew Bible as it is known today.
 - (1) In 2 Esd 14:44-48, 70 books are distinguished from 94, leaving 24, or the exact number of the Hebrew canon, which became our 39 OT books
 - (2) Not only does the Apocrypha not claim inspiration for itself, it actually disclaims it when 1 Mac 9:27 describes an existing cessation of prophecy.
- e. They include unbiblical teaching, such as praying for the dead(2 Mac 12:46).
- f. They contain demonstrable errors; for example:
 - (1) Tobit was supposedly alive when Jeroboam led his revolt (931B.C.)
 - (2) He was still living at the time of the Assyrian captivity (722 B.C.)
 - (3) Yet the Book of Tobit says he lived only 158 years - Tobit 1:3-5; 14:11
- g. The first official adoption of the Apocrypha by the Roman Catholic Church came at the Council of Trent in 1546, over 1,500 years after the books were written.
- h. When the Apocrypha appeared in Protestant Bibles:
 - (1) It was normally placed in a separate section since it was not considered of equal authority
 - (2) Luther included the Apocrypha in his German Bible, but he introduced them with the comment, "*These are books that are not to be considered the same as Holy Scripture, and yet are useful and good to read.*"
- i. No Greek manuscript contains the exact collection of the books of the Apocrypha as accepted by the Council of Trent
- j. While the Syrian church accepted the Apocrypha in the fourth century, the translation of the Bible into Syrian in the second century A.D. did not include it
- k. The Qumran community had hundreds of books in its library beyond the Scriptures:

- (1) While the library had some of the Apocrypha, it did not have commentaries on the Apocrypha it did with OT books
- (2) The OT books had special script and parchment, unlike the Apocrypha
- (3) Qumran clearly considered the Apocrypha as different from Scripture

4. CONCLUSION

- a. While the Apocrypha of the OT may be of historical value and in some ways supplement God's truth, they are not canonical
- b. Those who accept the authority of Jesus and His apostles will be content with those books found in the Hebrew OT
- c. The issue might be regarded as irrelevant...
 - (1) The Apocrypha relates to the Old Testament
 - (2) Christians are under the New Covenant of Christ- Ro 7:6; Ga 5:4
 - (3) Therefore we are to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine- cf. Acts 2:42

E. THE RECOGNITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

1. THE EARLY CHURCH ADOPTED APOSTOLIC WRITINGS AS CANONICAL...

- a. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine - Ac 2:42; cf. 2 Peter 3:2; Jude 17
- b. They received their words as the Word of God - 1 Th 2:13; cf. 1 Co 14:37
- c. Paul quoted the gospel of Luke as Scripture - 1 Ti 5:18; cf. Lk 10:7
- d. Paul's letters were designed to be circulated among the churches - Col. 4:16
- e. Peter equated Paul's letters with "Scripture" - 2 Peter 3:15-16
- f. The church accepted the apostles' writings because to accept their teaching was to accept Jesus Himself - cf. Jn 13:20

2. THE CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTING A BOOK AS CANONICAL...

- a. Written by an apostle (e.g., Matthew, John, Paul, Peter)
- b. Written by a close associate of an apostle (Mark, Luke, James, Jude)
- c. Thus the writing had to be "apostolic" in addition to showing evidence of inspiration

3. WHEN AN APOSTOLIC WRITING WAS CONSIDERED AS SCRIPTURE...

- a. It was read publicly - e.g., 1 Th 5:27
- b. It was circulated widely - e.g., Co 4:16; Re 1:11
- c. Copies of it were collected - e.g., 2 Peter 3:15-16
- d. It was often quoted in other writings - e.g., 1 Ti 5:18

4. BOOKS ACCEPTED AS CANONICAL BY ALL CHRISTIANS...

- a. Include the 27 books of our New Testament
- b. Most books were acknowledged from the very beginning
- c. Seven books (Hebrews, James, 2nd Peter, 2nd & 3rd John, Jude, Revelation) were disputed by some at first, but eventually accepted as authentic and apostolic
- d. Thus all professing Christians accept the 27 books of the New Testament as canonical.
- e. But what about other books supposedly written by or about the apostles? Why are they not accepted?

F. THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

- a. Otherwise called "false writings"
- b. There are over 280 of these writings
- c. More than 50 are accounts of Christ
- d. The more well-known of these are:
 - (1) The Gospel of Thomas
 - (2) The Gospel of Peter
 - (3) The Gospel of Hebrews
 - (4) The Protevangelium of James
- e. Their value is limited, but they do illustrate:
 - (1) Some of the ascetic and Gnostic attitudes opposed by the apostles
 - (2) The popular desire at that time for information beyond the Scriptures
 - (3) The tendency to glorify Christianity by fraudulent means

2. REASONS FOR REJECTION...

- a. They were never considered canonical by respectable leaders
- b. Mainly produced by heretical groups
- c. Containing exaggerated and mythical religious folklore
- d. Most known only through citation or quotation by another author
- e. Thus their historical connection to the apostles is suspect

G. THE NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA- Similar to the Pseudepigrapha

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

- a. Not to be confused with the OT Apocrypha
- b. These were books written after the time of Christ
 - (1) Which were accepted at first by some in the church
 - (2) Which appeared at times in collections and translations of Scripture
 - (3) They had acceptance in some areas for a temporary period of time
 - (4) They never enjoyed acceptance by the Church in general

2. The NT Apocrypha include:

- a. The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (70-79 A.D.)
- b. The Epistle to the Corinthians (96 A.D.)
- c. The Ancient Homily, also known as the Second Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (120-140 A.D.)
- d. The Shepherd of Hermas (115-140 A.D.)
- e. The Didache, also known as the Teaching of the Twelve (100-120 A.D.)
- f. The Apocalypse of Peter (150 A.D.)
- g. The Acts of Paul and Thecla (170 A.D.)
- h. The Gospel According to the Hebrews (65-100 A.D.)
- i. The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (108 A.D.)
- j. The Seven Epistles of Ignatius (110 A.D.)

3. These are more valuable than the Pseudepigrapha

- (1) They provide early documentation of the existence of NT books
- (2) They fill in the gap between the teaching of the apostles and the writings of the early church of the third and fourth centuries
- (3) They provide clues to the practices, policies and future teachings of the church

4. REASONS FOR REJECTION...
 - a. They never enjoyed more than a temporary and local recognition
 - b. Those that advocated their acceptance considered them at best to be "semi-canonical"
 - c. No major church council or New Testament collection included them as inspired books
 - d. The reason they had some acceptance was because they wrongly attached themselves to references in canonical books (cf. Col. 4:16) or alleged apostolic authorship (e.g. the Acts of Paul)

- H. What about interpretation of the Bible? *"That's your interpretation!"*
 1. Disagreement is nothing new among men and it is not just when the Bible is concerned.
 - a. Think of History- rewriting of political events, purposes for wars, reinterpreting ancient events with modern thinking...
 - b. Man's personal bias influences how he looks at any event. Sin blurs vision. Sin clogs our ears to truth.
 2. How to respond to *"that your interpretation."*
 - a. Investigate for yourself...never completely depend on the pastor, elder, or other Christians. Be good "Bereans"- Acts 17:11.
 - b. Investigate other scholars and their works...not just contemporary. You will find remarkable agreement between the men of faith like; Augustine, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, Edwards and Spurgeon.
 - c. The Bible interprets itself better than any man can. WCF 1:9- *"The infallible standard for interpretation of the Bible is the Bible itself. And so any question about the true and complete sense of a passage in the Bible (which is a unified whole) can be answered by reference to other passages which speak more plainly."* (John 5:46; Acts 15:15; II Peter 1:20-21)
 - d. The Reformation gave back to each believer the right and responsibility of interpretation. (The Catholic Church said mere men could not handle the secret things of God because they were untrained and didn't have the sanction of the infallible Church. It is interesting at the time these claims were made as much as 70% of the Catholic priests were virtually illiterate.) the Reformers made the point that all believers are priests and therefore are able to handle the Word of God because of the existence of the Spirit within believers. Along with the *"right"* to interpret Scripture comes the *"responsibility"* to interpret it properly. Believers are free to discover the truths of Scripture, but they are not free to fabricate their own truth.
 - e. There is only one correct interpretation- only one truth- not many truths...many applications of the Word.

**Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
June 15, 2014**

F. Prayer

G. Review

4. Since we have the Bible why do we need Creeds and Confessions?
 - a. At their simplest, they are statements of the Bible's great doctrines and a list of its leading precepts. We can further add this: they are summaries and presentations of Gospel truth.
 - b. The reading of Creeds, Confessions and Catechisms has done much good down the centuries. Believers of today neglect them to their own detriment. A regular reading of a Creed and a Confession's contents will stimulate study, inspire faith and keep biblical doctrines alive in a believers' hearts.
 - c. The Scriptures command us to think, believe and speak the same things. It is to this point that Creeds and Confession can help.
 - d. These taught adults and children the doctrines of the faith so that they might witness clearly to the true biblical faith.
5. What might be some reasons not to have Creeds and Confessions?
 - a. Both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches invest such authority in the declaration of the institutional church that the church creeds can seem to carry an authority that is derived from the church's approval rather than conformity with the teaching of Scripture. Evangelicals are right to want to avoid anything that smacks of such an attitude... At the Council of Trent in the 16th Century the RC Church stated emphatically that the special revelation of God's truth is found in Scripture AND in the traditions of the Church...a dual source of ultimate authority that was confirmed again as late as 1950 in the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* ("Of Human Race"). (This has not been changed even up to today. See how Jesus feels about human traditions and manmade laws on the spiritual conduct of His people...(Matt. 5: 21, 27,31,33,38,43, 6:1, 15:1-9 just to name a few.)
 - b. As a society we are becoming more and more relativistic so anything that even suggests absolute standards gets us at the very least edgy.
 - c. We have lost our ties to history so we want to do away with anything "old".
6. When looking at the ordination vows for officers in a PCA church what did we say was the difference between the I believe statement in the first vow and the I sincerely receive and adopt the WCF and the Larger and Shorter catechism in the second Vow? Here are the vows..
 - a. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?...Do You BELIEVE- states that these are what you live by, are shaped by and judge by. When I say that I believe in the Scriptures I am stating that these words... and these words alone... have the authority to bind my conscience and to impose upon me an absolute obligation...for it is the very Words of God.
 - b. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow? Do you SINCERELY RECEIVE AND ADOPT- communicates that we ascribe to and accept what is written in this confession and catechisms as documents that best contain the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures...but the wording also recognizes that this is a manmade document so there can be room for disagreement...exceptions. Presbytery would then

determine if these disagreements are acceptable or if they go against the doctrine there in. They in no way rise to the level of Scripture and are always a subordinate document.

H. Why does Doctrine Matter?

1. Look at I Tim. 1:3-7: *“As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship (good order?) from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”* I Tim. 1:3-7

a. Why does Paul refer to doctrine as a “stewardship” of God’s Word?

- (1) Doctrine, as Paul taught, is nothing less than good stewardship of the Word of God.
- (2) Sound doctrine *discovers* the teaching of Scripture, *communicates* that teaching clearly and faithfully, and *applies* that teaching to the work of sanctification and the progress of Christ’s Kingdom.
- (3) Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to ensure that the sound doctrine he had begun to teach there would continue after him.
- (4) The danger then, as in every age, is that there are those who, lacking a taste for doctrine, will come up with something else to teach rather than true biblical doctrine.

b. What does Paul mean by “speculations”, and how do these undo proper stewardship of sound doctrine/God’s Word?

- (1) Paul speaks of the original “speculators”...false teachers he would call them in other places.
- (2) Paul described such teachers as “speculating” – making things up out of their own minds to further their own interests and agendas.
- (3) Such teachers were a threat to sound doctrine, and thus to the health of the Body of Christ, because they sought to woo people away from simple trust in the plain teaching of Scripture.

c. Why do you suppose people today are skeptical of biblical doctrine?

d. How would you describe your own use of Biblical doctrine at this time? Would you say you are a student of sound doctrine? Or are you a bit put off by it? Explain.

e. What do I mean when I talk about the “doctrine of the sanctity of marriage” or “the doctrine of the Church”? Are these something we think of as doctrines why or why not? What are ways people “speculate” about these doctrines? What is the truth...the sound doctrine concerning these?

f. Is there any way that the Church can in good conscience and seeking to glorify God accept same-sex relationships and practicing homosexuals? How would you support your position doctrinally?

6. Now look at I Tim. 4:16: *“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching (doctrine). Persist in this, for by doing so you will be saved both yourself and your hearers.”* (I Tim. 4:16)

d. What is this passage telling us all?

- (1) The importance of keeping a close eye on what we look at...what we say...how we say things...how we live...taking regular personal assessments and repenting of our sinfulness..

- (2) Next we are to be spending a lot of time in God's Word...seeking to apply God's Word in our lives...keeping a close watch on the teaching of God's Word...biblical doctrine.
- (3) *"Persist in this..."* or... *"Persevere in them"* - to continue to do something even though it is difficult or other people want you to stop...and are physically trying to make you stop... or with little or no prospect of success. This is a recognition that these doctrines will not be popular...even in the Church...but standing firm anyway. (1 Cor. 16: 13-14)
- (4) Interesting way to end this passage if you think about it...puts a lot of pressure upon a preacher/pastor...no more than was placed upon the priests of the OT...
- (5) But... salvation is the goal, but it must be properly understood. In this context it is not talking about our justification but rather this is referring to our sanctification that is preparing us for our eventual glorification.

e. What would you say are some of the main doctrines of Scripture? List them below, and give a brief definition of each?

f. How important are these doctrines?

- (1) Sound doctrine brings wisdom, clear thinking, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, love for God and neighbors, and a desire to be transformed increasingly into the image of our Lord and Savior. For sound doctrine issues in a transformed soul which comes to expression in lives of love, as Paul makes clear in 1 Timothy 1:5.
- (2) Can Christians afford to neglect them? Why or why not? Throw out sound doctrine and you don't escape doctrine. You simply open your soul to false doctrine. The question, where embracing doctrine is concerned, is not whether, but which.

7. What are some of the important questions of life that are answered by Christian doctrine?

8. Look a minute at Matt. 16:1-12.

a. What is the basic message from Jesus to His disciples? It is about which doctrines to believe.

- (1) He says to them...watch out for bad doctrines...discern from Scripture what is right...do not just give in or accept what you have been taught all these years without studying it for yourselves. They knew that they didn't like the Pharisees and the Sadducees...but they were the religious elite and they deserved respect...at least that is what they were taught. Jesus is saying NO!...if they are not teaching sound doctrine they do not deserve to be heard...look at how He had just treated them...
- (2) They are to watch out for the Pharisees ...the religious conservatives fundamentalist/legalists of the day who add to Scripture.
- (3) They are to watch out for the Sadducees...the religious liberals of the day who only help to the Pentateuch...and really only to those parts that they liked...like religious liberals today who pick and choose which Scriptures they will like, if any at all...these men did not believe in miracles or the resurrection and they did their best to subtract from Scripture.
- (4) Stand on the Word of God...don't be looking for signs...those were given and recorded in the Word.

b. So why is doctrine important?

- (1) It is not some abstract set of philosophical or theological axioms.
- (2) Doctrine has as its content the very nature and character of God...Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

c. How do we spot bad doctrine?

- (1) Being in the Word ourselves...
- (2) Discerning where we get involved:
 - Christian Business Man's Bible Studies
 - Community Bible Studies

- Studies like these who say that some doctrines are just too controversial so the teachers are not allowed to teach those even when they come up in the Scriptures...these are to be avoided...
- Some flat out deny certain doctrines so they are also to be avoided
- Any group calling themselves Christian who seek to limit the teaching of biblical doctrine is to be avoided.

9. Do you agree that *some* form of doctrine is inescapable? Give some examples of the kinds of doctrines people embrace who do not accept Biblical doctrine:

10. How do non-Christian “doctrines” try to answer these questions? How does this help to demonstrate the importance of sound doctrine?

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
June 22, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What would you say are some of the main doctrines of Scripture? List them below, and give a brief definition of each?
2. How important are these doctrines?
 - a. Sound doctrine brings wisdom, clear thinking, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, love for God and neighbors, and a desire to be transformed increasingly into the image of our Lord and Savior.
 - b. Sound doctrine issues in a transformed soul which comes to expression in lives of love, as Paul makes clear in 1 Timothy 1:5.
3. Can Christians afford to neglect them? Why or why not? Throw out sound doctrine and you don't escape doctrine. You simply open your soul to false doctrine. The question, where embracing doctrine is concerned, is not whether, but which.
4. What are some of the important questions of life that are answered by Christian doctrine?
5. How do we spot bad doctrine?
 - a. Being in the Word ourselves...
 - b. Discerning where we get involved:
 - (1) Christian Business Man's Bible Studies
 - (2) Community Bible Study Fellowship
 - Studies like these who say that some doctrines are just too controversial so the teachers are not allowed to teach those even when they come up in the Scriptures...these are to be avoided...
 - Some flat out deny certain doctrines so they are also to be avoided
 - Any group calling themselves Christian who seek to limit the teaching of biblical doctrine is to be avoided.

C. WCF...Chapter 1- The Holy Scriptures w/ Shorter Catechism Q&A 1-3; and 88-90

1. What is the chief end of man? Why is this important for us? What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify Him and enjoy Him? Why is this important?
2. How many types of revelation are there? Two (Chapt. 1, Sect.1) How do they differ?
 - a. General revelation...all that God has created confirms that there is a God...a Creator...who deserves praise and honor....but can't in and of itself lead someone to salvation.
 - b. Special Revelation... God's Word...which reveals who God is, who we are and our need for salvation...which does in fact is the power unto salvation.
3. What is meant by "inspiration of God" as stated, "*All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of life and faith.*" (Chapter 1, Sect. 2 and again in section 8)
4. What is the evidence that the Bible is inspired that the confession speaks of? (See Sect. 5) Can you think of any Scripture texts that supports your claim? 1 Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16-17 and II Peter 1:20 to name a few.

5. Speaking how these books were chosen and of the Apocrypha, I hope you had time to look at the attachment I sent earlier this week called *Can We Trust the Bible*. This gives a "short" explanation on such matters.
6. What are the divines saying in Chapt. 1, sections 4-6 and why is it important to us today? At the Council of Trent in the 16th Century the RC Church stated emphatically that the special revelation of God's truth is found in Scripture AND in the traditions of the Church...a dual source of ultimate authority that was confirmed again as late as 1950 in the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* ("Of Human Race"). (This has not been changed even up to today. See how Jesus feels about human traditions and manmade laws on the spiritual conduct of His people...(Matt. 5: 21, 27,31,33,38,43, 6:1, 15:1-9 just to name a few.)
7. According to the Confession how do we prove/understand Scripture?
 - a. We may be moved and induced by the Church as to a high and reverent esteem of the Word...All that the Church can tell us is, however, in the end not sufficient for our salvation .
 - b. It is the inward work of the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.
 - c. After this we can see that the Scriptures prove themselves.
 - d. Learned or unlearned through the "ordinary means"= Proclamation of the Word, the correct administration of the sacraments, prayer and fellowship with other believers.
8. Does the Holy Spirit speak apart from the Scriptures? No! Explain. See Hebrews 1...there was a time when the Spirit spoke in "divers manners" but since the Word alone speaks the Spirit now speaks through it...interesting though, given the person of the Holy Spirit...it could be said that this is the method that He has always used since when He spoke through whatever means it was still through the Word...Now that Christ has come there is no need for any other means but the written Word of God.
9. Extra points: Why was it important for the divines to make the point over and over again that the Holy Spirit is the "voice" speaking through Scripture?
 - a. The Roman Catholic Church said that Scriptures alone are incomplete and insufficient and that the "living voice of Scripture" was the Pope and one of his jobs was to complete Scripture.
 - b. The divines on the other hand want to make it abundantly clear that no man speaks for God ...the Holy Spirit is the Living voice of God.

An attachment to this lesson...sent out over email.

"CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?"

- A. INTRODUCTION- How many books in the Bible?
 1. The Bible consists of 66 books...
 - a. The Older Testament contains 39
 - b. The New Testament contains 27
 2. Why these 66 books and not others...?
 - a. What about the additional books in Catholic versions of the Old Testament?
 - b. What about the so-called "lost books of the Bible?"
 3. Such questions pertain to the canonicity of the Bible...
 - a. The word "canon" means a rule or standard for anything

- b. For early Christians, it meant the rule of faith, what is accepted as authoritative Scripture
 - 4. The inclusion of any book into the canon follows two basic steps...
 - a. Inspiration by God - God determined the canon by authoring it
 - b. Recognition by men - Man recognized what God revealed and accepted it as the canon
 - c. *"A book is not the Word of God because it was accepted by the people; it was accepted by the people because it was the Word of God."*
- B. THE HEBREW CANON**
- 1. **RECOGNIZED BY JESUS...**
 - a. Anyone who accepts the authority of Jesus will accept what He acknowledged as Scripture
 - b. He pointed people to the Scriptures - cf. John 5:39
 - c. He spoke of the faithfulness of Scripture - cf. John 10:35
 - d. Jesus recognized three major divisions of the OT, which included 39 books - cf. Lk 24:44
 - (1) The Law (Torah) - the five books of Moses (Genesis -Deuteronomy)
 - (2) The Prophets (Nebhiim) - "the former prophets" (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and "the latter prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and a book containing the 12 minor prophets).
 - (3) The Writings (Kethubhim) - three poetical books (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job), five rolls (the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, and Ecclesiastes), and several historical books (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles)
 - e. Jesus followed the arrangement of the OT books that was customary among the Jews...we see this from His comments in Lk. 11:49-51
 - (1) There He speaks of the persecution of the prophets from the murder of Abel (Gen 4:8) to the slaying of Zechariah (2 Ch. 24:20,21)
 - (2) This arrangement is the one that is followed in the Hebrew OT today also...
 - f. Jesus does not quote from every book of the Old Testament, but He does quote from all three of the main divisions, showing that He accepted the entire Old Testament as canonical." - Wilbert R. Gawrisch (How The Canonicity Of The Bible Was Established)
 - 2. **RECOGNIZED BY THE APOSTLES...**
 - a. Paul acknowledged the Hebrew canon
 - (1) As written for our learning - Ro 15:4
 - (2) As written for our admonition - 1 Co 10:11
 - (3) As profitable for doctrine, etc.- 2 Ti 3:14-17
 - b. The apostles frequently quoted from those books in the Hebrew canon
 - (1) In their gospels - e.g., Mt 1:22-23; 2:17-18; Jn 12:37-41
 - (2) In their efforts to evangelize - e.g., Ac 17:2-3
 - (3) In their epistles - e.g., Ro 3:9-10; 4:3; 1 Pe 2:6
 - 3. It is evident that Jesus and His apostles accepted the authority (canon) of the Hebrew Scriptures which include the 39 books in the Old Testament. But what of the extra books found in the Catholic Old Testament...?

C. THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

1. THE APOCRYPHA DESCRIBED...

- a. These books were written after Malachi (400 B.C), prior to the coming of Jesus
- b. These books include:
 - (1) The Wisdom of Solomon (30 B.C.), known as the Book of Wisdom
 - (2) Ecclesiasticus (132 B.C.), also known as Sirach
 - (3) Tobit (200 B.C.)
 - (4) Judith (150 B.C.)
 - (5) 1 Maccabees (110 B.C.)
 - (6) 2 Maccabees (110 B.C.)
 - (7) Prayer of Azariah (100 B.C.) placed at Daniel 3:24-90
 - (8) Susanna (100 B.C.) placed at Daniel 13
 - (9) Bel and the Dragon (100 B.C.), placed at Daniel 14
 - (10) Baruch (150-50 B.C.), placed at Baruch 1-5
 - (11) Letter of Jeremiah (300-100 B.C.) placed at Baruch 6
 - (12) Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.), placed at Esther 10:4-16:24
 - (13) 1 Esdras (150-100 B.C.), also known as 3 Esdras
 - (14) 2 Esdras (150-100 B.C.), known as 4 Esdras
 - (15) Prayer of Manasseh (100 B.C.)

2. THE APOCRYPHA ACCEPTED...

- a. The Council of Trent accepted the Old Testament Apocrypha as canonical in 1546
- b. With the exception of 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh
- c. While there are 15 total books in the Apocrypha, Roman Catholic Bibles count only 11 because they combine the Letter of Jeremiah with Baruch and omit 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh
- d. The teaching of 2 Esdras 7:105 teaches opposition to prayer for the dead may have led to its exclusion by the Roman Catholic Church
- e. Reasons suggested for the Old Testament Apocrypha as Scripture include:
 - (1) Some church fathers seem to have accepted these books (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria)...usually they were referring to historical accounts written in them and other journals not necessarily accepting them as canon altogether.
 - (2) The Syriac church accepted them in the fourth century
 - (3) The Eastern Orthodox church accepts them
 - (4) The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed them as canonical in 1546
 - (5) The Apocrypha was included in Protestant Bibles, including the original KJV of 1611
 - (6) Some have been found among other OT books with the Dead Sea Scrolls

3. THE APOCRYPHA REJECTED...

- a. Jesus and His apostles did not accept these books as part of the Scripture
 - (1) There are no NT references to any of the Apocrypha as being authoritative
 - (2) The NT writers quote not one part of the Apocrypha
- b. Judaism never accepted these books as part of the Scriptures

- (1) Ancient Jewish leaders specifically rejected the Apocrypha (Josephus, Philo)
 - (2) While included in the Septuagint (Gr. OT), they were never accepted as canonical
 - (3) The New American Bible, the new Catholic translation, in a footnote to the Story of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon frankly admits: "They are excluded from the Jewish canon of Scripture..."
 - c. While a few early church leaders appear to take some material from them, most were opposed to the inclusion of the Apocrypha into the canon of Scripture (Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Origen)
 - d. The Apocrypha itself recognizes our OT canon as a distinct twenty-four books, which corresponds to the Hebrew Bible as it is known today.
 - (1) In 2 Esd 14:44-48, 70 books are distinguished from 94, leaving 24, or the exact number of the Hebrew canon, which became our 39 OT books
 - (2) Not only does the Apocrypha not claim inspiration for itself, it actually disclaims it when 1 Mac 9:27 describes an existing cessation of prophecy.
 - e. They include unbiblical teaching, such as praying for the dead(2 Mac 12:46).
 - f. They contain demonstrable errors; for example:
 - (1) Tobit was supposedly alive when Jeroboam led his revolt (931B.C.)
 - (2) He was still living at the time of the Assyrian captivity (722 B.C.)
 - (3) Yet the Book of Tobit says he lived only 158 years - Tobit 1:3-5; 14:11
 - g. The first official adoption of the Apocrypha by the Roman Catholic Church came at the Council of Trent in 1546, over 1,500 years after the books were written.
 - h. When the Apocrypha appeared in Protestant Bibles:
 - (1) It was normally placed in a separate section since it was not considered of equal authority
 - (2) Luther included the Apocrypha in his German Bible, but he introduced them with the comment, "*These are books that are not to be considered the same as Holy Scripture, and yet are useful and good to read.*"
 - i. No Greek manuscript contains the exact collection of the books of the Apocrypha as accepted by the Council of Trent
 - j. While the Syrian church accepted the Apocrypha in the fourth century, the translation of the Bible into Syrian in the second century A.D. did not include it
 - k. The Qumran community had hundreds of books in its library beyond the Scriptures:
 - (1) While the library had some of the Apocrypha, it did not have commentaries on the Apocrypha it did with OT books
 - (2) The OT books had special script and parchment, unlike the Apocrypha
 - (3) Qumran clearly considered the Apocrypha as different from Scripture
- 4. CONCLUSION**
- a. While the Apocrypha of the OT may be of historical value and in some ways supplement God's truth, they are not canonical
 - b. Those who accept the authority of Jesus and His apostles will be content with those books found in the Hebrew OT
 - c. The issue might be regarded as irrelevant...

- (1) The Apocrypha relates to the Old Testament
- (2) Christians are under the New Covenant of Christ- Ro 7:6; Ga 5:4
- (3) Therefore we are to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine- cf. Acts 2:42

D. THE RECOGNITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

1. THE EARLY CHURCH ADOPTED APOSTOLIC WRITINGS AS CANONICAL...

- a. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine - Ac 2:42; cf. 2 Peter 3:2; Jude 17
- b. They received their words as the Word of God - 1 Th 2:13; cf. 1 Co 14:37
- c. Paul quoted the gospel of Luke as Scripture - 1 Ti 5:18; cf. Lk 10:7
- d. Paul's letters were designed to be circulated among the churches - Col. 4:16
- e. Peter equated Paul's letters with "Scripture" - 2 Peter 3:15-16
- f. The church accepted the apostles' writings because to accept their teaching was to accept Jesus Himself - cf. Jn 13:20

2. THE CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTING A BOOK AS CANONICAL...

- a. Written by an apostle (e.g., Matthew, John, Paul, Peter)
- b. Written by a close associate of an apostle (Mark, Luke, James, Jude)
- c. Thus the writing had to be "apostolic" in addition to showing evidence of inspiration

3. WHEN AN APOSTOLIC WRITING WAS CONSIDERED AS SCRIPTURE...

- a. It was read publicly - e.g., 1 Th 5:27
- b. It was circulated widely - e.g., Co 4:16; Re 1:11
- c. Copies of it were collected - e.g., 2 Peter 3:15-16
- d. It was often quoted in other writings - e.g., 1 Ti 5:18

4. BOOKS ACCEPTED AS CANONICAL BY ALL CHRISTIANS...

- a. Include the 27 books of our New Testament
- b. Most books were acknowledged from the very beginning
- c. Seven books (Hebrews, James, 2nd Peter, 2nd & 3rd John, Jude, Revelation) were disputed by some at first, but eventually accepted as authentic and apostolic
- d. Thus all professing Christians accept the 27 books of the New Testament as canonical.
- e. But what about other books supposedly written by or about the apostles? Why are they not accepted?

E. THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

- a. Otherwise called "false writings"
- b. There are over 280 of these writings
- c. More than 50 are accounts of Christ
- d. The more well-known of these are:
 - (1) The Gospel of Thomas
 - (2) The Gospel of Peter
 - (3) The Gospel of Hebrews
 - (4) The Protevangelium of James
- e. Their value is limited, but they do illustrate:

- (1) Some of the ascetic and Gnostic attitudes opposed by the apostles
- (2) The popular desire at that time for information beyond the Scriptures
- (3) The tendency to glorify Christianity by fraudulent means

2. REASONS FOR REJECTION...

- a. They were never considered canonical by respectable leaders
- b. Mainly produced by heretical groups
- c. Containing exaggerated and mythical religious folklore
- d. Most known only through citation or quotation by another author
- e. Thus their historical connection to the apostles is suspect

F. THE NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA- Similar to the Pseudepigrapha

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

- a. Not to be confused with the OT Apocrypha
- b. These were books written after the time of Christ
 - (1) Which were accepted at first by some in the church
 - (2) Which appeared at times in collections and translations of Scripture
 - (3) They had acceptance in some areas for a temporary period of time
 - (4) They never enjoyed acceptance by the Church in general

2. The NT Apocrypha include:

- a. The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (70-79 A.D.)
- b. The Epistle to the Corinthians (96 A.D.)
- c. The Ancient Homily, also known as the Second Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (120-140 A.D.)
- d. The Shepherd of Hermas (115-140 A.D.)
- e. The Didache, also known as the Teaching of the Twelve (100-120 A.D.)
- f. The Apocalypse of Peter (150 A.D.)
- g. The Acts of Paul and Thecla (170 A.D.)
- h. The Gospel According to the Hebrews (65-100 A.D.)
- i. The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (108 A.D.)
- j. The Seven Epistles of Ignatius (110 A.D.)

3. These are more valuable than the Pseudepigrapha

- (1) They provide early documentation of the existence of NT books
- (2) They fill in the gap between the teaching of the apostles and the writings of the early church of the third and fourth centuries
- (3) They provide clues to the practices, policies and future teachings of the church

4. REASONS FOR REJECTION...

- a. They never enjoyed more than a temporary and local recognition
- b. Those that advocated their acceptance considered them at best to be "semi-canonical"
- c. No major church council or New Testament collection included them as inspired books
- d. The reason they had some acceptance was because they wrongly attached themselves to references in canonical books (cf. Col. 4:16) or alleged apostolic authorship (e.g. the Acts of Paul)

G. What about interpretation of the Bible? *"That's your interpretation!"*

1. Disagreement is nothing new among men and it is not just when the Bible is concerned.
 - a. Think of History- rewriting of political events, purposes for wars, reinterpreting ancient events with modern thinking...
 - b. Man's personal bias influences how he looks at any event. Sin blurs vision. Sin clogs our ears to truth.
2. How to respond to *"that your interpretation."*
 - a. Investigate for yourself...never completely depend on the pastor, elder, or other Christians. Be good "Bereans"- Acts 17:11.
 - b. Investigate other scholars and their works...not just contemporary. You will find remarkable agreement between the men of faith like; Augustine, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, Edwards and Spurgeon.
 - c. The Bible interprets itself better than any man can. WCF 1:9- *"The infallible standard for interpretation of the Bible is the Bible itself. And so any question about the true and complete sense of a passage in the Bible (which is a unified whole) can be answered by reference to other passages which speak more plainly."* (John 5:46; Acts 15:15; II Peter 1:20-21)
 - d. The Reformation gave back to each believer the right and responsibility of interpretation. (The Catholic Church said mere men could not handle the secret things of God because they were untrained and didn't have the sanction of the infallible Church. It is interesting at the time these claims were made as much as 70% of the Catholic priests were virtually illiterate.) the Reformers made the point that all believers are priests and therefore are able to handle the Word of God because of the existence of the Spirit within believers. Along with the *"right"* to interpret Scripture comes the *"responsibility"* to interpret it properly. Believers are free to discover the truths of Scripture, but they are not free to fabricate their own truth.
 - e. There is only one correct interpretation- only one truth- not many truths...many applications of the Word.

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
June 29, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How many types of revelation are there? (Chapt. 1, Sect.1) How do they differ?
2. What is meant by “inspiration of God” as stated, “*All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of life and faith.*” (Chapter 1, Sect. 2 and again in section 8)
3. What are the divines saying in Chapt. 1, sections 4-6 and why is it important to us today? At the Council of Trent in the 16th Century the RC Church stated emphatically that the special revelation of God’s truth is found in Scripture AND in the traditions of the Church...a dual source of ultimate authority that was confirmed again as late as 1950 in the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* (“Of Human Race”). (This has not been changed even up to today. See how Jesus feels about human traditions and manmade laws on the spiritual conduct of His people...(Matt. 5: 21, 27,31,33,38,43, 6:1, 15:1-9 just to name a few.)
4. Extra points: Why was it important for the divines to make the point over and over again that the Holy Spirit is the “voice” speaking through Scripture?
 - c. The Roman Catholic Church said that Scriptures alone are incomplete and insufficient and that the “living voice of Scripture” was the Pope and one of his jobs was to complete Scripture.
 - d. The divines on the other hand want to make it abundantly clear that no man speaks for God ...the Holy Spirit is the Living voice of God.

C. WCF- Chapter 2- God and the Trinity w/ SC 4-6

1. With the Bible in hand, what do you believe ...from your experience... that the average Christian understands about God?
 - a. That He is love...you know...God so loved the world...
 - b. He is not involved in the small things...only the big things...
2. Thinking of the catechism a minute. WSC #4... What is God? This is a question that our kids ask (that their kids asked, “back in the day.”)Here are some others: Who made God? Where is God? Why can’t I see God? Can God die? How would you answer them?
3. How does the confession answer this question? (Chapt. 2, sect. 1) Why is the answer to this question ultimately important to us?
4. The Belgic Confession of 1561 says this of God:
 - a. Article 1: About the Nature of God- We believe in the heart and confess with the mouth that there is a unique and simple spiritual Being, Who we call God, eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, unchangeable, and infinite, Who is wise and the overflowing source of all good things. Deut. 6:4; Is. 40:28, 44:6; John 4:24; II Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:8; I Tim. 2:5
 - b. Article 2: About the Knowledge of God- Moreover, we know God by two means, first, by the creation, preservation, and government of this whole world. For it is before our eyes as a most beautiful Book in which all creatures, from the least to the greatest, are as certain letters and marks through which the invisible things of God can be examined and

understood, certainly His eternal power and His divinity as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. This knowledge is sufficient for convicting any given people and rendering them inexcusable. But He also bears His very self to us, much more clearly and openly, in His holy and divine Word; indeed, as much as is expedient in this life for His glory and for the salvation of His own people. Psalm 19; Eph. 4:6; 2 Cor. 2:6.

5. Great benefit comes from studying the greatness of God (Jeremiah 9:23-24; Isaiah 40). On January 7, 1855, the great English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, who was only 20 years old at the time, began his sermon with these words: *"It has been said by someone that 'the proper study of mankind is man'. I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father....there is in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in His immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead."*
6. What makes God different from other gods? Think specifically of the attributes listed here as a way to explain the difference...not just because He is the Creator God. Thinking of his attributes:
 - a. Why is God invisible?
 - b. What do you understand the confession to mean when it says that God is "without passions"?
 - c. We talked about His attributes some weeks ago now so let see how this goes...what do these means:
 - a. Immutable...
 - b. Immense...= omnipresent
 - c. Eternal...
 - d. Incomprehensible...
 - e. Most holy, free absolute, loving, gracious, merciful, just...
7. A.W. Pink wrote, *"The God of this century no more resembles the Sovereign of holy writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun."* How should a clearer awareness of God's character influence us:
 - a. The content of our prayers and the amount of time we spend in prayer?
 - b. Our concern for personal holiness?
 - c. The tone and content of our worship services?
 - d. Our view of adversity or our adversary?
8. What does fearing God mean?
9. Have you noticed something about this explanation? There is not much about God's love spoken of in these sections. Why do you suppose that is?
 - a. No one has much trouble with this characteristic of God.
 - b. But...we need an even higher view than His love for us...we need this high and lofty...almost untouchable explanation so that we remember our need to fear God...He is not some loving

grandfather...He is the Creator God who is above all things ...in need of no thing...not moved or persuaded by anything beyond Himself...who alone will be glorified in Himself if need be...after which we can understand more fully Him being most loving.

10. What about this explanation is missing from your own understanding of God? How do you suppose reading the confession regularly can help you retain this/these?
11. What is meant by, *“He alone is all sufficient in and unto Himself, nor does He need any of His creations or derive any glory from them”*?
12. Describe in your own words God’s sovereignty.

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
July 6, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What makes God different from other gods? (Think specifically of the attributes listed in chapter 2 as a way to explain the difference...and not just because He is the Creator God.)
2. What is meant by, *"He alone is all sufficient in and unto Himself, nor does He need any of His creations or derive any glory from them"*?
3. How should a clearer awareness of God's character influence us:
 - e. The content of our prayers and the amount of time we spend in prayer?
 - f. Our concern for personal holiness?
 - g. The tone and content of our worship services?
 - h. Our view of adversity or our adversary?

C. Chapter Continued: The Holy Spirit: WSC 5 and 6

13. Now look at WSC #5-6. What does the catechism tell us about the Trinity?

14. B.B. Warfield once said, *"No doctrine in the Christian Faith has challenged the intellect and belief of man more than the doctrine of the Trinity."*

15. It is interesting then that so little is said about it in the Confession. All indications are from the notes on this discussion that Westminster seems to have taken less than a week to discuss and formulate this whole chapter. Why do you think that is?

- a. First, the Bible everywhere speaks about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit...
- b. It should be beyond us to think we can fully explain such a doctrine...as if we could draw a picture of God Himself...Considering all the time throughout Church History devoted to this doctrine because of all the heresies and controversies of the early church the divines of Westminster seem to have taken less than a week in discussing and formulating this whole chapter which is a short chapter when compared to others.
- c. Athanasia began to deal with this with his creed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 but it did not become the position of the Church until 381.
- d. Within the RCC and the Orthodox Church the split came down in 1054 over the Orthodox Church emphasizing that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son ...placing less emphasis on His co-equality which all the Reformers maintained.
- e. Among all these men (the Westminster divines and most of the believing Church at the time) it was a settled fact...the Church universal had spoken (Council of Constantinople in 381) and based on Scripture there wasn't much more to say than what they said.
- f. Scripture bears witness to the Godhead of three Persons united in will and purpose. One of those purposes is the creation of beings designed for union in the divine Community. For instance, notice how man's tripartite nature of mind, body, and spirit relates to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the following verses: *"Who has understood the mind of [Yahweh] . . .?" "The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God . . ."* *"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."*
- g. The Trinity is a mystery. By mystery the Church does not mean a riddle, but rather the Trinity is a reality above our human comprehension that we may begin to grasp, but ultimately must know through worship, symbol, and faith. It has been said that mystery is not a wall to run up against, but an ocean in which to swim.

16. What do the three persons of the Godhead hold in common?
- The persons of the Trinity are not subordinate to one another in their essential being.
 - Hodge elaborates, *"The Father sends and operates through both the Son and the Spirit. The Son sends and operates through the Spirit. Never the reverse in either case. The Son is sent by, acts for, and reveals the Father. The Spirit is sent by, acts for, and reveals both the Father and the Son"*
17. What is being said when we read, *"In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties"*?
- "three persons"*= 3 subsistences that must be recognized if we wish to be faithful to the testimony of Scripture...hypostasis= subsistence
 - "of one substance (essence), equal in power and glory..."*=essence/substance refers to eternal, self-existent... pure being.
 - Theologians have said that the personal distinctions of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are to be understood not as 3 distinct existences, but as 3 subsistences; so the distinction in the Godhead is real but not essential.
 - The point: The Church is affirming the full deity of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit...steering clear from tritheism and polytheism. In a sense the Church was saying; We do not know how God is 3 in one...but we do understand that He is not 3 gods.
18. Is the Holy Spirit an "it" or a "He"? Support your answer with Scripture and the confession. (Jn. 14:16,17,26, 16:13; II cor. 13:14)
19. To stand opposed to the Arian Heresy...(Christ was created...the highest form of creation but nevertheless created...so not divine)..Trinitarians wrote the Gloria Patria... *"Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, amen...amen!"* This was a "Fight Song" sung in opposition to the Arians!
20. What is being communicated with the last phrase? *"...the father is of none, neither begotten, not proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."*
- Nicaea defined "begotten" when referring to the Son with the Greek word "homooousis"= "the same, of the same being"= equal Christ being of the same essence with the Father in His divine nature...also another Greek term comes into play here; "monogenes"="only begotten... eternally begotten...not in time as a creature but eternally as the Son of God...John 1:1-3.
 - "eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."*The Father sent the Son and the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. (See John 1:14, 18, 15:26; Gal. 4:6)
21. For Augustine, love best illustrated the nature of the Trinity. *"Now when I, who am asking about this, love anything, there are three things present: I myself, what I love, and love itself. For I cannot love love unless I love a lover; for there is no love where nothing is loved. So there are three things: the lover, the loved and the love."*

22. Regis Nicoll has said this about the Trinity...*"If God is triune, it would be reasonable to imagine that tri-unity is reflected, to some degree, in the created order. Indeed, it is. At every level.*
- i. At the cosmic level, the universe consists of three things: space, time, and matter—each, themselves, having three integral components. Space exists in three dimensions: length, width, and height.*
 - j. Time consists of the past, present, and future.*
 - k. Matter is made up of three sub-nuclear ingredients: quarks, leptons, and bosons, each uniquely defined by three parameters: electronic charge, mass, and magnetic spin.*
 - l. What's more, atoms contain three things: protons, neutrons, and electrons.*
 - m. And, if that's not enough, all protons and neutrons are made up of three quarks. Am I sounding like a broken record or what?*
 - n. At the chemical level, water—the major molecule of biological life—is an example of matter with distinctive triune qualities. Consisting of three atoms (two hydrogen and one oxygen), water can exist in solid, liquid, or gas forms without changing its chemical makeup. Three forms, the same essence.*
 - o. But wait! As explained by Einstein—you know, his $E=mc^2$ relation—matter is energy and energy, matter. And, you guessed it, energy comes in three varieties: the strong-nuclear, the electro-weak, and gravitational.*
 - p. Finally, each of these grand components—space, time, and matter—are intricately woven and interconnected in the unified fabric of space-time. A single, integrated essence. Confounding, isn't it? Just like the Trinity.*
23. How would you respond to someone who said he didn't believe the doctrine of the Trinity because it can't be found in the Bible? (cf. Larger Catechism question 11- How does it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father? Answer: The Scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.)

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
July 13, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. It is interesting that so little is said about God and the Trinity in the Confession. All indications are from the notes on the discussions of the Westminster divines that it seems to have taken less than a week to discuss and formulate this whole chapter. Why do you think that is?
 - a. First, the Bible everywhere speaks about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit...
 - b. Athanasia began to deal with this with his creed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 but it did not become the position of the Church until 381.
 - c. Among all these men (the Westminster divines and most of the believing Church at the time) it was a settled fact...the Church universal had spoken (Council of Constantinople in 381) and based on Scripture there wasn't much more to say than what they said.
2. What is meant by the confession when it declares; *"In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity..."*?

C. Chapter 3: Of God's Eternal Decrees, along w/ Shorter Cat. Questions 7 & 8- Q7: What are the decrees of God? A7: The decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. Q8: How doth God execute his decrees? A8: God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

1. How many of you believe that God, from all eternity, freely and unchangeably ordains every single thing that comes to pass? (See Is. 45:7; 46:9-13)
 - a. If one does not agree with this statement they are a functional atheist.
 - b. All this statement does is express and affirm classical theism. This is not just a Reformed position...but it is a doctrine that expresses classical Jewish orthodoxy, Muslim orthodoxy and Christian orthodoxy.
 - c. This statement affirms God's sovereignty....if He does not ordain everything that comes to pass then that means that things can get by Him which would then mean He is not sovereign....and if not sovereign then He is not God.
2. If you agree with this statement, then how would you answer these questions?
 - a. Does God have complete and absolute power over our lives?
 - b. Could He take our lives at any second? Does He have the authority and right to do so? Would He be violating any principle of justice if He took our life right now?
 - c. If God knew what we were going to say or do, and did not approve of it, could He keep us from doing or saying it?
 - d. Since God ordains everything that comes to pass does He then ordain my sin? Yes. Does He know that from eternity past that I am going to sin? Yes. Could He stop me? Yes. Does He choose not to stop me? Yes. So I cannot sin apart from the permissive will of a sovereign God? He is not forcing me to sin and then holding me accountable for what I was forced to do. And I cannot excuse my sinful behavior by saying that God made me do it.
 - e. Is God the author of sin? Explain your answer!

3. Why do we need to know this? How is this not a teaching of limitations...that is, to our "free will"?
4. A decree- are God's eternal purposes, according to the counsel of His own will, whereby, for His own glory, He has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.--- With this definition in mind (SC #7); are we ever out of the will of the Father? God decreed simply as part of his plan. He was in no way influenced or affected by the future in His decrees. Chapt. 3.11
5. What is wrong with the statement; "Christ died for everybody"?
 - a. If Christ died for everyone...everyone would be saved...but they are not.
 - (1) Is this a weakness in God's action or...
 - (2) Is this a need God has for us to cooperate with His activity so as to not mess with our free will or...
 - (3) Is it simply not true?
 - b. Or what about this one: "Christ death was sufficient to save everyone"?
 - (1) Same problem, if we say Christ death is sufficient to save everyone and not everyone is saved then what do we make of who is the more powerful being... God or man?
 - (2) It also suggests that we can choose to be save...that we somehow have to cooperate with God's grace and choose what to do with God's grace. This is the thinking of many. God does His part but the final decision depends on what each individual does with that grace.
 - c. But in our fallen condition, we do not have the power to embrace the gospel...the Bible everywhere teaches that...that is why God does so much more than offer Himself to people...He must also do the work to secure salvation for His elect.
6. What point is the confession making when it says, *"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death."*? That some are predestined to eternal life and others are foreordained to everlasting death/punishment...judgment. Dbl. predestination- God has chosen before time to save some/many of fallen man and He has also chosen to pass over others, leaving them in their sin. What does Section 4 add to this answer? A set number...certain and definite... of the elect and of the reprobate! (John 17:9)
7. If the number has been predetermined why should we be involved in evangelism? Why pray for the salvation of lost souls?
 - a. God commands us to...
 - b. God uses us in salvation as means to proclaim His word to His elect...
 - c. We understand that through our proclamation God is pleased to bring His elect to salvation.
 - d. We in obedience are commanded to proclaim with the full knowledge that we do not have the power to bring spiritual awakening to anyone...that is God's doing...
 - e. He alone knows who are His and yet we are called upon to proclaim universally because we do not know who are God's.
8. Can man fulfill some predetermined condition to be chosen as God's child? If so, how? If not, why not?(See John 13:18; Acts 13:48; II Timothy 2:19)
9. Read Acts 2:22-41 (cf. Acts 27:14-44). Who ordained these events and how from this text do we know the answer to this question? What was the outcome? Why was it realized ultimately?

10. Back to the confession. Will God change His mind concerning the non-elect? Why or why not? Why is God so harsh? What did they do to deserve being passed by?

- a. God does not force them into unbelief...this is the natural state of all mankind since the Fall...but He knows that unless He intervenes they will persist in their unbelief...so He does intervene in the hearts of those who from the foundation of the world He chose to adopt into His family and passes over or passes by the others.
- b. God is a just judge...If the judge never punished sin, is he good and just? Actually it shows he has little regard for the rule of law.
- c. Rom. 9:11-16; II Tim. 1:9

11. What is the order of salvation found in the Confession? Effectual Calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation of the faith/ glorification. (See Rom. 8:29-30) Which comes first to believer's faith or regeneration? Why?

12. What do you believe is the ultimate reason that so many dislike the doctrine of election? (Rom.9) Predestination? (See John 6; Rom. 8; I Peter 2) How has this doctrine been abused? When taught rightly, what effect should these doctrines have on us as we grow and mature in our faith?

- a. The knowledge that my assurance of salvation is based in God's promise and Christ's work and His righteousness rather than my own self-examination...which always thinks too highly of one's self...brings about confidence and hope.
- b. These doctrines when taught correctly and taken to heart will cause praise, reverence and admiration of God which is really more important than our own well-being.
- c. These doctrines will also keep us humble reflecting on God's amazing grace. Contemplating the question not, "why does God chose?" but rather "why did God chose me?"

13. A few of definitions:

- a. **Predestination**—this is a positive decree determining to confer everlasting life. It is only to be used and applied to the saved and those who will be saved.
- b. **Foresaw**- Looking down the corridors of time and making a determination based on what He saw occurring...hence His will would be determined by something outside Himself...it would be determined by future events.
- c. **Foreknew**- the easiest definition is the one the Scripture itself gives...fore loved as in "*...before the foundation of the world God elected ...in love He predestined...*"
- d. **Foreordination**—a decree determining that the guilty should be condemned to everlasting death. This determination is one to pass by or pass over those who are not elect as a choice by God not as a sign of "hatred" as we define it. The Bible defines God's hatred (like towards Esau) as a passing over of His saving love that was given to Jacob. ...Foreordination also speaks of the method or means God uses to bring His elect to salvation (See Section 6 of this chapter)

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
July 20, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. According to chapter 3 of the Confession what is wrong with the statement; "Christ died for everybody"?
 - a. If Christ died for everyone...everyone would be saved...but they are not.
 - b. Or what about this one: "Christ death was sufficient to save everyone"?
 - (1) Same problem, if we say Christ death is sufficient to save everyone and not everyone is saved then what do we make of who is the more powerful being... God or man?
 - (2) It also suggests that we can choose to be save...that we somehow have to cooperate with God's grace and choose what to do with God's grace. This is the thinking of many. God does His part but the final decision depends on what each individual does with that grace.
 - c. The Scriptures and the Confession say that because of our fallen condition, we do not have the power to embrace the gospel...the Bible everywhere teaches that...that is why God does so much more than offer Himself to people...He must also do the work to secure salvation for His elect.
2. According to the Confession can man fulfill some predetermined condition to be chosen as God's child? If so, how? If not, why not?(See John 13:18; Acts 13:48; II Timothy 2:19)

C. Chapter IV. Of Creation... WSC Q8: How doth God execute His decrees? A8: God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

1. We have been told what God is...now we are looking at what God has done and is doing. What do the following verses tell us about this?
 - a. Ps. 104: 10-30- What does this tell us about God?
 - b. Daniel 4:35
 - c. Acts 4:24-28- What do the people here presuppose about the Creator? That the Sovereign God made all that there is...no hesitation...no question in their faith. True believers believe this stuff without question!
2. Q and A #9- *What is the work of creation? The work of creation is God making all things of nothing, by the Word of His power, in the space of 6 days, and all very good.* This gets us back to the confession.
3. Who does the Confession say created the world? The Godhead...Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Why is it important to recognize the Godhead when answering this question? It gives proper honor to all as participating together in the creation of the world...not "improper" to just say God...just not as precise and in this day and age when so many question the validity of the Trinity it is an opportunity for us to be clear. Also it avoid any confusion concerning the persons of the Godhead...they were each together at creation.
4. What did God create out of? Out of nothing material...not even out of His own essence...ex nihilo. In what space of time? The Confession seems to support a literal 6 days...though that has been debated since. What is the point of faith at issue? God did it all out of nothing by the power of His Word!

5. Q and A #10- *How did God create man? God created man, male and female, after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.*

a. What does the Confession Chapt. IV, Sect. 2 and this catechism question tell us about Adam and Eve that is very important for us to believe?

- (1) They are real...historical people.
- (2) They were male and female...not male and male or female and female.
- (3) We are made in the image of God.
- (4) Law was written on their hearts from the beginning. They knew right and wrong and how to fulfill God's will.
- (5) We have been vested with knowledge, righteousness, holiness...with dominion over the creatures...we are special. There is none like us.
- (6) We are purposefully at the top of the created order for we are the only ones who can manage God's creation properly.

b. How does man deny his "special ness" when he denies God as creator? By denying God existence we are denying our origins and our purpose for existence. What is the duty of Christians today toward the theory of evolution?

6. What does the confession mean when it says that we were "*endued with knowledge*"- "*having the law of God written on our hearts*"?

- (1) They knew God's will and they did God's will without hesitation.
- (2) No one is innocent before God. We are all without excuse.

D. Chapter V.- Of Providence

1. What is the definition of providence and what does it mean in your own words? (Chapter. V, Sect. I) Everything is appointed to happen just as it does to the praise of God.

2. Given this definition: Are providence, chance, fate and luck different? Is so, how? Why do we need to make a distinction?

- a. Fate, luck deal in happenstances...no guide no direction...things just happen
- b. Providence shows us that things are controlled and determined and going to their God-ordained end. Providence is God doing as He promised to do.

3. Does it take as much power to preserve all of His creation as it did to make it? Why or why not? Why is this question even important for the Christian? We think and talk about His greatness in creation but if we don't also consider how He preserves we fall into the trap of thinking we somehow are doing something when we are not...thus denying God in too many ways. Something else we need to confess on a daily basis.

4. God maintains everything according to His will and for His glory. What do these passages tell us about God's providence?

- a. Matthew 10:29 – "*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father.*"
- b. Acts 17:28 – "*In Him we live and move and have our being.*"

- c. Ephesians 1:11 – *“In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will....”*
 - d. Hebrews 1:3 – *“He upholds the universe by the word of his power.”*
 - e. R.C. Sproul once remarked, *“there is not a stray molecule in the universe,”* yet we at times have trouble believing that God governs all events. Why?
5. How do Sections 4 and 5 of this chapter offer hope and comfort for the believer? He always knows what we are doing...He loves us and does all that is needed that we might be restored to Him again.
6. What reasons does Sect.5 give for God allowing us to sin?
- a. To administer fatherly discipline to us.
 - b. To reveal the power of the sin that remains in us.
 - c. To humble us.
 - d. To make us more dependent on Christ.
 - e. To make us more vigilant against future temptation.
 - f. Ultimately, to strengthen us to be able to better bring Him glory.
7. Why is there no chance that a non-believer can do the will of God according to the Confession?
8. How does the doctrine of God’s providence give us hope and comfort?

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
July 27, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What do these passages tell us about God's providence?
 - a. Matthew 10:29 – *"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father."*
 - b. Acts 17:28 – *"In Him we live and move and have our being."*
 - c. Ephesians 1:11 – *"In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...."*
 - d. Hebrews 1:3 – *"He upholds the universe by the word of his power."*
 - e. R.C. Sproul once remarked, *"there is not a stray molecule in the universe,"* yet we at times have trouble believing that God governs all events. Why?

2. How does the doctrine of God's providence give us hope and comfort?

C. WCF- Chapter 6- Of the Fall of Man, Of Sin, and the Punishment thereof.
(Westminster Shorter Catechism questions 13-20)

1. The simplest definition of sin is "to miss the mark." What "mark" does all mankind miss when we sin?
2. What does the catechism mean when it says, *"Any want of conformity unto, or transgression of any law of God."*? I love the answers in the Children's Children's Children's catechism...😊😊!
 - a. What is meant by lack of conformity?- Not being or doing what God requires....Often called sins of omission...a failure to do what God commands. Example: God commands us to love our neighbor...if we do not, we sin!
 - b. What is meant by transgression?- Doing what God forbids. .. Often called sins of commission.
 - c. Give me examples of each! What is the difference?
3. How is it just that all mankind are held accountable for Adam's sin?
4. Describe man's natural condition as a result of the Fall. What does section IV mean? How extensive is the damage from the Fall? Complete and full...every portion of our being is touched by sin and under the influence of sin and so nothing we do can be considered good in God's eyes.
5. What does section VI mean concerning what all our sins deserve? The divines pull no punches here...they are merely reflecting what God has said in His Word. Death to the sinners...but more than that eternal damnation for our transgressions...if not for Christ all would be lost to be sure. God called down His curse on all mankind from the beginning in gen. 3 a curse that made it impossible for man to find satisfaction in this life or the next. How many sins would it take to deserve this punishment? One-Adam's sin is all that it took.

D. WCF- Chapter 7- Of God's Covenant with Man-

1. What are the points offered in section 1 of this chapter that is needful for us today because of our arrogance in this life?
 - a. There is a great distance between God and man...one that can never be gulfed by anything we could do. No place for equality. Our differences are clear in Scripture...Is 40:13-22.

- b. All men owe their absolute obedience and allegiance to God. God is our creator which signifies ownership which signifies authority to do whatsoever He wills to do.
 - c. God owes us nothing. He doesn't have to bless us. We have no rights unless He gives them to us. We must obey and even then we have no rights to blessings unless God condescends to give them.
 - d. God did condescend. P. 113:6...and then more fully in Jesus. "*fruition*" means pleasurable possession...like a parent giving themselves for their child in love.
- 2. **What is a covenant?** An agreement...but so much more. Biblical covenants are not made between equals...they are usually made between the conqueror and the conquered. No negotiations...the conquered were told what the conqueror would do for them...protect, provide and chastise for disobedience...and the conquered were to serve the conqueror under promise of blessings for obedience and threats of curses for disobedience. Covenants were ratified by blood...the parties would walk between dismembered animals to symbolize the seriousness of the vows being taken. God was the only one to walk between the animals in Gen. 15 indicating He was binding Himself to fulfill His covenant with His elect.
- 3. **The covenant**
 - a. **Its prevalence**
 - (1) We find the word *covenant* some 297 times in the Bible.
 - (2) Some of the key passages that speak of the covenant are Genesis 9:8-17; 12:1-3; 15; 17:1-14; Exodus 19; II Samuel 7:1-14; Jeremiah 31:31-34.
 - b. **Its definition:** A solemn agreement that God unilaterally imposes that binds him to his people.
 - c. **Its unilateral imposition:** Because God is the King, he sets the terms of the covenant (its promises, commands, and penalties) and calls us to respond by believing his promises and obeying his commands.
 - d. **Its goal: fellowship with God:**
 - (1) Genesis 17:7 – "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."
 - (2) This promise of fellowship is reiterated throughout Scripture: Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 29:13; II Samuel 7:14; Jeremiah 31, 33; Hebrews 8:10.
 - (3) It is consummated in Revelation 21:3 – "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."
- 4. **What 2 covenants does the Confession speak about? How are they different? How are they similar? Which came first in the course of time? How do you know? Which one do we live under currently? How was the covenant of works fulfilled? Christ came and died as a perfectly obedient sacrifice thus fulfilling the covenant of works...and yet the requirement has not changed...the only way into heaven for God's people is through perfection...through the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to each of His elect. We are perfected because He is perfect.**
- 5. **According to Sect. 6, aside from Christ's sacrifice on the cross what "means of grace" does God use now to regularly confer His grace upon His people?**
 - a. The preaching of the Word
 - b. Administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

- c. Why are these important to our understanding of the covenant?
- 6. Did OT believers come to faith differently than NT believers? Why or why not?
- 7. WSC Q and A #20- *“Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery? God having, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.”*

**Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
August 3, 2014**

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. The simplest definition of sin is “to miss the mark.” What “mark” does all mankind miss when we sin? What does the catechism mean when it says, *“Any want of conformity unto, or transgression of any law of God.”*?
2. What 2 covenants does the Confession speak about? How are they different? How are they similar? Which came first in the course of time? How do you know? Which one do we live under currently? How was the covenant of works fulfilled?

C. WCF- Chapter 8- Of Christ the Mediator- WSC questions 21-23.

1. This term was John Calvin’s favorite term to describe Jesus. Mediator means biblically- reconciler...one who belongs to both parties God and man to reconcile both parties.
2. According to Chapter 8, section I, why did Christ come?
 - a. Jesus came because... *“It pleased God...”*
 - b. Then ...the rest...*in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest and King, the Head and Savior of His Church, the Heir of all things, Judge of the world: unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.”*
3. How is the role of mediator carried out according to section 1? How does Christ fulfill each of His prescribed parts of His mediatorial role?
 - a. Prophet- Is the Word proclaimed and he proclaims the Word.
 - b. Priest- intercedes on behalf of His people...He stands in the gap for them...John 17:6-12
 - c. King- ruler, sustainer, sovereign One.
4. *“You can’t be right in the rest, unless you think rightly of Him.”*- John Newton.
5. Section 2 of the Confession makes a lot of Jesus’ two natures. Why is it important for God’s elect that Jesus be both human and divine?
6. What would you say is the heart of Christ’s mediatorial work? The atonement! Someone has said, *“The Cross was engraved on God’s heart from all eternity.”*
7. According to the Confession can the elect resist God’s gift of salvation? Why or why not? (See Sect. VIII)

D. Chapter 9- Of Free-Will

1. Do all men have the free will to do what they desire? YES How many of you were made to come here today? Why did you come? *Proves that we are free to do what we desire—Jack Benny Story-Benny is confronted by a robber who says “Your money or your wife.” Benny stands there quietly thinking. (Jack Benny was known as being a tight wad) The robber getting impatient says again, “Which is it? Your money or your wife?” “I’m thinking”, says Benny, “I’m thinking.” Then he gives him his wife. The moral of this story is that we choose according to our strongest inclination at the time because we can...but it is a moment by moment thing depending upon what is happening.*
2. With what capacity, according to Section 1, did God create all men?
 - a. He gave him *FREE- WILL-*
 - b. *“Natural liberty”* is part and parcel to our natures. In fact, it is one of those characteristics that separate us from the animals... we have a will they have instinct.
3. If you were to condense this whole chapter into a sentence or 2 how would you do it? Man has free will! Before the Fall he had the free will to sin or not to sin...After the Fall man is bound to free to sin. But when God converts His elect He frees him from the bondage of sin changes his nature and is freely able to do good...but because of the sin that still exists in this life is free to sin as well though it is not his natural inclination any longer.
4. What does the Bible and the confession mean when they say we are *“dead in our sins”*? (See Eph. 2:1-5)
 - a. Incapable...we can do nothing to please God because we are dead before Him...can do nothing but sin.
 - b. What do you think? James Arminius (the father of Arminianism) said- *“The free will of man towards the true Good...is imprisoned, destroyed and lost. And its powers are not only deliberate and useless unless they be assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatsoever except such as are excited by Divine Grace. The mind of fallen man hates and has a complete aversion to that which is truly good and pleasing to God; it loves and pursues what is evil.”* (He defines evil as anything that gets in the way of God.) Martin Luther put it this way, *“Free-will without God’s grace is not free at all, but is the permanent prisoner and bond slave of evil, since it cannot turn itself to good.”*
 - c. See how these two agree on this particular doctrine. Not exactly...Arminius goes on to say... *“All unregenerate persons have freedom of will and a capacity of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the grace of God...and do not open to Him who knocks at the door of the heart; and these things they can actually do.”* In other words, in his total view God’s grace is resistible by many men...and they can reject God’s grace. Whereas Luther taught what the Bible teaches that God’s grace is irresistible.
 - d. What is the doctrine of original sin?
 - (1) The result of the first sin was total corruption, total depravity of man....total inability of men to do what God has commanded us to do...we are no longer free to choose that which pleased god since god is now our enemy.
 - (2) Our nature was changed when we fell... it is sort of like the difference between Liberals and Conservatives outside the Church and within...different worldviews...in the first, the battle is between the Constitution, what it actually says and what they want it to say... in the second, the battle is between what God’s Word actually says and what we want it to say.

5. **Considering Section 4-5— Why, if we are redeemed, renewed, and saved do we still sin? (See Rom. 7:15-25)**
- a. I do believe, pleasing God is high on the Christians list of things to do. I don't think we wake up in the morning as Christian saying, "How can I sin against God today?" But we do, because we still desire to please ourselves...remember the last fight you had with your wife...pleasing God is just one thing on the list not THE thing on the list. We desire to satisfy our own lusts through control, porn, over drinking, using people...we desire to do something more than what God says.
 - b. Steve Brown has said many times, *"The problem in the Church is not that people don't want to be good, the problem is that they want to be good and can't. I am absolutely convinced that most Christian, if they did what they wanted, they would be faithful."* What do you think of this statement and why can't we? Or can we?
6. **As believers what are some things we can do to strengthen the desire of our inner man towards God?**
- a. Spending time in the Word. We then discover the Triune God, what He desires most, and we have our desires changed. This may sound hokey but...what do we do when we want to strengthen our knowledge of our job or lose weight? We read up on the stuff we need to know.
 - b. But true success in most thing comes when we become part of a group that holds one another accountable, encourages, and cheers us on when we succeed— just like Weight Watchers- why does it work?
 - c. Free-will has never been something that is indifferent to good or evil, with no inclination either way. The will is never neutral. Never has been. Never will be. The ability to make our decisions does not give us the freedom we need. After conversion, after the Spirit changes our hearts in regeneration we then become free—but not perfectly until glory where we will finally be released and be free once again to only obey.

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
August 10, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Why did Jesus come...according to the Confession first and foremost? Because it pleased God...
2. Why would it have been important to begin this section this way?
 - a. To emphasize God...first and foremost!
 - b. Also, emphasizing God good pleasure not anything we did.
3. Why is this short statement important for us today? Because when asked why Jesus came today, most people say to save "me"...emphasizing "me" first. We need to keep the primary reason off us and always on God and His work...from which we derive benefits but it is not about us...but about God first and foremost.
4. Do all men have the free will to do what they desire? YES! Since this is true, what is the rub between church traditions? Why is the discussion about free-will so contentious?

C. Chapter 10- of Effectual Calling- See WCF, Q and A 30-32- #30-How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?- *The Spirit applies to us redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.* #31- What is effectual calling? *Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.* #32-What benefits are enjoyed by those who are effectually called?-*They who are effectually called do in this life enjoy justification, adoption, and sanctification, and several other benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.*

1. There is a call of God that is effective!
 - a. When God called the universe into being. God's desired effect in creation came to pass.
 - b. When Jesus called Lazarus from the grave Lazarus immediately responded.
 - c. When God calls believers to Himself. This call has its desired effect. It is an inward call of God. It is regeneration. Paul says in Rom. 8 that those whom God predestines, He calls, and those whom He calls, He justifies. Before the effectual call of God no person is inclined to come to Him. This call effects the work of inward change of disposition, inclination, and the desires of the soul.
 - d. Definition: Effectual calling refers to the creative power of God by which we are brought to a spiritual life in Christ.
2. According to sections 1 and 2 what part does each person of the Trinity play in our salvation?

- a. Each member of the Trinity participates in our salvation.
 - b. The Father elected the saints from eternity past, marking them out for salvation.
 - c. The Son came and secured their salvation with His death. These two acts alone do not complete salvation.
 - d. The Holy Spirit applies the benefits of election and salvation to the elect. The *application* of redemption is known as the *ordo salutis* (the order of salvation): calling – regeneration – faith and repentance – justification – adoption – sanctification – perseverance – glorification.
 - e. Passages on which the *ordo salutis* is based include Romans 1:17; 8:28-29; John 1:12; 3:3,4; 6:44. This order describes not the chronological, but the logical relationship between the elements of salvation.
3. See John 6: 44-45. How does this text aid our understanding of this chapter?
 4. What changes occur in those God has called? Does this all mean we are brought in to this salvation kicking and screaming or do we come in freely by our own will? (Sect. 1)
 - a. When God effectually calls there is always an answer because we have been renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit, in order that we might answer in the affirmative for He only calls His own...those He had predestinated unto life.
 - b. John 6:44... “draws” can also be translated “compelled” as if being drug kicking and screaming...one commentator put it this way years ago...we enter into this world at birth kicking and screaming not wanting to give up the luxury of the womb, we are brought into salvation kicking and screaming because everything in us stands opposed to God and we are “happy” in our chosen ignorance, and then we often die kicking and screaming thinking that this life is the best we can expect.
 5. According to Section 2 are we passive or active in our calling and regeneration? Why does the disposition of our heart have to change before we can receive so great a salvation? When does our faith become active? That is; when can we respond? Which comes first regeneration or faith? Why?
 - a. Faith cannot precede regeneration, because you need to be regenerated in order to exercise faith. We maintain that man in his fallen state is like a corpse. He cannot respond to God. Indeed, he cannot want to respond to God. Thus, God must take the initiative to regenerate those He calls – before any faith is possible on their part. Only AFTER God regenerates them, are they able to believe. And they will believe because they have been effectually called.
 - b. "Regeneration precedes faith". To be sure, after a person is regenerated, that person cooperates by exercising faith and trust. But the first step, the step of regeneration by which a person is quickened to spiritual life, is the work of God and of God alone. The initiative is with God, not with us. The reason we do not cooperate with regenerating grace before it acts upon us and in us is because we cannot. We cannot because we are spiritually, dead. We can no more assist the Holy Spirit in the quickening of our souls to spiritual life than Lazarus could help Jesus raise him from the dead.
 - c. See also Eph. 2:1-5.
 - (1) Vs. 5- “made alive” in contrast to be dead in trespasses and sin. “Dead men walking” is the most natural way to describe the unregenerate.
 - (2) Vs. 5- “made alive”=
 - regenerated...given the ability to respond to Him...
 - to seek forgiveness and recognize Him as LORD and Savior
 - and begin to walk in obedience by faith
 6. Why is such a provision needed as Section 3? How does this section continue the theme that God’s call is effective?
 7. What is section 4 telling us?

D. Chapter 11- Of Justification- Q33: What is justification? A33: *Justification is an act of God's free grace, where He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.*

- 1. Martin Luther declared that justification by faith alone is “the article by which the church stands or falls.” Why according to Luther is this such a make or break doctrine? The answer to this question is the one that split the church!!! According to Rome it was baptism into the one true Church (Rome). According to the Reformers justification is by faith alone.**
- 2. A simple definition for Justification: “To declare not guilty, but righteous.”**
 - a. R.C understanding of justification: faith plus works= justification.**
 - b. Biblical understanding of justification: faith then justification then works come from these...**
 - c. Even the faith to believe is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:29). This stands in distinction to the Roman Catholicism and many protestant denominations today, which teach that faith is the work of man; Catholicism teaches that faith is unregenerate man cooperating with the Holy Spirit.**

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
August 17, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. **What is effectual calling?** *Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.*
2. **How does the doctrine of effectual calling stand in opposition to the current thinking that we choose or decide for Christ? And why is that type of thinking "dangerous" for the Christian?**
3. **Chapter 11- What is justification?** *Justification is an act of God's free grace, where He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.*
4. **Martin Luther stated that this one doctrine of justification by faith alone is, "the article by which the church stands or falls." Why did this one doctrine literally split the Church? According to Rome it was baptism into the one true Church (Rome). According to the Reformers justification is by faith alone...the question was one of authority...who had it God or the Church and the works of the people in the church.**
5. **There are 2 words in Chapter 11, Section 1 that we need to define..."infusion" and "imputation". What do you understand today that these words means?**
 - a. "Infusion" - a Roman Catholic doctrine that basically states that righteousness is "poured into" the soul, as in "added to" the existing righteousness of the soul so that a person in affect assents to and/or cooperates with this grace.
 - b. "Imputation" - to account, to reckon, to transfer legally...see Gen. 15, Rom. 4:3...so what happens is that our sin is imputed to Christ and Christ righteousness is imputed to us.
6. **What according to Section 2 is the result of God justifying His people?**
 - a. We are not the same person ever again...
 - b. Good Works are the result of justification. The confession says "faith is not alone" in that good works naturally come from or as a natural result of being justified.
 - c. **Again what is the easiest meaning of "good" when we talk about it in this context?** Good works are those works that do in fact glorify God...that only those who have been justified can do!
 - d. **Why is the correct understanding of this doctrine important?**
7. **When does justification happen?** Justification happens when we put our trust in Christ. When we are regenerated... "made alive"... we respond in faith...in those "moments" (if there are any, probably not) we are justified...declared righteous by the righteousness of Christ...His righteousness is accounted or accredited to us...transferred legally since Christ's work on the cross took care of the demand of God's law.
8. **A.A. Hodge once said... "God either had to sacrifice; His Law, His Elect or His Son...to fulfill His law."**
9. **Why wouldn't God simply declare sinners forgiven instead of having to send Jesus to live and die for us? Why such an elaborate plan?**
 - a. The answer is more than just because that is the way He planned it—

- b. Because it pleased Him to place all of His attributes on display in His act of redemption
 - c. Think about His justice—He demanded justice for breaking the law—He would not be a just judge if He simply acquitted everyone without upholding the law. (cf. vs. 26)
 - d. God is just. Only He has the right to declare anyone just...or acquitted. Living in the world of a JUST Judge is a good thing for us...we see every day what happens when unjust judges...those who interpret the law for themselves or their political positions... their decision often lead to chaos. We may not always like God's judgments but to know that all men are judged alike...that all men are judged by the same standard...that all men are judged by One who never changes is comforting from the perspective of a thinking person.
10. What is Sect. 4 making clear? Although our justification was decreed from eternity past (1 Peter 1:2,19,20; Romans 8:30) and accomplished 2000 years ago on the cross, we are not justified until the Holy Spirit does actually apply Christ to us (i.e. works faith and repentance in us).
11. How does Sect. 5 answer the following questions:
- a. Since I am justified once for all, is there no need for a Christian to pray, "Forgive us our debts"? By Christ praying this, he demonstrates that we must as well...it doesn't contribute to our justification but is an outworking of our faith.
 - b. What happens to my standing before God when I sin after becoming a Christian? (Ps. 32:3-5; Ps. 66:18; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 John 2:1-2)
 - c. What is the purpose of a Christian confessing his sins, since he cannot lose his salvation?
12. Based on the 2 chapters we have just studied, how would you respond to this statement: When God forgives our sin He also forgets our sins? Does God have a sudden lapse of memory concerning the sins we have just been forgiven for? The scriptures say that He remembers them no more when He forgives...but it is not that He forgets...otherwise there wouldn't be a place called the great throne of judgment that ALL must pass before... it is not that He forgets it is rather that He does not hold those sins against us ever again.
- C. Chapter 12- of Adoption
- 1. It has been said, (And I don't remember where I heard this before...) that justification is the Gospel in legal terms and adoption is the Gospel in family terms. See Rom. 8:14-17, Gal. 4:4-7 and Eph. 1:3-10.
 - 2. How would you define the biblical doctrine of adoption for someone?
 - a. Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the Sons of God.
 - 3. What does the word and act of adoption presuppose about the one being adopted?
 - a. That they weren't part of the original or natural family.
 - b. They were undeserving...nothing they did to have the adopter choose them.
 - c. That they were adopted from less than stellar conditions... circumstances.
 - d. They don't get to choose who adopts them.
 - e. They are in a place to refuse the adoption.
 - f. A choice is being made between children.
 - g. Adopter sets their love and desire upon them before the child can do anything to prove their love for the one adopting.
 - 4. What are the benefits of this adoption?
 - a. The Confession uses the word "*Vouchsafeth*" to speak about the benefits of our adoption. It is an old word that conveys the idea of a superior, under no obligation, freely giving or guaranteeing something. In adopting us, God, out of his unmerited love, guarantees that we are his children.

- b. It is the act of God's grace by which He "legally" (1) accepts us into His family, (2) grants us the status of children, and (3) bestows upon us all the blessings of family membership.
- c. We are given a new status...children of God. Gal. 4:7-9
- d. We are given a new access to the Father...Eph. 3:12
- e. We are given a new family...Eph. 2
- f. We are given a new inheritance...Rom. 8:17

D. Chapter 13- Of Sanctification- WSC-# Q35: *What is sanctification?* A35:

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

1. What is the relationship between God's work and man's work in sanctification?
2. Is sanctification completed in this life?
3. What do you suppose is meant by "...further sanctified really and personally..."? real and personal...something unheard of in any other religion. No other religion speaks of such a personal God so involved with His own to bring them to a place of glorification...for the most part every major religion speaks of an impersonal god that awaits the persons own perfection.
4. Theologians often speak of a "definitive sanctification" and a "progressive sanctification" in the life of the believer. The Confession seems to speak in such a way as well. Using the Confession and Scripture how would you distinguish between the 2?
 - a. **Definitive Sanctification**= "...the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed..." because of the work of Christ the Word and the Spirit living within us. See Rom. 6:6; 1 Cor. 6:11
 - b. **Progressive Sanctification**= "...and the several lust thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they are more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practices of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." See John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13
5. The WSC next asks this question. Q36: *What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?* A36: *The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.*
6. If this statement is true, how is it true? And if so why do we act the way we do? And what do you suppose needs to be the remedy?

**Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
August 24, 2014**

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What is sanctification? Can it be complete in this life? Why or why not?
2. The WSC next asks this question. Q36: *What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?* A36: *The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.* If this statement is true, how is it true? And if so why do we act the way we do? And what do you suppose needs to be the remedy?

C. Chapter 14- Of Saving Faith

1. The Heidelberg Catechism Question #21: What is true faith? *"True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel, in my heart; that not only the 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."*
2. WSC-Q & A86: What is faith in Jesus Christ? *"Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel."*
3. What are these statements communicating about faith? That grace is the instrumental power or the means by which we are saved through faith. Eph. 2:8-9
4. How is this Historical/Biblical position different from many in the Church?
 - a. Divine initiative is the Historical/ Biblical position...
 - b. Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism basically states the man produces his own faith...not without the aid of the Spirit...but without Christ's predetermined will and work.
 - c. Jesus' own words on the subject...John 3:3,5 -*"Unless one is born from above...born again..."*
5. What according to this section enables us to grow stronger in our faith?
 - a. The ministry of the Word- Rom. 10:14-17,
 - b. After faith is born it is increased by the sacraments and prayer...
6. WCF Q&A-88-90 What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption? *"The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation."* Q89: How is the Word made effectual to salvation? *"The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation."*

7. What according to section 2 are the elements of faith? In other words what is it made up of?
 - a. Content- whatever is revealed in the Word is true- Faith enables us to believe Christ.
 - b. Trust- accepting, receiving, and resting in Christ and His work alone. Faith enables us to believe IN Christ.
 - c. Assent- believes it to be true by acting on it...expressing our beliefs by doing that which God has prepared for us to do by producing fruit...Matt. 25: 31-46; John 15...Faith enables us to do what Christ wants and expects by producing the fruit necessary to bring God glory and to enjoy Him forever.

D. Chapter 15- Of Repentance unto Life

1. WCF Q&A 87: What is repentance unto life? *“Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.”*
2. “Repentance is the natural consequence of regeneration!”
3. What is repentance and why is it important to our daily walk?
 - a. True repentance is contrition...a deep remorse for having offended...
 - b. An open and full disclosure of sin...
 - c. A complete confession without attempt to excuse behavior and with no attempt to blame others...
 - d. A resolve and action... to turn away from sin...
 - e. Always coupled with a willingness to make restitution whenever possible...
 - f. The results are a humble and thankful heart

E. Chapter 16- Of Good Works

1. Who defines what a good work is? God alone through His Word.
2. What is the relationship between faith and good works according to the Confession? *“Good works are an outpouring of our faith.”*
3. A few quotes on this matter:
 - a. *“All that is possible to us is already a debt we owe God as our Creator and Perserver. When we have done our utmost for His highest we are still only unprofitable servants.”*- A.A. Hodge
 - b. *“While Christ fulfills the Law for us, it is the Spirit that fulfills the Law in us.”*
 - c. *We need to repent of our bad deeds, but also our good deeds.”*- John Calvin
 - d. *We need to be working as if everything depends upon God, because it does.”* Paul Kooistra, former president of Covenant Theological Seminary, former director of Mission to the World for the PCA, currently president of Erskine College.
 - e. Heidelberg Catechism questions#62-#64
 - (1) #62- Why cannot our good works be whole or part of our righteousness before God?- *Because the righteousness which can stand before the tribunal of God must be absolutely perfect and wholly comfortable to the divine law, while even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.*

(2) #63- What? Do our good works then merit nothing, while God will yet reward them in this and in the future life? *This reward is not merit but of grace.*

(3) #64- But does not this doctrine make men careless and profane? *By no means, for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.*

4. What are the limitations of our good works according to Sect. 4 and 5?

- a. Our Good works do not come from us, but from the Spirit so we can only do as the Spirit directs as far as good works are concerned.
- b. They cannot merit pardon from sin.

5. What are some of the “good works” that God has revealed to us in His Word...works that He prepared beforehand for us to do?

- a. Spreading His Word...
- b. Loving our neighbor as ourselves...which means we put others before ourselves...NOT...”I have to learn to love myself before I can love others.”
- c. Lay down your life for others...same as above.
- d. Participate in corporate worship...
- e. Receive regularly the means of grace...
- f. Practice repentance
- g. Exercise faith as God has described it in His Word...
- h. Bringing up our children in the Word...
- i. Prayer.

**Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
August 31, 2014**

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What are good works and what makes them “good”?
2. What are some of the “good works” that God has revealed to us in His Word...works that He prepared beforehand for us to do?
 - a. Spreading His Word...
 - b. Loving our neighbor as ourselves...which means we put others before ourselves...NOT...“I have to learn to love myself before I can love others.”
 - c. Lay down your life for others...same as above.
 - d. Participate in corporate worship...
 - e. Receive regularly the means of grace...
 - f. Practice repentance
 - g. Exercise faith as God has described it in His Word...
 - h. Bringing up our children in the Word...
 - i. Prayer.
3. What are some of the excuses that believer’s give for not doing “good works” as often as they should? What are we communicating to all when we refuse to do the “good works” God has plan out for us to do?

C. Chapter 17- Of the Perseverance of the Saints

1. What is section 1 saying to us?
 - a. All those who are God’s cannot totally and finally fall away...
 - b. That being said it is possible for the believer to temporarily straying from the faith...
 - c. But those who are God’s will come back...and those who don’t ...never were God’s.
2. Section III speaks of the “...neglect of the means of preservation...” as a reason for a believers fall into sin. What are the means of preservation as you understand them and how can they help us from living in continual sin?
 - a. Participation with the Word
 - b. And sacraments
 - c. And fellowship with God’s people.
 - d. Prayer
 - e. Service
3. So with this in mind, what is our role as God preserves us? To live in the way He prescribes and to bear fruit as a sign of our preservation.
4. Some object, “*If Christians are told that God will preserve them and never forsake them, a key incentive to holy living has been removed.*” How would you respond to that objection? See Mt. 7:20-21; John 10:27; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 5:22-23; James 2:26; II Peter 1:10.
5. So with this in mind, as well, how is this doctrinal statement different than the one we often hear from our Baptist brothers and sisters, “Once saved, always saved.”?

- a. Within the context usually this is said when they are talking about how they made a “decision” for Christ and were baptized as a sign of that decision....their decision.
- b. This statement can lead to great presumption that just because they are baptized in the faith they are saved “no matter what”...almost Catholic in nature.

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
September 28, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What does the perseverance of the saints depend on? (Chapter 17, section II)
2. Can true believers lose their salvation? Why or why not?

C. Chapter 18- Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation; WLC Question 80: Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation? *“Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God’s promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation.”*

1. Who is it that can be assured of God’s grace and salvation according to section 1? Those who truly believe...who are?
 - a. Those who love Him sincerely...
 - b. Those who endeavor to walk in good/clear conscience before Him...
 - c. What does this look like day by day? Staying in the Word!
2. Interesting first statement in section 1. What are some things that may give unbelievers a false sense of assurance about their salvation?
 - a. A inflated ego concerning all the things they are doing...proving themselves...Matt. 7:21-22
 - b. False understanding of salvation...justification by works.
 - c. Some church that being a member in a particular church (sometimes even particular local church) is the only way to heaven.
 - d. Roman Catholic Church teaches that one is saved by taking the sacraments...specifically being baptized in the RC Church.
3. What according to Section 2 and 3 are the *“grounds of true assurance”*?
 - a. The divine truth of the promise of salvation...According to this ground, how important is God’s promise and His Word for our assurance? See John 5:24; John 6:37; John 10:28; 1 Jn. 5:12
 - b. The inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made ... How does that work? 1 John 1:9.
 - What higher court of appeal is there?
 - Where can you possibly get more assurance of forgiveness than from God’s own Word?
 - God had the angel tell Mary “you have found favor with God” ...but He says that to us through His Word by the Holy Spirit every day. How can we know what we know? The Bible tells me so!
 - c. The testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God....an inward assurance...a confidence that we are truly saved. See Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6
 - d. How does He do this, once again? Through His Word...there is no other way that we can be and stay assured of our salvation than with regular reading of the Word of God. As we read the Spirit uses the Word to enlighten, convict and encourage!
 - e. To a culture that puts such a premium on man’s understanding, J.C. Ryle speaks, “The poorest Englishman who reads and understands his Bible, knows more about religion than the wisest

philosophers of Greece and Rome.”... and I would add to this a caveat...Not only will they know more about religion, but also about the realities of life in general, more than the smartest of people. There are lots of smart people, but few that are wise in comparison. Being a person of the Word will increase your wisdom which will strengthen your assurance.

- f. God does save us and confirms that but there is also our own works that show we are saved. The practice of the Christian contributes to his realizing his assurance. Old Puritan syllogism, “*A Christian does good work, I do good work, therefore I am a Christian.*” II Peter 1:3-11
4. According to section 3 how can we really be assured of our salvation and not be those who Christ says, “*I never knew you...*” in Matt. 7?
 - a. The Holy Spirit enables us to experience and understand what God has provided;
 - b. An on-going and correct use of the means of grace will develop assurance.
 5. What are some ways you can “*examine yourself, to see whether you are in the faith*” (II Cor. 13:5ff)?
 6. What is section 4 warning us of? Promising us of? That is why we should never give up or as William Wilberforce said, “*A man who fears God is not at liberty to give up.*” John Knox said as well, “*A man with God is always in the majority.*”
 7. What may be some things that hinder us in our assurance of faith?
 - a. Lack of on-going and regular reading of God’s Word...like journaling, Journibling, or other daily exercises where we not only read the Word but engage the Word.
 - b. Besetting sin that controls...and then the other of the lack of being assured of forgiveness from sins in the past.
 - c. A true lack of understanding And belief in doctrines like election, predestination and perseverance.
 - d. A lack of understanding of justification and a lack of further understanding of sanctification in our lives.
 - e. Inconsistent Christian living.
 - (1) It is impossible to have a high degree of assurance when there is little obedience to Christ...In Ps. 51:3 David’s sin is ever before him, not assurance of salvation (v. 12).
 - (2) Hitting and missing coming on the Sabbath...
 - (3) Not making a point of keeping short lists on our sins and coming to worship prepared...
 - (4) Not participating in the means of grace regularly.
 - f. Misunderstanding of the place of daily repentance before God.
 - g. Misunderstanding of all that we are to be thankful for.... “in all things give thanks...”
 - h. Misunderstanding the function of affliction in Christian growth.
 - (1) Affliction is corrective (Prov. 3:11-12)
 - (2) Affliction produces Christian character (Heb. 12:10-11)
 - (3) Affliction is often the context in which God reveals His grace and glory in us (II Cor. 12:9)
 - i. Misunderstanding the nature of sin in the believer...When Christ saved you, sin’s reign over you ended, but its presence has not been banished
 - j. Attacks of the devil.
 - (1) Gen. 3:1, “*Did God really say . . . ?*”
 - (2) In Romans 8:31, Paul knows that Satan is the great adversary of our assurance.
 - k. Lack of Christian fellowship.
 - (1) Lack of fellowship does not necessarily lead to a lack of assurance, but it can have a profound effect since we were created to be IN community with other believers for our growth and edification and enjoyment.
 - (2) If we do not seek to be in Christian fellowship we will be influenced by who we do hang out with...
 - (3) Hebrews 10:22-25
 - l. This is obviously not an exhaustive list of the things that hinder our assurance of faith.

8. How to grow in assurance: Study the objective elements of the Gospel as they display the grace of God in salvation -- election, justification, adoption, etc. In addition, Thomas Watson advises, *"If you would have assurance, be much in exercise of grace. Let us lie at the pool of the ordinances and frequent the word and sacrament"* (A Body of Divinity).
9. How can this chapter with all its proof texts help the elders of the church in assessing the needs of the flock?

D. Chapter 19- of the Law of God

1. Who is under obligation to keep the law of God? All Men! Why are all men, believer and non-believer obligated to keep the law?
2. What were the 3 forms of the Law talked about here and confirmed in scripture?
 - a. Moral
 - b. Ceremonial
 - c. Judicial
 - d. Which are still enforced?
3. What is the purpose of the Law in the life of believers?
4. What are the divines seeking to communicate by the use of the phrase, *"as a church under age"*?
 - a. The church is an organism and as such grows and matures
 - b. At the time of giving the ceremonial laws the church was in its infancy and needed pictures...signs and symbols to teach them what God requires...as well as preparing the Church for the day when we can understand more as we mature in Christ. Just like with our littlest children...
5. Do the concepts of Law and Grace contradict each other in the Scriptures? Why or why not?
6. Let's think together a minute. Why is the sanctity of life more than a Christian issue? Why is the sanctity of marriage more than simply a Christian issue? What if a man was to object to this teaching and say he doesn't believe the Bible so none of this matters? Does what he says negate in anyway the truth of Scripture or the requirement of Scripture on such a person? Explain your answer.
7. What changed after the Fall concerning the Law? Man's condition not the Law!

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
October 5, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What according to Chapter 18, Section 2 and 3 (dealing with the Assurance of grace and Salvation) are the “*grounds of true assurance*”?

- a. The divine truth of the promise of salvation...According to this ground, how important is God's promise and His Word for our assurance? See John 5:24; John 6:37; John 10:28; 1 Jn. 5:12
- b. The inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made ... How does that work? 1 John 1:9.
 - What higher court of appeal is there?
 - Where can you possibly get more assurance of forgiveness than from God's own Word?
 - God had the angel tell Mary “you have found favor with God” ...but He says that to us through His Word by the Holy Spirit every day. How can we know what we know? The Bible tells me so!
- c. The testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God....an inward assurance...a confidence that we are truly saved. See Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6
- d. **How does He do this, once again?** Through His Word...there is no other way that we can be and stay assured of our salvation than with regular reading of the Word of God. As we read the Spirit uses the Word to enlighten, convict and encourage!
- e. To a culture that puts such a premium on man's understanding, J.C. Ryle speaks, “The poorest Englishman who reads and understands his Bible, knows more about religion than the wisest philosophers of Greece and Rome.”... and I would add to this a caveat...Not only will they know more about religion, but also about the realities of life in general, more than the smartest of people. There are lots of smart people, but few that are wise in comparison. Being a person of the Word will increase your wisdom which will strengthen your assurance.
- f. God does save us and confirms that but there is also our own works that show we are saved. The practice of the Christian contributes to his realizing his assurance. Old Puritan syllogism, “*A Christian does good work, I do good work, therefore I am a Christian.*” II Peter 1:3-11

2. What is the purpose of the Law in the life of the believer?

- a. The Law reveals to us God's nature and His character...he wishes that we will know Him intimately so there will be no question or doubt that would lead us in anyway away from Him.
- b. “The perfect rule of righteousness”
- c. “A rule of life informing them...”
 - (1) Of the will of God...
 - (2) Of our duty to God...
 - (3) It directs and binds us to walk according to His will...
 - (4) It roots out the sinfulness in our fallen nature exposing the darkness of our hearts to the light...
 - (5) So we may come to further repentance and a regular hatred for the sin within...
 - (6) Restraining our corruptions
 - (7) To show us what the reward will be for obedience

C. Chapter 20- Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

1. According to Section 1, where does true liberty come from and what are true believers freed FROM that others are not?

- a. Christ purchased liberty for His children...
- b. We are freed from the guilt of sin, God's wrath and curse, the love of the world, bondage to Satan, the dominion of sin.

- c. How are these last two different? The evil of afflictions (delivered from the “evils” of afflictions not the necessity of them happening....hopelessness, bitterness, total despair), the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and eternal punishment.
2. What are we freed FOR...to experience... to be able to do? Access to God’s throne, obedience to Him, and to be able to love Him with all of our heart, mind, and soul.
 3. In Chapter 9 the Confession speaks of “that natural liberty” which God has “endued the will of man”. What is the difference between the natural liberty spoken of in Chapter 9 and the liberty that is spoken of here? Christ purchases this liberty for the believer and it is given by the Holy Spirit to His elect. Because of this component ...in that we are given a new ability...a changed heart/desire/nature...so now it is true liberty.
 4. Who is the Lord of the conscience and what does this mean for those of us who believe? “God alone is Lord of the conscience” means that God has the inherent right to impose moral obligations upon us. All other legitimate authorities are under God’s authority.
 5. R. C. Sproul makes this statement, *“It is significant that the Westminster divines included this chapter, because Christian liberty is one of the most important fruits of our redemption that was won for us by Christ.”* What do you think he means...(since when you ask the average Christian about the most significant thing that happened in the death and resurrection of Christ; they/we do not readily come up with this as an answer)?
 - a. In the beginning God gave man 2 things- free will and liberty.
 - b. We didn’t lose our humanity in the Fall because we retained free will...(the power and the ability to make choices)...what we lost was our liberty.
 - c. We became in bondage to sin...we could only make choices that were sinful by nature and by God’s definition.
 - d. The bondage did not destroy our humanity...but since the fall we have become “WILLING” prisoners to sin.
 - e. By and through Christ we who are His are liberated from the bondage of sin. Our liberty was restored...our natures changed that we might be free to live in such a way to glorify the Godhead.
 - f. Liberty is the state of all believers in Christ and consists of freedoms...the outworking of that liberty.
 - g. Unconverted man has the freedom to sin but he does not have the liberty to keep the law of God. When we are freed from the constraints of sin we have liberty of conscience...no matter the circumstances because we have been liberated in Christ we are free even if we are not free physically.
 6. What does being liberated in Christ require of us? In other words, what is wrong with only following our consciences as redeemed people?
 7. What according to sect. 4 is the church to do with those who abuse this liberty?
- D. Chapter 21- Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day
1. Everybody knows there is a God: *“For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:20).

2. What is worship? *"The work of acknowledging the greatness of our covenant Lord."* John Frame
3. What does this 1st section tell us specifically about how we are to worship God?
 - a. Lets us know there is only one way to worship...God's way.
 - b. This is the Regulative Principle of Worship starting at "but the acceptable way..."
4. If the worship prescribed by Scripture is the only acceptable way to worship God, than all other ways of worshipping God are offensive: *"he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture."* This is known as "the regulative principle."
5. Does the principle taught in Section 1 seem restricting by nature, that is, God regulating worship for Himself? Why or why not? How might worship in general be less controversial if all churches understood this principle? (See Jer. 19:5; Mark 7:7)
6. How has God prescribed how He is to be worshiped from the beginning?
 - a. Think the sacrifices of the animals to provide skin for Adam and Eve...first substitutionary atonement and worship...
 - b. Think Cain and Able and what was expected of them...they had seen and/or heard of the animal sacrifice and were to do accordingly.
7. Which are the foundational elements of worship clearly prescribed by the Bible and confirmed by the Confession here in Sections 3-5?
 - a. Prayer.
 - b. The reading of Scripture... an attitude of reverence...and not over 10 verses according to a recent information poll. After 10 verses they say we lose people...can you imagine those folks that were standing all day for the reading of the whole Pentateuch?
 - c. Sound preaching...interestingly, no words like dynamic, exciting, interesting, eloquent or fascinating to describe the preaching only one word..."SOUND"...the preacher is held accountable for preaching soundly...truthfully and the whole counsel of God.
 - d. Conscionable hearing of the Word...What does this mean? The people are held accountable for "sound" listening (paying close attention). One of the jobs of the elders is to make sure that people are listening, learning and growing from the preaching of the Word.
 - e. Singing of psalms...Scripture choruses or songs taken from the scriptures with God as their focus.... "with grace in our hearts..."We are to sing with God in mind...that what we are doing is for His glory and His benefit. We are to think about what we sing.
 - f. Administration of the sacraments.
 - g. Worthy receiving of the sacraments.
 - h. Along with religious oaths, vows solemn fasting's and thanksgiving on special occasions...i.e. wedding ceremony is a worship service...hold membership vows in the worship service...ordination services...installation services...special days of remembrance and thanks like Mother's day and Father's day as long as the emphasis is still on God's provision of such people.
8. Why do you suppose there is so much attention given to prayer in 3 and 4?
 - a. So we can get it right. God wants to ensure our success...does it get any better than that?
 - b. Clarifies that prayer is required of ALL men...but that God does not hear all prayers the same.
 - c. God hears all prayers but the only acceptable prayers are those made in faith in the name of His Son, by the help of the Spirit, according to His will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love and perseverance...

- d. And in vocal, in a known language....the language of the people, not Latin.
9. In light of these principles, what do the practices of many churches today tell us about where they are spiritually? What do you suppose is the number one reason people say they go to church might be?
- a. Fellowship...
 - b. Some churches have a ritual of friendship...to greet each other in the main body of worship...not necessarily wrong if done before the service begins.
10. For clarity concerning the last phrase of section IV, *“nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.”* John Stott describes blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: *“This sin, committed by the Pharisees, was a deliberate, open-eyed rejection of known truth. They ascribed the mighty works of Jesus, evidently done ‘by the Spirit of God’ (Mt. 12:28), to the agency of Beelzebub. Such sin, Jesus said, would never be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come. He who commits it ‘is guilty of an eternal sin’ (Mk. 3:29; cf. Mt. 12:22-32). It leads him inexorably into a state of incorrigible moral and spiritual obtuseness, because he has willfully sinned against his own conscience. In John’s own language he has ‘loved darkness instead of light’ (Jn. 3:18-21), and in consequence he will ‘die in his sins’ (Jn. 8:24). His sin in fact, leads to death.”* (The Letters of John, pg. 191).

**Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
October 12, 2014**

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What does being liberated in Christ require of all believers?
2. What does the first half of chapter 21- On Religious worship and the Sabbath day make abundantly clear for all believers?
3. How might worship in general be less controversial if all churches understood and adhered to the principles being taught in this section?

C. Chapter 21- Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day continued See Sect. 7 & 8 :

11. What does the word “Sabbath” mean? Rest. What is the significance of this?

12. How is the Sabbath day/Lord’s Day to be observed by the believer today?

- a. Preparing our hearts throughout the week...
- b. Setting in order all worldly affairs so nothing has to be dealt with on the Sabbath...so that we can rest from our regular cares
- c. Public and private worship...church attendance, catechism, reading of Scripture...21st Century...Sunday School, Evening worship service or Bible Studies on Sunday for churches that do that sort of thing.

13. Why did God give us the Sabbath commandment?

- a. It tells us that God wants desires and expects to be worshiped.
- b. It communicates clearly how important our keeping the Sabbath/Lord’s Day is to God.
- c. Each of the commandments tell us something of God’s nature, something that He holds dear.
 - (1) He rested on the 7th day so the principle of rest is not only verified but commanded in Eden...He rested from His work of creation not from everything else that needs to be done...though...in a way it has all been concluded in God’s economy...
 - (2) He set aside a day for rest and gave it to us as a gift...the Sabbath was made for man...not man for the Sabbath.
 - (3) God delights in what He made and He expects that we will delight unimpeded in the One who made us.

14. Why should we go to church? What do we miss if we don’t go? Is it a requirement of all believers? (See sections 7 and 8) Ex. 20:8-10, 31:14, 35:2; Num. 15:32-36; Acts 2:42-47; I Cor. 14:25; Hebrews 10:25

15. One more thing: There exists within the Reformed tradition 2 views of how the Sabbath/Lord’s day may be observed.

- a. The Continental View- the Sabbath should at all cost be kept by every believer, but there is no prohibition is scripture against re-creation. Recreation being how we rest, relax and fellowship on the Sabbath.
- b. The Puritan View- (which won out at Westminster) the Sabbath day was to be taken up in worship, in the study of the things of God, and in doing errands of mercy...ONLY! No recreation of any kind.
- c. Their support for this is Is. 58:13 giving more definition to Ex. 20:8-10. They chose to interpret the word “pleasure” in this text to mean that all things outside of the approved things on the

Sabbath were prohibited. There are a few things at play here that make this interpretation problematic:

- (1) First, if this interpretation is true then it would be an addition to Sabbath restrictions that had not previously been known to the people. God could do this if he chose to but that is not how He normally worked through the prophets.
- (2) The prophets served very much like the Reformers not calling the people to something new so much as calling them back to what God had already prescribed in His covenant.
- (3) But the term “pleasure” here has to be seen within the context of Israel first and then brought into today. The Israelites knew the law, they chose to ignore it in some cases...not a matter of ignorance so much as a willful act...in other cases they violated it commercially. They didn’t want to lose profits by closing down businesses on the Sabbath...they didn’t want to give their fields rest on the Sabbaths established because that would take away from “their” fortunes...their “pleasures”. You see the “pleasures” that Isaiah spoke about was doing business on the Sabbath so they wouldn’t see a downturn in profits. They were doing as they pleased as far as making money of the Sabbath and this displeased God. So this text has nothing to do with recreation but with doing business on the Sabbath at the expense of their faith.
- (4) The original intent was “rest” so it is hard to see that this wouldn’t include recreations and fellowship with family and friend as we rest in the Lord’s gift away from regular worldly affairs.

D. Chapter 22-Of Lawful Oaths and Vows

1. Now turn to Numbers 30:2; Eccl. 5:4-5; Matthew 5:33-37; Rom. 9:1-2; James 5:12. What is going on here? Is the Scriptures contradictory?
2. What is this section saying to us and why is it important for us to make vows and oaths?
 - a. It seems that the reason that we have oaths and vows is because by nature all men are liars. See Ps. 116:11; Rom. 3:4, not because people tell nothing except lies but because we are all prone to twist the truth and to look for wiggle room when it comes time to fulfill our promises. Most men/people, even Christians...when they says yes ..they mean...”Yes, unless something better comes along.”
 - b. When we make a vow or take an oath we should not word things in such a way as to have an escape route if things don’t go as plan. We are to use plain and simple language.
 - c. These Scriptures point out that this is not an option for a Christian...when our word is given...it is to be adhered to.
 - d. Vows and oaths are to be guarded carefully and are not to be entered into without intent...they are a proof of our trustworthiness in Christ.
 - e. Oaths and vows in themselves do not establish truth. They testify to the swearer’s intent to keep a promise. An oath only has value in upholding the truth of what is promised if the one who makes the oath intends to fulfill it. If a vow is broken, that which was sworn is shown to be false; however, the truth that God will hold accountable those who violate sacred vows remains.
 - f. Believers are to be people so known for their truthfulness that they have no need to vow that they will keep their word. Let us not make promises that we cannot keep and be faithful to do what we say in big and small things.
3. Some helpful definitions:
 - i. The nouns “vow” means “a solemn promise”.
 - j. Oath, while close in meaning, typically has an additional sense of invoking the divine (e.g., an oath taken on the Bible or verbally invoking God’s name). A verb with close meaning to all three is to swear.
 - k. But in the end as we have seen whether the Christian invokes God’s name or not...God is there and whatever we say we say as a representative of Him so we are always standing before God when we speak.

4. How does this chapter help your understanding about how as a Christian you should deal with others?
5. Again, what would be some of the benefits if more Christians actually kept their word?

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
October 19, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Why should we go to church? What do we miss if we don't go? Is it a requirement of all believers? (See sections 7 and 8 along with Ex. 20:8-10, 31:14, 35:2; Num. 15:32-36; Acts 2:42-47; I Cor. 14:25; Hebrews 10:25)
2. Why is God so insistent about our going to Church?
3. What is going on...in the OT capital punishment for not going to Sabbath...in NT no such command...Why? Is the insistence any less just because there is no threat of death? Explain.
4. For the Christian how often do we make oaths/vows? Every time we open our mouths for the most part...of all people our Yes is to mean Yes and our No ...No!

C. Chapter 23- Of the Civil Magistrate (READ THIS SECTION)

- a. Why do you suppose that the divines would include a section in the confession on Civil Magistrates?
 - a. Some might be of a mind to say that we are only under the direct command of Scripture and we don't need these guys...
 - b. But they determined to tell us why we have governments, where their authority comes from, along with its purpose and role are important things for us to be clear about.
- b. Augustine said, *"Civil government is a necessary evil made necessary because of evil."*

D. Chapter 24- Of Marriage and Divorce

1. How is marriage defined in the Confession? Is it different from the way Scripture defines it?
 - a. One man and one woman...(Gen. 1: 27; 2:24)no confusion Male and Female...no gender confusion...everyone is created male or female...nothing else...even if there is some form of mutation which is extremely rare...the DNA defines our gender...this is not something we can choose to change...Oh, we can change the outside but not the inside...
 - b. Monogamy and permanence...in opposition to polygamy.
 - c. So the Confession and Scripture agree.
 - d. Hence this church does not do marriages or unions that are not endorsed by Scripture or recognize them as legitimate either.
 - e. This along with Scripture EXCLUDES anything like homosexual marriage or unions...there is no such thing as same-sex marriage...because there is only one definition given by God for marriage and it is this definition to which the Confession agrees.
 - (1) The argument that the Bible is historically conditioned and therefore is not binding upon us today reveals where the person is who says such thing concerning God's Word...they do not believe God's Word and hence are themselves not believers at worst and at best have an inadequate understanding of the authority of God's Word on the life and practices of all men...especially the one who professes belief.
 - (2) These kind of relationship are expressly forbidden in Scripture and are sinful.
 - (3) Chuck Colson was once asked about Bible believing Christians, in a derogatory way...he said is there any other kind.

2. What are the reasons given in the Confession for one to marry? Why these?
 - a. Mutual help...just like in the Trinity...mutual help requires a mutual submission among equals in God's eyes...Eve was created as Adam's helpmate...to complete and complement him...but Adam as well was created and had responsibilities overall God's creation including his wife and is held accountable by God for his wife and children.
 - b. Increase in number with legitimate issue...bearing children...multiplying as the original command only in the context of marriage. The Bible and the Confession condemn sexual relationships outside of marriage...another policy of this church is that I will not marry anyone currently engaged in living together outside of marriage unless there are children involved and the desire of the couple is marriage. Cohabitation before marriage is always wrong. Never grant yourself what God forbids. God's Word is clear here. And statistics bear this out. (60-80% of all people who live together and/or are sexually active before marriage will get a divorce within the first 5-7 years of being married.) Determine today to seek God's purity and strength and watch Him take your relationship to a higher level.
 - c. Increase of the Church with a holy seed...we seldom look at children in this culture as anything but a burden...but the Bible endorses large families...it nowhere gives the Christian especially the right to just decide for themselves they do not want children. It is one thing if they are prevented somehow...but to simply make the decision not to bring children into this world is wrong. The command and has not been rescinded to be fruitful and multiply.
 - d. For preventing uncleanness... Paul says, "*It is better to marry than to burn*"... and the context tells us that he is talking about burning with lust. God gives us the sexual desires and impulses we have for the love of our spouse and for the reproduction of children...they are not to be used outside of marriage. Some may determine to be single but if their desires tend toward sexual impulses and desires this is a clear sign that they are not called to celibacy.
 - e. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give consent... this statement has to be taken in the context of the whole section that begins by defining marriage as between one man and one woman...so this is NOT as some in the mainline Presbyterian Church say opening the door to any and all including homosexuals. It is meant as a positive, affirming that God created marriage for all mankind equally...except for those perhaps that do not have the mental capabilities to judge well.
3. What are the prohibitions registered here and how do they apply today?
 - a. Not to marry an unbeliever...this is the policy of this church...we will not yoke a believer to a non-believer.
 - b. A true reformed religion even to Catholics/Papists... this is a matter of wisdom... unequally yoked can even be among Christians with opposing doctrinal positions...either come together on these biblical positions or do not marry. Choose the church that best reflects God's Word. - Do you really see the Lord the same way? (Example: Protestants and Catholics will agree on the basics but will disagree on issues like the sacraments and their salvific nature that may be central to the faith. Presbyterians and Pentecostals will agree on some things but will disagree on the basic understanding of "predestination, election, perseverance of the saints" as taught in Scripture. These issues can be and will be the undoing of a relationship unless the couple is willing to go to God's Word and talk with their pastor and others they respect to discover what God says about such things together. You can't just agree to disagree because in this close of a relationship they will continue to raise their head...and Satan will use them as wedges between the couple.)
 - c. Not to marry a close relative=consanguinity- no incestuous relationships as confirmed in Scripture. Affinity is within relationships created by marriage. (See Lev. 20:19-21)
4. What grounds does the Confession give for divorce?
 - a. Adultery or fornication committed after contract...gives the innocent party the right to dissolve the contract of engagement with no obligation.
 - b. Adultery after marriage... is a grounds for which the Bible seems to say that one can be re-married after a divorce if the original relationship cannot be mended.

- c. Desertion is allowed only after every possible remedy is sought and one cannot be found first by the church and then by the civil magistrate...
 - d. Divorce has to be according to the Law of God not the desires of people.
 - e. Man's desire for a divorce is not in and of it self a reason for divorce.
 - f. Puritan's held to "incompatibility" ... "a willful repudiation of the covenant vows"...at least one person making a personal vow not to uphold their vows...continual physical abuse or forced abortion were their reasons for this subset if you will for desertion.
5. What role does the church have in marital struggles?
- a. Preaching the truth of God's word on subjects such as this...to be as clear as possible ...not with opinion but with God's Word alone.
 - b. To be involved to the point of aiding both parties to come to reconciliation or if divorce is eminent to give counsel and support as best it can. For even the biblical reasons given does not mean that a couple must divorce it simply means they may seek a divorce after all other avenues to be reconciled have not worked. If a man commits adultery and then asks for forgiveness... his wife must forgive him and receive him as a brother in Christ...as a Christian she has no option on this...however that does not mean that she must stay married to him.
 - c. In the case of a biblical divorce the church is to support and not condemn or criticize the "innocent" party.
 - d. When one has been filed against for unbiblical grounds then it is the Church's place to step up and remind the "believer" that this is not biblically acceptable behavior.
 - e. If the person persists in divorcing outside of biblical grounds it is the church's responsibility to excommunicate that person for their unwillingness to submit to the authority of God, the Scripture, the Church and their vows made before God. By excommunicating the contumacious we free up the "innocent" to be able to remarry if they so choose.
6. And what is the role of the church to be when a Christian couple seeks re-marriage?
- a. To determine as best as possible the status of the first marriage and divorce...
 - b. If it was a divorce for biblical reason, then to bless the union of these two as if there were no ties to the first marriage. Of course, this is easier said than done when there are children involved.

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
October 26, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What made you the most uncomfortable with our discussion on marriage and divorce last week and why?
2. What is the Church's role concerning this issue?

C. Chapter 25- Of the Church

1. Who created the church? What is its purpose?
 - a. (See Section III Christ, the head, rules His church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of men (e.g. 1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:5; Ephesians 4:11-12; Matthew 18:18).)
 - b. *"For the gathering and perfecting of the saints..."*
2. What do the terms "catholic", "invisible", visible" communicate about the Church?
 - a. "catholic"= the Church universal...
 - b. "invisible"- is the catholic/universal church... The true church is invisible to us because we cannot know the hearts of people, but it is visible to God... the whole number of the elect...past, present and future from everywhere consisting of the elect from every nation, tribe and people.
 - c. "visible"- is catholic/universal...all of which openly profess the true religion along with their children.
3. What do you believe the Bible regards as important qualities to look for in a church? The Church in ages past identified 3 marks of the true visible church:
 - a. The pure preaching of the Word of God
 - b. The proper administration of the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)
 - c. The exercise of church discipline
4. Can anything stop the Church from existing?

D. Chapter 26-Of the Communion of the Saints=The Church

1. In the Apostles' Creed we say, *"I believe in the communion of the saints."* Do you? What does this phrase mean to you? (Or do you look to the church mainly as a place for Bible teaching and worship?)
 - a. "communio sanctorum"- describes our relationship to Christ and to one another.
 - b. Being in communion with Christ we do not lose our identity but we are connected to or have fellowship with Him....we believe "into" Him and then we are in union with or in Him. It is the union through faith that is the foundation for our communion with Him.
 - c. Communion with other believers then speaks to our connection to or fellowship with other believers but we do not lose our identity.
2. Why do you suppose the divines define the kind of fellowship/communion we can expect with Christ as, ... *"in His Grace, suffering, death, resurrection and glory..."*? And then with one another, *"...communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obligated to the performances of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man."*? What does this for us today?
 - a. We are a unit...in communion with one another...like a military unit or a football team...totally dependent upon the other for the success of the mission... *"the gathering and perfecting of the saints..."*
 - b. We must view church not merely as a Sunday gathering but as a working-together fellowship where each member seeks to minister to others.

- c. We should reach out to church members facing financial, employment, and marital struggles, but we cannot reach out to people until we discover their struggles, and we will not discover their struggles until we take the time to build friendships with them. They are brothers and sisters in Christ...first and foremost...if you don't want to know the people you worship with...why are you here since the communion of the saints is such a necessary part of our ability to glorify God?
3. Explain what section 2 is saying and how it is important for today? What do you make of such words as *“bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God”*? (See Hebrews 10:23-25) In today's church most see attendance as optional...most see involvement with the others in the church as optional...most see membership in a local church as optional...most see church as something that we get to when we can...very much the way the average person views tithing... “...if I have the time I will go...If I have anything left over then I will give...”
 4. *“Everyone who belongs to Christ belongs to everyone who belongs to Christ. You do not have to seek unity. You have it...in Christ.”* (E. Stanley Jones, Methodist missionary of the 20th cent.) If we would only believe this simple fact, it could change the way we look at many things.
 5. What role does the church play in your life? What role do you play in the life of the church?
- E. Chapter 27- Of the Sacraments- See also WSC Q&A 88-93 Q88: What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption? A88: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, are His ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation. Q89: How is the Word made effectual to salvation? A89: The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation. Q90: How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? A90: The Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend to it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives. Q91: How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation? A91: The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that administers them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them.
1. What is a sacrament according to the Confession?
 - a. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace... signs and seals placed upon His people designating that we are His and that we become the recipients of His covenant of grace. (Gen. 17:7&19, Rom. 4:11)
 - (1) Sacraments are a *sign* in that they symbolically declare the gospel of grace. It points beyond itself to some greater meaning or significance...Baptism is not redemption in Christ, the Lord's Supper is not the crucifixion of Christ...but these outward signs point to the realities of these things.
 - (2) Sacraments are a *seal* in that they are a stamp of ownership or authenticity of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit seals us to Himself inwardly and these sacraments point to that sealing and to the promises of God to nourish and preserve us as His own. Sacraments seal or certify to the Christian that he has received grace and belongs to God.

- b. Q92: What is a sacrament? A92: A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.
2. What are the purposes of the sacraments according to the Confession?
 - a. *"To represent Christ and His benefits to us"...* hence, to strengthen our faith.
 - b. *"confirm our interest in Him"...* as we receive and partake of the sacraments Christ instituted for the Church...they are tangible signs that continually keep us united and strengthen us in Christ
 - c. These are for the family of God alone so they *"put a visible difference between those who belong in the church and the rest of the world..."*
 - d. *"and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His word."* When we "rightly" receive and partake of these sacraments we pledge our allegiance to Him and His service...to His glory.
3. Theological definition of a sacrament – *"A holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and these, in turn, give expression to their faith and allegiance to God"* (Berkhof, 617).
 - a. The word sacrament is not found in the Bible, but like the words "theology" and "Trinity", it represents a biblical concept.
 - b. It is derived from a Latin word (sacramentum) which translates the Greek word "mystery" from Scripture. The biblical term "mystery" refers to a something previously hidden that has now been revealed. In the biblical usage of the word a mystery is not intended to conceal anything but rather to reveal something. Thus, baptism and the Lord's Supper are external signs that reveal spiritual realities.
 - c. The administration of the sacraments is among the primary elements of Scriptural worship, yet in modern churches they often assume a peripheral role.
4. Calvin said, *"in the sacraments the reality is given along with the sign."* In receiving the sacraments, the believer is "given the thing itself." That is why we consider these "means of grace"- *"those institutions [the Word, sacraments and prayer] which God has ordained to be the ordinary channels of grace, that is, of the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men"* (Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, III, 466). This is not mechanical, but when the sacraments are rightly applied and received, they are means by which God gives His grace to the recipient... they do not give grace in and of themselves as is believed and taught in Roman Catholicism. (See Sect. III)
5. How many sacraments are there, what are they and why are they the only ones?
 - a. Q93: Which are the sacraments of the New Testament? A93: The sacraments of the New Testament are, Baptism, and the Lord's supper.
 - b. Covenant Baptism is an initiation rite marking a person as a member of Christ's church.
 - c. The Lord's Supper is a covenantal meal by which Christians are spiritually nourished.
 - d. These 2 alone were instituted by Christ as sacraments.
 - e. RC adds 5 more...Confirmation, Penance, Ordination, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction (a former name for the sacrament of anointing of the sick, especially when administered to the dying "Last Rites"...even baptizing dead babies.)
6. If this is so clear why is there so much confusion concerning the sacraments?
7. The sacraments have been called "the gospel addressed to the eye." How so?

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
November 2, 2014

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. How many sacraments are there, what are they and why are they the only ones?
 - a. Q93: Which are the sacraments of the New Testament? A93: The sacraments of the New Testament are, Baptism, and the Lord's supper.
 - b. Covenant Baptism is an initiation rite marking a person as a member of Christ's church.
 - c. The Lord's Supper is a covenantal meal by which Christians are spiritually nourished.
 - d. These 2 alone were instituted by Christ as sacraments.
 - e. RC adds 5 more...Confirmation, Penance, Ordination, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction (a former name for the sacrament of anointing of the sick, especially when administered to the dying "Last Rites"...even baptizing dead babies.)
2. The sacraments have been called "the gospel addressed to the eye." How so?

C. Chapter 28- Of Baptism-

1. What is the purpose for baptism according to the Confession?
2. Should children of believers be baptized? Why or why not?
 - a. God instituted a covenant, which He chose to give to Abraham and his descendants. This promise contained spiritual blessings summarized in the repeated guarantee: *"I will be your God and you will be my people."*(Gen. 12:2-3; 17:1ff)
 - b. God commanded that an outward physical sign of this inner covenant be administered...circumcision. This sign was to be administered to Abraham and his descendants because God chose to work in family units. Even converts from paganism to the worship of Yahweh were to receive the sign of circumcision. These converts were in turn privileged to have the sign administered to their children as well.
 - c. God's covenant was intended to be *"an everlasting covenant"* lasting to the end of the ages. (cf. Gen. 17:7; Heb. 13:20-21) This covenant with Abraham was still in effect generations later in the days of Christ, and also in Rev. 21:1-3, which shows clearly the unity of the Testaments and the eternity of the Covenant.
 - d. Jesus Christ came on the scene to purchase for us the blessings of the covenant. Galatians 3:14 states, *"in order that in Christ Jesus the blessings of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."* The Apostle Paul shows us that those who exercise saving faith in Christ are now the true seed of Abraham. We have inherited God's covenant. Galatians 3:29 promises, *"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise."*
 - e. If we who trust in Christ have now inherited this covenant of grace, what should be the outward sign? Circumcision is no longer the commanded sign. Since Christ has come and shed His blood to fulfill the law all blood sacrifices are null and void. Baptism has replaced it as the new physical sign and seal of God's promised blessings. Col. 2:11-13 shows that circumcision has been replaced by baptism as the sign and seal of being in God's covenant. (cf. Rom. 4)
 - f. Just as the sign of the covenant was administered to believers and their children in the Old Testament, so the sign now is to be administered to believers and their children. There is continuity to the testaments even in the sign and seals of the covenant. Peter said in Acts 2:39, *"the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."* Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 7:14 that the children of a believing parent are holy not saved, but under the covenant blessings of God. Baptism is a sign that the

child of believing parents is included in the blessings of the covenant of grace. God generally chooses to work in such family units. Therefore, a child chosen by God to be born into a believing home is exposed to the blessings of the covenant in the same way the children of Israel were exposed and blessed by being Israel but it in no way guaranteed a salvific act on God's part.

- g. Baptism does not regenerate a child any more than that water of baptism regenerates an adult believer. No magic exists in the water to remove sin or guarantee admission into heaven. Just as outward circumcision alone was not effective without the circumcision of the heart, so baptism alone is not effective. Each child needs to be exposed to the teachings of the Bible about salvation by grace not by works. Each child needs to be encouraged to acknowledge God's work in their life and repent of their sin and believe in Christ alone. When this does occur, we can rejoice at God's faithfulness to His covenant, signed and sealed at baptism whenever that occurred.
- h. Once again, to move away from that which God instituted would have required another command by God.

3. What is the acceptable mode of baptism according to the Confession? Does this contradict the Scriptures?

- a. The Westminster divines spent MUCH time discussing this...there is much written about their discussion...even sermons preached one way or another...however, in the end Section III is what was agreed upon though not unanimous...it seems that this wording only won about by a handful of votes.
- b. Christ Presbyterian Church teaches that pouring is the valid mode of baptism. Though we do not view pouring as the only valid mode of baptism, it certainly seems more consistent with what is taught in Scripture.
- c. See Ezekiel 36:25-27...sprinkling to cleanse and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...
- d. The Greek word *"baptizmo"* (though it can be translated "immersed") is most often used in Scripture to refer to pouring or sprinkling. Luke 11:38 and Hebrews 9:10 uses the word *"baptizmo"* to refer to various washings. Hebrews 9:13,19,21 describe three such OT washings that regularly took place. Each of these washings was done by means of pouring or sprinkling.
- e. Jesus was baptized (*"baptizo"*) by John the Baptist. John asked Jesus why He should be baptizing Christ. The Lord's reply gave only one reason—for the fulfilling of the law ("To fulfill all righteousness"). Numbers 8:6-7 tells us of the law requiring priests to be baptized—*"ceremonially cleansed for service to the Lord"*. The Greek translation of the OT used the word *"baptizo"* in the place of the Hebrew word that refers to pouring or sprinkling.
- f. As an aside, except for Jesus' baptism and the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch we have no other examples of what could be construed as immersion baptism being done. Even these required that the one administering the sacrament also be in the water. However, neither verifies that the recipient was immersed. To follow the grammar if one was immersed both would have to be immersed which makes it difficult to administer the sacrament if both are under the water.
- g. The easiest way to understand the intent is that they went down into the water the way I say, "I went into the water"...when I walked into the surf at the beach... that is, I have not gone under I simply went into the water to play or stand. Nothing in the word demands that something go under water. As Luke 11 shows us along with Hebrews and most of the OT, pouring was the accepted mode for ceremonial cleansing. See also Mark 7:1-5.
- h. Water was to be poured on the guest's feet when he came into your home to represent that his whole body was clean. So public immersion would not have been necessary to guarantee cleanness. Acts 10, concerning Cornelius and his household, seems to indicate they were baptized at home.
- i. Once again, to move away from that which God instituted would have required another command by God.

4. Why do you suppose that baptism should only be administered once? Some Christians who had been baptized as infants want to be rebaptized after their conversion. These people typically view baptism as a *sign of their faith* rather than a *sign of God's promise* (which sometimes is actualized long after the baptism). R.C. Sproul comments that since baptism is a sign of God's promise, to be rebaptized is to go before God and say, "Would you run that by me again?"

D. Chapter 29- Of the Lord's Supper- (a long section)

1. According to the Confession what are the 5 benefits of the Supper for the believer?
 - a. Enables us to remember Jesus' sacrificial death. By remembering His death we are also expected to remember all else that he said about His resurrection and our inclusion in it and His regular involvement in our lives, as well as His 2nd coming...
 - b. It certifies or confirms His benefits to Christians. At the Last Supper Jesus said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Lk. 22:20). Charles Hodge explains that Jesus was saying, "My blood is the seal of the covenant of grace, and this cup is the symbol of my blood, and as such is offered to you. In its use Christ ratifies his promise to save us on the condition of faith, and to endow us with all the benefits of his redemption" (Commentary on the Westminster Confession, p. 356).
 - c. It nourishes us spiritually.
 - d. It is an occasion to renew our engagement to be the Lord's and to live for His glory by doing as He commands us.
 - e. It is a pledge of our continual communion with Christ and fellow Christians.
2. SECTIONS 2-7 condemn the practices of the Roman Catholic Church (the reason this section was so long) and affirms the practices laid out in the Scriptures.
3. Historically, there have been four views regarding the presence of Christ's body in the elements:
 - a. Transubstantiation – Roman Catholic view. They take literally Jesus' words, "This is my body" (Mark 14:22; cf. John 10:9). The essence (=substance) of the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ while the outward appearance remains the same.
 - b. Consubstantiation - Lutheran view. Similar to the Roman Catholic view. Christ is physically present, but the presence is only in, under, and alongside the elements (which remain the same). Although the bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ, communicants receive Christ's real body and blood along with the elements.
 - c. Memorial view- Many evangelicals. The Lord's Supper is merely a memorial service; there is no special presence of Christ.
 - d. Spiritual Presence – Presbyterian and most Reformed churches. Christ is spiritually present in a unique way to believers who come to him by faith (1 Cor. 10:16). While Christ is not physically present, neither are the elements merely symbols.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 10:16 speaks not merely of remembrance, but of communion. Jesus did not merely display the elements for His disciples to look at. He invited His disciples to eat the bread and to drink the wine. These actions indicate that the Lord's Supper is more than a memorial; they point to Christ who spiritually nourishes us, as bread and wine physically nourishes us.
 - (2) Jesus is really present – there is something special about the fellowship we enjoy with Christ in the taking of the Supper.
4. What are the 'elements' of the Lord's Supper? What do they represent?

5. According to Chapter 27, of the Sacraments, Section 5 states, *“The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the New.”* If this is true (I am believe it to be true) how do the Passover and the Lord’s Supper compare? And how do they differ?
6. What are worthy things to reflect on when you take the bread and wine? (This is not mine, but I can’t remember where I picked this up.)
 - a. Past: “do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24,25)
 - b. Present: Communion with Christ and with other Christians
 - c. Future: Jesus’ return (1 Cor. 11:26).

**Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
November 9, 2014**

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What is the purpose of Covenant Baptism and the Lord's Supper for God's children according to the Confession?
2. When participating in the sacraments what should we be doing...reflecting upon?

C. Chapter 30- Of Church Censures

1. A censure is a judgment condemning a person for misconduct.
2. What is the purpose for Church Discipline?- Steve Brown, (PCA pastor and theologian), *"For those of us who are Calvinists (Reformed), you know that one of the manifestations of a true church is the willingness to practice church discipling. I agree that church discipline is sometimes necessary, but I believe that it should be prescribed not on the basis of the sin committed, but on the basis of the lack of repentance manifested."*
3. How does the Confession explain the power of church authority and what the elders especially are to do with said authority? (See Sections 1 and 2)
 - a. Church officers have the authority (keys of the kingdom) to declare people pardoned or not pardoned from the guilt of sin, thus opening or closing heaven to them.
 - b. *"The keys of the kingdom of heaven"* = the power of the gospel given to the elders of the church and the authority to exercise the government and discipline in the church.
 - c. *"Bind"* and *"loose"* = authority to permit and to forbid. When such judgments are agreeable to Scripture, they are ratified in heaven. These were given to the Apostles and as such transfer to the Elders of the Church.
 - (1) Matthew 16:19 – *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* [Church officers are seen as heirs of the keys that were given to Jesus' disciples.]
 - (2) Matthew 18:17-18 – *"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*
 - (3) John 20:23 – *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."*
 - d. This authority that church officers have is not unqualified. It must be exercised according to God's commands; otherwise church members should reject it.
 - e. Church government is not infallible; nonetheless, it is to be respected. Nor is it a democracy; it is representative rule.
4. The Westminster divines who wrote the Confession in 1647 probably relied heavily on the Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563. Thus, it may be helpful in places like this to cross reference the Heidelberg Catechism. In the Heidelberg that we find three questions and answers that relate directly to the keys of the kingdom.
 - a. Question 83: What are the keys of the kingdom? Answer: The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance. Both preaching and discipline open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.

- b. Question 84: How does preaching the gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven? Answer: According to the command of Christ: The kingdom of heaven is opened by proclaiming and publicly declaring to all believers, each and every one, that, as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith, God, because of what Christ has done, truly forgives all their sins. The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to unbelievers and hypocrites that, as long as they do not repent, the anger of God and eternal condemnation rest on them. God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.
- c. Question 85: How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline? Answer: According to the command of Christ: Those who, though called Christians, profess unchristian teachings or live unchristian lives, and after repeated and loving counsel refuse to abandon their errors and wickedness, and after being reported to the church, that is, to its officers, fail to respond also to their admonition -- such persons the officers exclude from the Christian fellowship by withholding the sacraments from them, and God himself excludes them from the kingdom of Christ. Such persons, when promising and demonstrating genuine reform, are received again as members of Christ and of his church.
5. What are the 5 purposes for church discipline according to section 3 of this chapter?
- a. reclaim offenders – 1 Cor. 5:4-5
- b. deter others – “As for those [officers] who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear” (1 Tim. 5:20).
- c. purge those who are contaminating the body of Christ – 1 Cor. 5:6-7- What effect can a church member who is engaging in deliberate, ongoing sin have on a church? What does 1 John 2:19 say about one who rejects legitimate church discipline and never returns in repentance?
- d. vindicates the honor of Christ and the gospel - 1 Cor. 5:1
- e. prevents the wrath of God – 1 Cor. 11:27-34
6. What are the steps to be administered in Church Discipline?
- a. Admonition- The warning is private, if possible. It only becomes public if absolutely necessary. As a general guideline, private sins should be dealt with privately and public sins should be dealt with publicly.
- (1) 1 Thess. 5:12 – “*respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.*”
- (2) Titus 3:10 – “*As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.....*”
- b. Suspension from the Lord's Supper- 1 Cor. 10:1-22- This becomes necessary if there is a lack of repentance or if some one is in the midst of changing from that life style.
- c. Excommunication- 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 13, This is reserved only for the incorrigible or contumacious...most serious offenders.
- D. Chapter 31- Of Synods and Councils
1. Independent and Congregational churches (which include Baptists and “Bible churches”) may allow for congregations to seek advice from councils of ministers, but they deny that such councils have any authority over local congregations. By contrast, Presbyterian Church government is connectional. The Presbyterian form of government consists of a series of graded courts, the lowest court being the board of elders (Greek, presbyters) of the local church

(session), then the regional church (presbytery), then the highest court (final court of appeal) the General Synod or General Assembly. (All “courts” are to always give deference to the lower courts in matters of congregational work.)

2. What are their purposes?
3. Are they infallible? Why is the correct answer to this important? Sola Scriptura
4. 3 forms of thought concerning the Church.
 - a. Sectarianism- an attitude of exclusiveness, “Only my church (sometimes means local) church has the truth.” This group is, by definition, striving to be separate from others because they are exclusive.
 - b. Syncretism- this is trying to mix the gospel with ideologies of the day, thus corrupting the truth.
 - c. Denominationalism- True denominationalism gives room for checks and balances to occur...accountability structures that hold each to a set of biblical standards which facilitate unity with other believing bodies. This preserves unity without doing away with minor differences. Denominations can and should encourage cooperation with other like-minded churches/denominations...having the ability to look past the small or minor doctrines...(Non-salvific in nature).... To be able to view fully the major doctrines that are foundational to Biblical truth. *“Denomination...is an inclusive term. It implies that the group referred to is but one member called or denominated by a particular name, of a larger group...the Church...to which all denominations belong.”* (10 Great Ideas from Church History)
5. This statement arose because the 17th century Scottish Reformers sought to protect the church from the encroachment of the state. They insisted that the church alone had the power to convene her assemblies, even if the king himself should “withhold or deny his consent.”

E. Chapter 32- Of the State of Men After Death, and the Resurrection of the Dead

1. What happens to us between death and the resurrection of our bodies? This period is called the “intermediate state.” What Scripture tells us about the intermediate state, in the words of Dutch theologian G.C. Berkouwer, “*is nothing more than a whisper*”. But Scripture is clear that at death man is not annihilated, nor does he enter a soul sleep (an unconscious existence between death and the resurrection), nor does he go to purgatory.
2. What does the Confession say about this state after death?
3. How many places has God given for the soul to reside while it awaits the day of its final resurrection?
4. I love these from the WSC-
 - a. Q 37- What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? A: The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately

pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.

b. **Q38: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?**

A38: At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the Day of Judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

Sunday School
Westminster Confession of Faith
November 16, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What is the purpose for Church Discipline?
2. What right do the elders have to hold someone accountable...even to bring church discipline against a member?
3. I gave 3 types of ways to look at the Church last time: sectarian= exclusive; syncretistic= mixing the gospel with something else like social ideologies...could be other things; denominationalism= truly inclusive of other believing bodies...and inclusive term in its true meaning. What about non-denominationalism?
 - a. The Bible expressly prohibits autonomy within Christ's body...by virtue of the Church being called a body requires that we are connected denominationally...one part of a larger whole.
 - b. Non-denominationalism...an oxymoron in many ways seeks to experience the "best" of sectarianism and syncretism by giving off an air of unity or being connected to the greater body of Christ. They are not... for they choose to stand on their own in many cases unconnected with other bodies...going their own way, doing their own thing ...seeking to be autonomous from those Presbyterians (no matter the stripe) or those Baptists and especially the Methodists...
 - c. There is no examples of autonomous churches in the Scriptures.

C. Chapter 32- Of the State of Men After Death, and the Resurrection of the Dead

5. We will know one another in heaven according to the confession? "self-same bodies"...Scriptural support for this? Matt. 8:11, 12:41, 17:1-3; Luke 9:30-31, 16:23; 1 Cor. 13:12
6. What about cremation? Does that throw a wrench into the works? Why or why not?

D. Chapter 33- of the Final Judgment

1. On the dome of the U.S. Capital are inscribed the words, "*One God, one law, one element; And one far off, divine event to which the whole creation moves.*" History is not an endless succession of meaningless cycles. It is moving toward a goal: the return of Christ and final judgment. There is little discussion about the last judgment among most Christians and in most churches. Why do you think this is so? Too judgmental...too offensive...not fair! What do you see as the value of this topic?
 - a. Healthy to talk about about since it is something God talks about a lot...and we should want to have the same kinds of discussions
 - b. Gives us a sense of urgency to share the gospel
 - c. Gives us a sense of urgency to live as God prescribes
 - d. Puts the fear...and respect of God in you
 - e. Reminds us that judgments belongs to God ...vengeance is His...not ours.
2. According to the Confession who will be the judge? Who will be judged? (See Matt. 12:36-37; John 5:22,27; Acts 17:31; Jude 6) Immediately after the general resurrection all men and apostate angels will stand before Christ and give an account. The good works of Christians will be not be the grounds of their acquittal, but rather evidence of their having trusted in Christ and been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

3. What is the confession saying when it speaks of us being finally judged by our works? Our works show the reality of the faith that God has given to us. Matt. 12:36-37; 1 Cor. 3:10-15
4. What is the purpose for the Last Judgment (Sect II)?
 - a. Completion of our sanctification.
 - b. *"The last day is the completion of God's judgment not the beginning. We have been judged and being judged all along."* Dr. David Calhoun
 - c. The purpose of the Day of Judgment is not to inform Christ of the sin (He is all-knowing). Nor is it so that Jesus may determine man's future destiny (that is already decided before the foundations of the world). It is rather that Christ may reveal His glory in judgment.
 - d. There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed (Luke 12:2). Fortunately, for believers, their sins will be revealed as forgiven sins, whose guilt has been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.
5. Why does God want all men to know with certainty that there will be a Judgment Day? (Sect. III)
 - a. To deter all men from sin, and
 - b. For the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity;
 - c. That they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful
 - d. May be ever prepared to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Amen.
 - e. Because that is the kind of God He is...He reveals all things that He can.
6. Do we or can we know when the Last day will be? Why or why not?
7. What seems to be of upmost importance to the divines for all true believers to KNOW about the last judgment?
 - a. The Christ will be bodily resurrected at His return,
 - b. That there WILL BE a general resurrection of ALL men when Christ returns,
 - c. All men will be judged in righteousness on THE DAY of His choosing, unknown to us.
 - d. The day is fixed...Why doesn't He want us to know the exact day and time?
8. Are you prepared for Jesus to return today? Or are you like Augustine who said, *"Lord, change me, but not yet"*?
- E. What have you learned?
 1. Is the Westminster still an adequate confession for today's church? Why or why not?
 2. Why do "we" want to believe that a "good" God would never actually punish anyone? Different definition of what "good" is... If God is a just judge...a good judge...for He defines the word "good" then whatever He does is good and right.
 3. After looking and considering the teaching of the Confession along with Scripture, how would you answer this question: Are people invited to come to Christ? Why or why not?
 - a. Invitations can be either politely or impolitely declined without impunity.
 - b. The Bible actually commands people to repent and believe...an invitation is never given...we cannot decline a command without impunity. The Bible commands people to repent and believe just like it commands that we love the LORD with all our might soul and Heart and our neighbor as ourselves...How can God command a fallen sinful people to do anything like this and expect that it can and will be done? In other words, how do we not turn down the command?

4. After looking and considering the teaching of the Confession along with Scripture, how would you answer this question: What is wrong with the old question WWJD- What would Jesus do?
 - a. It can assume that we can't know what Jesus would do so we need to speculate in seeking an answer to the questions of life.
 - b. It assumes that the Bible doesn't have all the answers we need.
 - c. It assumes that we need to make decisions based on experience.
 - d. It assumes that Christ is not sufficient.
 - e. Better adage would be WDJJ- What Did Jesus Do? Since He made things clear...He revealed God's will to us...answering the basic and the hard questions of life if we would only rely on Him instead of the world for our leading.
5. Has anything about the study of the Confession changed the way you look at and pursue your faith?