

Lord's Day 1

Questions and Answers 1–2

1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own,¹
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—²
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.³

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.⁵
He also watches over me in such a way⁶
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;⁷
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life⁹
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

¹1 Cor. 6:19

²Rom. 14:8

³1 Cor. 3:23

⁴1 Pet. 1:18; 1 John 1:7; 2:2

⁵1 John 3:8

⁶John 6:39

⁷Matt. 10:30; Luke 21:18

⁸Rom. 8:28

⁹2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:16

¹⁰Rom. 8:14

2 Lord's Day 1

2 **Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?**

A. Three things:¹

first, how great my sin and misery are;²

second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;³

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.⁴

¹Luke 24:47; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:3

²**John 9:41**; John 15:[6–]7

³John 17:3

⁴Eph. 5:10

The Heart of the Matter

There's a popular theory that in times of wild economic consumption zombie movies and television shows make a comeback and in times of economic desperation vampires are the preferred genre. In both cases, there's a numbing effect on the soul, a bloodletting and a blood thirsting, the sucking away of life and vitality. One thing zombies and vampires don't have is a heart.

In his book *Waiting for Gospel*, Douglas John Hall cites the theologian Paul Tillich, who discussed the three combination anxieties that all human beings face: (1) fate, destiny, and where I will go when I die; (2) shame, condemnation; and (3) meaningfulness and purposefulness. Hall suggests that even as the gospel offers the antidote to the fears and anxieties of each and all of those categories, we as twenty-first-century people need the Good News of God to counter number 3. To put it in a question, it's not so much anxiety over "Where will I go when I die?" as it is more about "What is the point of life and living?" "What is the heart of the matter of our life?"

It is very possible to live our lives as the walking dead—eating, voting, teaching—but not truly and fully alive in God. St. Irenaeus once remarked, "The glory of God is man fully alive."

Yet, we can get stuck in the mire of what we call life, going from point A to point B, in pursuit of people, places, and things . . . going through the grind of work, family, social responsibility, with Church or faith as but one among many activities or venues or compartments of our lives. It's a life of the walking dead . . . without passion, without soul.

The Catechism in these first two sections speaks to us in comprehensive terms—body and soul, life and death, and everything in between. This is cradle to grave and the life thereafter. The triune God claims us as God's own; God has a right to. God has the right to insist, to intrude, to instill in us

the knowledge and love of God because apart from God we can do nothing and are nothing; the opposite is true, as Scriptures testify, in and with God, “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). God knows us best, as our Maker, and when we go on our self-destructive ways, thinking life is about us, or we are about ourselves, God as our loving Father in heaven sees the hurt we inflict on our souls, the hurt we inflict on others, and puts a stop to it so that we may live more fully alive for what God has in store for us.

The Scripture passages appended to Q/A 1 are replete with language of belongingness, or possession . . . God possesses us, and because God possesses us, holds us, we forever belong to God. The Tempter, evil spirits, death itself, and every element that contradicts our life in God—all of this has no right to intrude on us. God saves us fully, finally, in Jesus Christ, with the seal of the Holy Spirit to enable and empower us to live in, with, and for God. God declares to all these powers, principalities—no! And to us, God says—yes! You belong to Me. I am yours, and you are Mine.

Eberhard Busch summarizes what is at stake in Q/A 2. We need this comfort because we are in misery. God gives us this comfort in Christ by redeeming us. This comfort has the effect of our commitment to live lives of gratitude to God.

The misery comes in living as the walking dead, a life apart from God, a life not in touch with God’s desire for our lives and the world; a life that breaks the heart of our heavenly Father for what we were created to be.

Luther and Ursinus compared us to a sick patient: we need to recognize our diseased state and the source of our medicine, and be given the desire for that medicine. In the recognition of the illness and the cure, and in the receiving of the antidote, we are filled with joy and thankfulness. This recognition we learn from the Ten Commandments as the Decalogue teaches us the heart of God. The medicinal source we learn from the Creed, which summarizes the Good News of the triune God, the One who is the way, the truth, and the life. The Lord’s Prayer, which Jesus Christ joins us in praying to the Father and which the Spirit of Christ enables us to pray, keeps our lives continually pulsing after the heartbeat of God.

Prayer

Lord, You delight in me through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Anchor me to Your heart, that I may always delight in Your will and in Your ways. In body and in soul, in life and in death, I belong to You. For that, I am grateful. Amen.