

**What is your only comfort in life and in death?**

That I am not my own,  
but belong—  
body and soul,  
in life and in death—  
to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.  
He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,  
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.  
He also watches over me in such a way  
that not a hair can fall from my head  
without the will of my Father in heaven:  
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.  
Because I belong to him,  
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,  
assures me of eternal life  
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready  
from now on to live for him.

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

Three things: first, how great my sin and misery are;  
second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;  
third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance

**How do you come to know your misery??**

The law of God tells me.

**What does God's law require of us?**

Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22—

Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart  
and with all your soul  
and with all your mind  
and with all your strength.

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it:

Love your neighbor as yourself.  
All the Law and the Prophets hang  
on these two commandments.

**Can you live up to all this perfectly?**

No, I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.

**Did God create people so wicked and perverse?**

No.

God created them good and in his own image,  
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,  
so that they might  
truly know God their creator,  
love him with all their heart,  
and live with him in eternal happiness  
for his praise and glory.

**Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?**

From the fall and disobedience of our first parents,  
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.

This fall has so poisoned our nature  
that we are born sinners—  
corrupt from conception on.

**But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?**

Yes, unless we are born again, by the Spirit of God.

**But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?**

No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law.  
They, however, tempted by the devil,  
in reckless disobedience,  
robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

**Will God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?**

Certainly not.

He is terribly angry  
about the sin we are born with  
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge  
he punishes them now and in eternity.

He has declared:

"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do  
everything written in the Book of the Law."

**But isn't God also merciful?**

God is certainly merciful,  
but he is also just.

His justice demands  
that sin, committed against his supreme majesty,  
be punished with the supreme penalty—  
eternal punishment of body and soul.

**According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both in this world and forever after:  
how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?**

God requires that his justice be satisfied.  
Therefore the claims of his justice  
must be paid in full,  
either by ourselves or another.

**Can we pay this debt ourselves?**

Certainly not. Actually, we increase our guilt every day.

**Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?**

No.

To begin with,  
God will not punish another creature  
for what a human is guilty of.

Besides,  
no mere creature can bear the weight  
of God's eternal anger against sin  
and release others from it.

**What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?**

One who is truly human and truly righteous,  
yet more powerful than all creatures,  
that is, one who is also true God.

**Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?**

God's justice demands  
that human nature, which has sinned,  
must pay for its sin;  
but a sinner could never pay for others.

**Why must he also be true God?**

So that,  
by the power of his divinity,  
he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity  
and earn for us  
and restore to us

righteousness and life.

**And who is this mediator—true God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous?**

Our Lord Jesus Christ,

who was given us

to set us completely free

and to make us right with God.

**How do you come to know this?**

The holy gospel tells me.

God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;

later, he proclaimed it

by the holy patriarchs and prophets,

and portrayed it

by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;

finally, he fulfilled it

through his own dear Son.

**Are all saved through Christ just as all were lost through Adam?**

No.

Only those are saved

who by true faith

are grafted into Christ

and accept all his blessings.

**What is true faith?**

True faith is

not only a knowledge and conviction

that everything God reveals in his Word is true;

it is also a deep-rooted assurance,

created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel,

that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,

not only others, but I too,

have had my sins forgiven,

have been made forever right with God,

and have been granted salvation.

**What then must a Christian believe?**

Everything God promises us in the gospel.

That gospel is summarized for us

in the articles of our Christian faith—

a creed beyond doubt,

and confessed throughout the world.

**What are these articles?**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit

and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**How are these articles divided?**

Into three parts:

God the Father and our creation;  
God the Son and our deliverance;  
God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

**Since there is but one God, why do you speak of three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?**

Because that is how

God has revealed himself in his Word:

these three distinct persons  
are one, true, eternal God.

**What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth"?**

That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who out of nothing created heaven and earth  
and everything in them,  
who still upholds and rules them  
by his eternal counsel and providence,  
is my God and Father  
because of Christ his Son.

I trust him so much that I do not doubt  
he will provide whatever I need  
for body and soul,  
and he will turn to my good  
whatever adversity he sends me  
in this sad world.

He is able to do this because he is almighty God;  
he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.

**What do you understand by the providence of God?**

Providence is  
the almighty and ever present power of God  
by which he upholds, as with his hand,  
heaven and earth and all creatures,  
and so rules them that  
leaf and blade,  
rain and drought,  
fruitful and lean years,  
food and drink,  
health and sickness,  
prosperity and poverty—  
all things, in fact, come to us  
not by chance  
but from his fatherly hand.

**How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?**

We can be patient when things go against us,  
thankful when things go well,  
and for the future we can have  
good confidence in our faithful God and Father  
that nothing will separate us from his love.  
All creatures are so completely in his hand  
that without his will  
they can neither move nor be moved.

**Why is the Son of God called "Jesus," meaning "Savior"?**

Because he saves us from our sins.

Salvation cannot be found in anyone else;  
it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere.

**Do those who look for their salvation and security in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only savior Jesus?**

No.

Although they boast of being his,  
by their deeds they deny  
the only savior and deliverer, Jesus.

Either Jesus is not a perfect savior,  
or those who in true faith accept this savior  
have in him all they need for their salvation.

**Why is he called "Christ," meaning "Anointed"?**

Because he has been ordained by God the Father  
and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit  
to be our chief prophet and teacher  
who perfectly reveals to us  
the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance;  
our only high priest  
who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body,  
and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;  
and our eternal king  
who governs us by his Word and Spirit,  
and who guards us and keeps us  
in the freedom he has won for us.

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

Because by faith I am a member of Christ  
and so I share in his anointing.

I am anointed  
to confess his name,  
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,  
to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil  
in this life, and afterward  
to reign with Christ over all creation  
for all eternity.

**Why is he called God's "only Son" when we also are God's children?**

Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.  
We, however, are adopted children of God—  
adopted by grace through Christ.

**Why do you call him "our Lord"?**

Because not with gold or silver,  
but with his precious blood,  
he has set us free  
from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,  
and has bought us, body and soul,  
to be his very own.

**What does it mean that he "was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary"?**

That the eternal Son of God,  
who is and remains true and eternal God,  
took to himself,  
through the working of the Holy Spirit,  
from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,  
a truly human nature  
so that he might become David's true descendant,  
like his brothers and sisters in every way  
except for sin.

**What do you understand by the word "suffered"?**

That during his whole life on earth,  
but especially at the end,  
Christ sustained  
in body and soul  
the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race.  
This he did in order that,  
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,  
he might set us free, body and soul,  
from eternal condemnation,  
and gain for us  
God's grace,  
righteousness,  
and eternal life.

**Is it significant that he was "crucified" instead of dying some other way?**

Yes.

This death convinces me  
that he shouldered the curse  
which lay on me,  
since death by crucifixion was accursed by God.

**Why did Christ have to go all the way to death?**

Because God's justice and truth demand it:  
only the death of God's Son could pay for our sin.

**Why was he "buried"?**

His burial testifies that he really died.

**Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?**

Our death does not pay the debt of our sins.  
Rather, it puts an end to our sinning  
and is our entrance into eternal life.

**What further advantage do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?**

Through Christ's death  
our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,  
so that the evil desires of the flesh  
may no longer rule us,  
but that instead we may dedicate ourselves  
as an offering of gratitude to him.

**How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?**

First, by his resurrection he has overcome death,  
so that he might make us share in the righteousness  
he won for us by his death.

Second, by his power we too  
are already now resurrected to a new life.

Third, Christ's resurrection  
is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection.

**What do you mean by saying, "He ascended to heaven"?**

That Christ,  
while his disciples watched,  
was lifted up from the earth to heaven  
and will be there for our good  
until he comes again  
to judge the living and the dead.

**But isn't Christ with us until the end of the world as he promised us?**

Christ is truly human and truly God.  
In his human nature Christ is not now on earth;  
but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit

he is not absent from us for a moment.

**If his humanity is not present wherever his divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?**

Certainly not.

Since divinity is not limited  
and is present everywhere,  
it is evident that Christ's divinity  
is surely beyond the bounds  
of the humanity he has taken on,  
but at the same time his divinity is in  
and remains personally united to  
his humanity.

**How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?**

First, he pleads our cause in heaven  
in the presence of his Father.  
Second, we have our own flesh in heaven—  
a guarantee that Christ our head,  
will take us, his members,  
to himself in heaven.  
Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth  
as a further guarantee.  
By the Spirit's power  
we make the goal of our lives,  
not earthly things,  
but the things above where Christ is,  
sitting at God's right hand.

**Why the next words: "and is seated at the right hand of God"?**

Christ ascended to heaven,  
there to show that he is head of his church,  
and that the Father rules all things through him.

**How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?**

First, through his Holy Spirit  
he pours out his gifts from heaven  
upon us his members.  
Second, by his power  
he defends us and keeps us safe  
from all enemies.

**How does Christ's return "to judge the living and the dead" comfort you?**

In all my distress and persecution  
I turn my eyes to the heavens  
and confidently await as judge the very One  
who has already stood trial in my place before God  
and so has removed the whole curse from me.  
All his enemies and mine  
he will condemn to everlasting punishment:  
but me and all his chosen ones  
he will take along with him  
into the joy and the glory of heaven.

**What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?**

First, he, as well as the Father and the Son,  
is eternal God.  
Second, he has been given to me personally,  
so that, by true faith,  
he makes me share in Christ and all his blessings,  
comforts me,

and remains with me forever.

**What do you believe concerning "the holy catholic church"?**

I believe that the Son of God  
through his Spirit and Word,  
out of the entire human race,  
from the beginning of the world to its end,  
gathers, protects, and preserves for himself  
a community chosen for eternal life  
and united in true faith.

And of this community I am and always will be  
a living member.

**What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?**

First, that believers one and all,  
as members of this community,  
share in Christ  
and in all his treasures and gifts.

Second, that each member  
should consider it a duty  
to use these gifts  
readily and cheerfully  
for the service and enrichment  
of the other members.

**What do you believe concerning "the forgiveness of sins"?**

I believe that God,  
because of Christ's atonement,  
will never hold against me  
any of my sins  
nor my sinful nature  
which I need to struggle against all my life.

Rather, in his grace  
God grants me the righteousness of Christ  
to free me forever from judgment.

**How does "the resurrection of the body" comfort you?**

Not only my soul  
will be taken immediately after this life  
to Christ its head,  
but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ,  
will be reunited with my soul  
and made like Christ's glorious body.

**How does the article concerning "life everlasting" comfort you?**

Even as I already now  
experience in my heart  
the beginning of eternal joy,  
so after this life I will have  
perfect blessedness such as  
no eye has seen,  
no ear has heard,  
no human heart has ever imagined:  
a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.

**What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?**

In Christ I am right with God  
and heir to life everlasting.

**How are you right with God?**

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.  
Even though my conscience accuses me

of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments  
and of never having kept any of them,  
and even though I am still inclined toward all evil,  
nevertheless,  
without my deserving it at all,  
out of sheer grace,  
God grants and credits to me  
the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,  
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,  
as if I had been as perfectly obedient  
as Christ was obedient for me.

All I need to do

is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.

**Why do you say that by faith alone you are right with God?**

It is not because of any value my faith has  
that God is pleased with me.

Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness  
make me right with God.

And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine  
in no other way than by faith alone.

**Why can't the good we do make us right with God, or at least help make us right with him?**

Because the righteousness  
which can pass God's scrutiny  
must be entirely perfect  
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.  
Even the very best we do in this life  
is imperfect  
and stained with sin.

**How can you say that the good we do doesn't earn anything, when God promises to reward it in this life and the next?**

This reward is not earned;  
it is a gift of grace.

**But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?**

No.

It is impossible  
for those grafted into Christ by true faith  
not to produce fruits of gratitude.

**It is by faith alone that we share in Christ and all his blessings: where then does that faith come from?**

The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts  
by the preaching of the holy gospel,  
and confirms it  
through our use of the holy sacraments.

**What are sacraments?**

Sacraments are holy signs and seals for us to see.

They were instituted by God so that  
by our use of them  
he might make us understand more clearly  
the promise of the gospel,  
and might put his seal on that promise.

And this is God's gospel promise:  
to forgive our sins and give us eternal life  
by grace alone

because of Christ's one sacrifice  
finished on the cross.

**Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ**

**on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?**

Right!

In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us  
and through the holy sacraments he assures us  
that our entire salvation  
rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.

**How many sacraments did Christ institute in the New Testament?**

Two: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?**

The Lord's Supper declares to us  
that our sins have been completely forgiven  
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ  
which he himself finished on the cross once for all.

It also declares to us  
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,  
who with his very body  
is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father  
where he wants us to worship him.

But the Mass teaches  
that the living and the dead  
do not have their sins forgiven  
through the suffering of Christ  
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches  
that Christ is bodily present  
in the form of bread and wine  
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

Thus the Mass is basically  
nothing but a denial  
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ  
and a condemnable idolatry.

**Who are to come to the Lord's table?**

Those who are displeased with themselves  
because of their sins,  
but who nevertheless trust  
that their sins are pardoned  
and that their continuing weakness is covered  
by the suffering and death of Christ,  
and who also desire more and more  
to strengthen their faith  
and to lead a better life.

Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however,  
eat and drink judgment on themselves.

**Are those to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they say and do that they are unbelieving and ungodly?**

No, that would dishonor God's covenant  
and bring down God's anger upon the entire congregation.  
Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ  
and his apostles,  
the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people,  
by the official use of the keys of the kingdom,  
until they reform their lives.

**What are the keys of the kingdom?**

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.

**How does preaching the gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?**

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.

**How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline?**

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.

**We have been delivered from our misery by God's grace alone through Christ and not because we have earned it: why then must we still do good?**

To be sure, Christ has redeemed us by his blood.

But we do good because

Christ by his Spirit is also renewing us to be like himself,  
so that in all our living

we may show that we are thankful to God  
for all he has done for us,  
and so that he may be praised through us.

And we do good

so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,  
and so that by our godly living  
our neighbors may be won over to Christ.

**Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent ways?**

By no means.

Scripture tells us that

no unchaste person,  
no idolater, adulterer, thief,  
no covetous person,  
no drunkard, slanderer, robber,  
or the like

is going to inherit the kingdom of God.

**What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?**

Two things:

the dying-away of the old self,  
and the coming-to-life of the new.

**What is the dying-away of the old self?**

It is to be genuinely sorry for sin,  
to hate it more and more,  
and to run away from it.

**What is the coming-to-life of the new self?**

It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ  
and a delight to do every kind of good  
as God wants us to.

**What do we do that is good?**

Only that which  
arises out of true faith,  
conforms to God's law,  
and is done for his glory;  
and not that which is based  
on what we think is right  
or on established human tradition.

**Why do Christians need to pray?**

Because prayer is the most important part  
of the thankfulness God requires of us.  
And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit  
only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly,  
asking God for these gifts  
and thanking him for them.

**How does God want us to pray so that he will listen to us?**

First, we must pray from the heart  
to no other than the one true God,  
who has revealed himself in his Word,  
asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for.  
Second, we must acknowledge our need and misery,  
hiding nothing,  
and humble ourselves in his majestic presence.  
Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation:  
even though we do not deserve it,  
God will surely listen to our prayer  
because of Christ our Lord.

That is what he promised us in his Word.

**What does that little word "Amen" express?**

"Amen" means,  
This is sure to be!  
It is even more sure  
that God listens to my prayer,  
than that I really desire  
what I pray for.