

# WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

## SHORTER CATECHISM

### LESSON # 3 (Q1LES3) - REFORMED FAITH, TULIPS, AND RULES

1. Prayer
2. Bible Reading: Psalm 22: 1 - 31
3. Reformation History
  - a. 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Age of the Reformation
  - b. Reformation in West (Western Europe), not east, did not involve Eastern Orthodox or Russian churches. Pastor noted that there are Protestant elements in Orthodoxy
  - c. Two reformations,
    - Protestant – In response to Rome’s Catholic doctrine
    - Catholic – Opposed Protestant reformation, stimulated by it, but not caused by it, as it was already underway..
  - d. Causes of reformation are a very complex situation, and it could be (and has been) studied forever. Major factors included:
    1. Moral – based on moral corruption of the church. Church of Rome had become corrupt.
    2. doctrinal – dealing with church doctrine. With the availability of the Bible to other than just the clergy, major differences with the Catholic doctrine were expressed.
    3. sociological – changes in the times, beginning of scientific revolution
  - e. Enter Martin Luther
    1. Luther extremely concerned with his salvation
    2. Became an Augustinian monk and a Bible teacher at Wittenberg, Saxony.
    3. Determined that the Catholic Sacrament of Penance, consisting of contrition, confession and satisfaction, was wrong
    4. Through meditation on 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, he came to the understanding that Christ, who is without sin, became sin for us
    5. Power play by Rome and German House of Hohenzollern (and the Hapsburgs, who are still powerful, and a force behind the European union.) to

control ecclesiastical Germany, involved selling a vacant see to obtain power. My Webster's New 20<sup>th</sup> Century dictionary tells me that a "see" is the official seat, or center of authority, of a bishop (from which the term "diocese"). (In Europe of the time, Rulers considered themselves to be Christians, and as rulers, in charge of the Christianity of their subjects.)

6. Luther sparring with Rome over doctrinal and moral matters.
- f. On October 30, 1517, Luther delivered his Ninety-five Theses, posting them on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. This set off the Reformation. He struck at core of doctrine.
  - Denied basic theory of treasury of merits of the saints. (a saint can acquire enough good points with God (read "works") that he can use them to get others out of hell.
  - Luther felt that man can do absolutely nothing to constitute a claim upon God.
  - Disagreement on number of sacraments (2 vs 7)
  - Rome felt church consisted virtually Pope and representatively in the Cardinals, and anyone who denies this is a heretic. Luther saw the church as consisting virtually in Christ, and representatively in a council.
  - Transubstantiation (Bread & wine of Lord's Supper become actual body and blood of Christ.)
  - In spite of this, the Church of Rome did not immediately kick Luther out.
- g. Luther spared with Rome for several years
  - December 10, 1520, responding to an official edict, or bull (i.e. bulletin), from Rome, In a display of contempt, Luther burned the bull, and the entire canon law.
  - Luther excommunicated by Rome on 3 January 1521.
  - Addressed "Diet of the Empire", meeting in the city of Worms, 1521. Luther allowed to address the Diet. Ask if he acknowledged all his books, and he admitted to them all. When asked if he would defend his teachings, he responded, "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God, I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."
  - Luther under a ban of Empire and church, and if found, could be burned.
- h. Luther a moderate, other reformed churches sprang up, which were much stricter.
- i. It should be noted, that in response to the Protestant reformation, the Catholic church underwent a counter reformation, to offset the protestants. This resulted in the Council of Trent, beginning in 1545, and continuing intermittently until

1563. I need to study this in more detail, but during this counter reformation, the Apocrypha was added to the Bible.

j. Calvinism

- Another branch of the Reformed church.
- Took hold in France
- Most international, taking hold in Netherlands, Scotland, and New England, and also in Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, and Northern Italy.

k. John Calvin in 1536 came to notice through the publication of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

l. Calvin's key insight is that the center is sovereignty of God. The chief end of man is to glorify God, not save one's self.

m. England, Scotland & Ireland

- In 1534 English King Henry VIII established the English National Church. It applied to Henry only, as, at that date, there was no English nation. Henry introduced the Bible in the English language.
- English and other European religion varied with the ruler, and his/her alliances. Reformed church took hold in English parliament under rule of James I, acting against his autocratic rule.
- Scotland independent of England, allied with Catholic France.
- 1560, John Knox brings reformation (Calvinism) to Scotland. First Scottish General Assembly met in December 1560. Scottish church first called "Presbyterians". Knox very anti Rome.
- Under King Charles I, in 1649, the controversy over religion finally resulted in civil war between the King and Parliament. Charles was defeated and executed.
- Reformed church became dominant in England/Scotland

n. In 1643, Parliament called a theological assembly to meet at Westminster Abbey to revise the articles of the Church of England, so they would express a more thorough going Reformed Faith, and to institute a Presbyterian form of government. From this came the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Shorter and Larger catechisms.

4. There are a number of tools which we must know and understand. They help us to understand our faith, and, as important, help us to help others who are in need. These are basic tools of our faith, and we must master them. They are presented up front, so that, as we progress toward understanding the principles of our faith, we can understand where they came from, and see how they are applied.

5. TULIPS – The term “TULIP” is an acronym for the five points of Calvinism. The history of the five points of Calvinism is interesting, as the five points were not developed because of Calvin’s doctrine, but in response to another doctrine.

- As noted above, Calvin was a Frenchman, who left France, and settled in Geneva, Switzerland. His doctrine spread throughout Europe.
- In 1610, the followers of **James Arminius** presented their “five articles of faith” to the State of Holland in the form of their “Remonstrance” (i.e. a protest). The Armenians, as they had become known, insisted that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism, which are based on Calvinism, and were the expression of the doctrine of the Church of Holland, be changed to conform to conform to those doctrinal views contained in the Remonstrance.
- The five points of the Remonstrance were:
  - a. God elects or reprobates on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.
  - b. Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved.
  - c. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed.
  - d. This grace may be resisted.
  - e. Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation. (later revised to teach that truly regenerate believers can lose their faith, and therefore their salvation.)
- A national Synod was called to meet in Dort, and began on Nov. 18 1618 for the purpose of examining the views of the Armenians in light of Scripture.
- The principles put forth in the Remonstrance were unanimously rejected.
- In response to the five points of the Remonstrance, the Synod set forth the Calvinistic position in five chapters, which have since been known as the five points of Calvinism.

Like the catechism is a tool for learning, so is the acronym “TULIP”. It is used by the Reformed faith to explain the five points of Calvinism. Let us take a look at the meaning of “TULIP”.

- a. “T” stands for “**total depravity**”. You are a sinner, lost in your sin. In (**Rom 3: 20 & 23**), Paul tells us that <sup>“(20)”</sup>**Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”** And <sup>“(23)”</sup>**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:”** Guess what! This means you! All people are sinners, saddled at birth with original sin, and unable to any good by ourselves. We have all sinned against God, and it only takes one sin to send us to hell. And it gets worse. The more you learn about God’s Word, the bigger sinner you realize you are.

King David, himself a pretty good sinner, had this to say <sup>“(1)”</sup>**The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable**

**works, there is none that doeth good. <sup>(2)</sup>The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. <sup>(3)</sup>They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one.” Psalm 14: 1 - 3)**

A= Faith is mans gift to God.      C= Faith is God’s gift to man.

- b. “U” stands for “**unconditional election**” Unconditional Election is the testimony that your condition doesn’t matter because God does the saving you cannot do. Dead men don’t have much to offer God. It is very encouraging to learn that God will save you, regardless of your trespasses against Him. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians says “**And you hath he quickened (given life), who were dead in trespasses and sins;” (Eph 2:1).**

Salvation is by God’s grace alone!!! Paul continues: “<sup>(8)</sup>**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. <sup>(9)</sup>Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2: 8 – 9)**

Jesus said to his disciples, who were sinful men, just as you and I, “**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.**

A= Conditional Election- God looked ahead to see who would develop faith. Salvation given based on what man would do. Man’s will to have faith.  
C= Unconditional Election- God from all eternity predestined those who would be saved. God’s will to grant faith.

- c. “L” stands for “**limited atonement**” Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was for the elect only. Limited atonement means that, while the Bible teaches that not everyone is saved, those that He selects, those that he sets out to save, he saves entirely. On the night of the betrayal, Jesus said unto his father, “<sup>(9)</sup>**I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. <sup>(10)</sup>And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” (John 17: 9 - 10)**

The bridge is narrow, but it goes all the way with Jesus.

A= Christ’s work on the cross made it possible for everyone to be saved, but did not secure the salvation of anyone. God can pardon sinners if they believe.  
C= Christ’s redeeming work was intended for the elect only, and fully secured their salvation

- d. “I” stands for “**irresistible grace**” Irresistible grace tells us that once selected, we cannot resist the Holy Spirit. It is a reminder that God is God, and we are not.

With the number of things we manage mess up in this life, what makes you think you can win a fight against God?

Did any of you make a choice to be born? God put you here, you couldn't stop it. In the same way you are born again into the kingdom of God. Jesus said, ***“(6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”*** (John 3: 6 – 7)

The Christian faith works in sinners such as us because God is the higher power in our lives. It is not by our works, but God's grace by which we are saved. Remember what Paul said in his letter to Titus, ***“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”*** (Titus 3:5)

A= While Spirit inwardly calls all who have outwardly been called by the Gospel invitation, man's free will enables him to resist the Spirit.

C= Once the Spirit applies the free gift of grace, man cannot resist it. External call to all, and can be rejected. Internal call to elect only, and is irresistible.

- e. “P” stands for **“perseverance of the saints”** Salvation is forever. Just as you did not choose to be born again, once you are among the elect, you are saved for ever. Nothing can stop God from completing His will. Paul says in his letter to the Romans, ***“(28) Now we know that all things work together for the good, to them that love God, to them who are the called, according to his purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*** (Rom 8: 28 – 29)

A= Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation. Not all in agreement. Salvation accomplished by combined effort of God and man.

C= All who are chosen by God, redeemed through Christ, and given faith by the Spirit, are eternally saved.

## 6. The Puritan Principle.

- a. The puritan principle is our method of understanding scripture. Much of the scripture can be difficult to understand. Much of it we will not understand until God, through His Spirit, provides us with the understanding. As the process of our sanctification (covered later) progresses, and we are moved more and more to seek his Word, God will provide us with more and more understanding of his Word. Our process of understanding has three parts. Of each scripture verse we should ask:

- **What does it say?** Read the words. Understand the words.
- **What does it mean?** This one can be difficult. Sometimes the words themselves are difficult to understand. And all scripture must be taken in context. There are many apparent contradictions in the scriptures. Until you understand what is meant in context with the rest of scripture, you may not be able to understand. You will experience times when you read a passage of scripture that you previously read and did not understand, that, this time, it's meaning is perfectly clear. This is God's Spirit working in you. And it is important to remember to start all of your scripture reading time with a prayer.
- **What do I do about it?** Seems the steps get tougher as we go along. All scripture is intended by God to teach us something. Once we understand what a passage is saying, then we need to determine how that passage should affect our lives. What do we do about it. Again, we will need help from God's Spirit.

## 7. Geometry of Scripture

- a. God tells us to check the things we are exposed to about our religion to ensure they are in compliance with His Word. **(need proof)** We have a procedure we use to ensure doctrine is in accordance with His Word. It is called the Geometry of Scripture, and goes like this:
  - If you have one scripture proof, you have a single point, which is a good start.
  - If you have two scripture proofs, you have developed a line of thought. Things are looking better.
  - When you add the third scripture proof, you have a plain upon which to build your solid foundation.
  - And when you add a fourth scripture proof, you have established a solid foundation for what you believe.

The information is there. Like anything of real value, you must work to find it.

## 12. Questions on Introduction?