

OUTLINES TO ACCOMPANY THE AUDIO/VIDEO SERIES

THE WESTMINISTER
CONFESSION
— OF —
FAITH

by Dr. John H. Gerstner



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THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

A twenty-four lecture series by Dr. John H. Gerstner

The Westminster Confession of Faith has, for hundreds of years, served as the doctrinal foundation of the Reformed churches. In this series Dr. Gerstner focuses his lifetime of scholarship on a comprehensive treatment of the meaning and application of this important confession for the life of the church. This is an exceptional series for pastors and church leaders. Listed below are the titles of each lecture.

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1

Chapter 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine one of the greatest creeds of Christendom, The Westminster Confession of Faith.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Westminster Confession is a summary of the Reformation doctrines.
 - A. It was written to unite England, Scotland, and Ireland doctrinally.
 - B. It has undergone several minor revisions and additions.
 - C. It has attempted to remain scrupulously faithful to the Scriptures.

- II. Chapter One — “Of The Holy Scriptures” — is the most significant.
 - A. Man cannot find God through nature, even though nature reveals God.
 - B. The Apocryphal books are not infallible, being of human origin.
 - C. Though there is abundant evidence for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the assurance comes from the inner working of the Holy Spirit.
 - D. Things inferred or deduced from Scripture are as authoritative as explicit teaching.
 - E. Those things necessary in the Scripture are clear by ordinary means.
 - F. Some passages may require the help of learned men.
 - G. Scripture interprets Scripture.
 - H. All controversies are subject to the Holy Spirit speaking through the Scriptures.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why can we trust the Westminster Confession so fully?
2. Why would such a thorough creed need to be amended and revised? Are there revisions you would make to it? Why do we have creeds? Why is Scripture insufficient as a creed?
3. What view of Scripture does the Confession hold?

2

Chapters 2–3, Sec. 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine the doctrine of God and His eternal decrees.

OUTLINE:

- I. Chapter Two deals with the doctrine of God and the Holy Trinity.
 - A. God is not without emotions, but without *bodily* passions.
 - B. God is all-sufficient, in no way dependent upon any creature.
 - C. The Godhead is of one essence, but three distinct persons.

- II. The doctrine of God's eternal decrees tell of how God relates to us.
 - A. There is nothing over which God does not have control. "He is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all."
 1. He in no way violates man's will or responsibility.
 2. God's sovereignty can co-exist with the choices of men.
 - B. God's knowledge is because of His decrees, not the other way around.
 - C. All men are dead in sins, but God elects to save some of them.
 1. There is a distinction made between predestination and foreordination.
 2. God is in no way obligated to any creature.
 3. Romans 9 is the definitive passage on this matter.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If God doesn't need us for anything, from what can we derive self-worth?
2. How can God be in control of all without being the author of evil?
3. Can you think of anything that proves God's sovereignty and man's choices cannot co-exist?

3

Chapters 3, Sec. 4– Chapter 5, Sec. 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine Westminster's teaching on the decrees of God, creation, and the providence of God.

OUTLINE:

- I. God's decrees include predestination to life and foreordination unto death.
 - A. The number of each is fixed by God.
 - B. Foreknowledge is based on what is foreordained.
 - C. God's election is based on His good pleasure, not anything in man.
 1. God provides grace to elect sinners.
 2. He also provides the means to the end — salvation.
 - D. This doesn't absolve man of his responsibility to obey.
 - E. God is not obligated in any sense to any of His creatures.
 - F. Predestination should be a consoling doctrine.

- II. Chapter Four begins the working out of God's decrees: "Of Creation."
 - A. The term "day" may or may not mean a 24 hour day.
 - B. God created all from nothing.
 - C. Man is subject to change; only God is immutable.

- III. God is sovereign over the affairs of men.
 - A. There is nothing which God does not uphold.
 - B. Nothing happens which God does not enable men so to do.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can God's predestination be a consoling doctrine?
2. In most people's understanding, what constitutes the basis of salvation, What's it for God?
3. How does the biblical doctrine of God refute pantheism and the prevailing theories of modern science?

4

Chapter 5, Sec. 2– Chapter 6, Sec. 4

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine the providence of God, and the fall of man into sin.

OUTLINE:

- I. God is the primary cause of all that happens, but He uses secondary causes.
 - A. He is still sovereign, though, and is not restricted to any normal means.
 - B. Ordinary means help us recognize God's miraculous intervention.
 - C. Though God ordains everything, including sin, He neither authors nor approves it.
 - D. God sometimes allows sin in our lives to reveal our corruption to us, to humble us, and drive us into a deeper dependence on Him.
 - E. The means of grace may harden some hearts, while softening others.
 - F. God exercises special care and concern for His church.

- II. Chapter Six, "Of The Fall Of Man, Of Sin, And The Punishment Thereof," follows God's decrees.
 - A. The first sin came under the auspices of God's permission.
 1. Predestination is an act of intervention.
 2. Foreordination is an act of permission.
 - B. Man's sin has left him spiritually dead, and totally depraved.
 - C. Adam's sin is passed to all succeeding generations. All his descendants possess his sinful nature.
 - D. Man is not a sinner because he sins, he sins because he is a sinner.

4

Chapter 5, Sec. 2– Chapter 6, Sec. 4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does God use sin in the believer's life?
2. Discuss the differences between predestination and foreordination.
3. In what manner is sin transmitted from Adam to each and every one of his posterity?
4. Might there be any other reasons for sin besides how it effects the believer?

5
Chapter 6, Sec. 5–
Chapter 8, Sec. 4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To complete our look at the corruption of fallen man.
2. To examine God's covenant dealings with man and Christ's role as Mediator.

OUTLINE:

- I. Even though we are regenerated, sin remains, but it does not reign.
 - A. Man's sin is infinite.
 - B. His punishment, therefore, must also be infinite.

- II. Because of sin, God initiated a system of redemption for man.
 - A. The covenant is a mighty act of condescension on God's part.
 - B. The covenantal concept does not suggest equality between God and man.
 - C. The first covenant, between God and Adam, was the covenant of works.
 1. The condition of the covenant was perfect obedience.
 2. The promise of the covenant was life.
 - D. The covenant of grace is given to all who exercise faith in Christ.
 - E. Both covenants contain the elements of grace.
 - F. The covenant of grace was administered differently in the Old Testament, but it is the same covenant. The difference is mode, not essence.

- III. Christ is the One on whom the covenant rests.
 - A. Christ is the Mediator of the covenant of grace.
 - B. Christ is fully God and fully man, yet without sin.
 - C. Though fully God, Christ submitted Himself to the will of the Father.

5

Chapter 6, Sec. 5– Chapter 8, Sec. 4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How much have you been taught about the doctrine of eternal punishment? What might account for the lack of this teaching in the church?
2. Discuss the differences between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.
3. Why was it necessary for Christ to be our Mediator?

6

Chapter 8, Sec. 5– Chapter 9, Sec. 5

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine further the mediatorial work of Christ.
2. To determine whether man's will is free or not.

OUTLINE:

- I. Christ's mediatorial work was on behalf of those given Him by the Father.
 - A. His obedience was perfect.
 - B. He purchased not just life, but an eternal inheritance.
 - C. The Old Testament elect were saved through faith in Christ, though He was revealed differently to them than He is to the New Testament church.
 - D. Christ had two natures, divine and human, but He was only one person.
 - E. All whom Christ has chosen are given salvation by Him.
- II. There is much discussion over the question of free will.
 - A. Man's choices are his own; he never chooses against his will.
 - B. The will cannot be forced, but it may be changed.
 - C. Originally, man was free *not* to sin, and free to sin. After the Fall, he is now able only to sin, dead to virtue.
 1. The compulsion against good is a moral one, not a natural one.
 2. There are no external forces compelling man to choose evil.
 - D. Conversion frees man from bondage to sin, but he does not always exercise that freedom. Sin remains.
 - E. Only in his glorified state will man choose good alone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How could people in the Old Testament have faith in Christ?
2. Discuss the difference between compelling and changing the will.
3. How is it that one can never choose against his will?
4. If there are no external forces compelling man to choose evil then what role does Satan play?

7

Chapter 10–Chapter 12

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine the doctrines of Effectual Calling, Justification, and Adoption.

OUTLINE:

- I. Chapter Ten begins the history of redemption.
 - A. When we are changed by the Holy Spirit, we are then willing to accept grace.
 - B. Man is passive in the new birth, in effectual calling.
 1. The first call is the external call, the call of the Gospel.
 2. What is still necessary is the internal call, the call of the Spirit.
 - C. Elect infants who die in infancy, and elect people unable to respond, are regenerated by Christ.
 - D. There is only one way to be saved, and that is through Christ.

- II. “Justification” was the hinge of the Reformation.
 - A. Even your faith adds nothing to your justification.
 1. Justification is really by “Christ alone.”
 2. Faith is not a meritorious work. It is a necessary work.
 - B. Justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.
 - C. Though elect, justification is not effective to the elect until applied by the Holy Spirit.
 - D. We do not lose our salvation by sin, but we may lose God’s pleasure.

- III. The adoption of God is forever, bringing all the privileges of sonship.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can man be passive in his own regeneration?
2. What is the difference between a "necessary" work and a "meritorious" one?
3. In what way are all three persons of the Godhead involved in your redemption?

8

Chapter 13–Chapter 14, Sec. 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine Westminster's doctrine of Sanctification and Saving Faith.

OUTLINE:

- I. Sanctification is often referred to as “the Christianizing of the Christian.”
 - A. The image of God is restored to us by justification.
 - B. His image is made visible by sanctification.
 - C. The dominion of sin is destroyed, not the presence of sin.
 1. The guilt of sin is destroyed.
 2. The power of sin is broken, not destroyed.
 - D. The sin that remains creates a conflict within the believer, between the Spirit and the flesh.
 1. There was no battle before conversion, only which evil to choose.
 2. The battle is proof of his new life. If he weren't saved, he wouldn't fight sin.
 3. Though sin may prevail for a time, holiness is the bent of the believer's life.

- II. Saving faith is an ingredient of sanctification.
 - A. God's normal means is to work through the preaching of the Word.
 - B. Saving faith is always by Christ.
 - C. The ingredients of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting on Christ alone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why must sanctification be a necessary consequent to justification?
2. How can a Christian find proof of salvation by means of the conflict within?
3. Is there a type of faith that does not save? Explain.

9

Chapter 14, Sec. 3– Chapter 15, Sec. 5

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine the place of repentance in sanctification.

OUTLINE:

- I. The amount of our faith, or the quality of faith, does not limit the amount or quality of our justification.

- II. Faith and repentance are inseparable.
 - A. Repentance recognized the filthiness of sin, being contrary to the holy nature of God.
 - B. Repentance turns from sin to Christ, seeking complete obedience.
 - C. Repentance is necessary for salvation, but not meritorious towards it.
 - D. The slightest sin brings the damnation of God to the unbeliever.
 - E. The most enormous sin is forgivable to those who truly repent.
 - F. Repentance is not to be vague and general, but particular.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you give scriptural proof to show that repentance as well as faith is necessary for salvation?
2. If God knows our sins, why must we confess them specifically?
3. While faith and repentance are inseparable, can it be said that one precedes the other? Why or why not?

10

Chapter 15, Sec. 6– Chapter 16, Sec. 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine the place of good works in the life of the believer.

OUTLINE:

- I. Public sins require public confession before those offended.
 - A. It is not a matter of “ought to.” It is a must!
 - B. Jesus demands forgiveness to one who has repented.

- II. Good works are visible evidence of what happens to the soul invisibly.
 - A. The best way to know if you have been saved, is to see if you are being saved.
 - B. A good work is an act of obedience to a command of God.
 - C. Good works accomplish many things, but they do not bring forth salvation.
 - D. The Holy Spirit is the initiator, the source of all good works.
 1. This does not relieve man of any responsibility.
 2. Man works out what the Holy Spirit is working within.
 - E. When the flesh is unwilling to do good works, we must do what God has commanded nonetheless.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why can't I just confess my sins to God and let it go at that?
2. Discuss the past, present, and future tenses of salvation.
3. Why can a non-believer never perform a “good work”?

11

Chapter 16, Sec. 4–7

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To further examine Westminster's teaching on good works.

OUTLINE:

- I. It is impossible to do works that go beyond what is required of us.
 - A. The Roman church, then and now, believed in works of supererogation.
 - B. God requires perfection, so to go beyond that is impossible.
 - C. We all must obey Christ as perfectly as we are able so to do.

- II. Our good works neither pay for our sins, nor obligate God to us in any way.
 - A. Because Christ accepts us, He accepts our good works.
 - B. As Christ makes us acceptable, He makes our good works acceptable by His intercessory work.

- III. Wicked men are able only to do bad works.
 - A. A good work must be in accordance with God's Word.
 - B. The reason for a good work is God's glory.
 - C. Only a regenerate person can do truly good works.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If the Roman church still believes doctrines such as supererogation, what consequences does this have for their broader teaching of the Gospel?
2. If Christ demands perfection, how do we ever live up to that?
3. Don't non-Christians *ever* do anything that is good in God's eyes? Explain.

12

Chapter 17, Sec. 1– Chapter 18, Sec. 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.
2. To begin to look at the evidence for assurance of salvation.

OUTLINE:

- I. Those God chooses for salvation cannot fall from grace.
 - A. They may fall for a time, but never totally or finally.
 - B. Because God preserves His saints, they persevere to the end.
 1. It is the character of God that insures the salvation of the elect.
 2. Our certainty comes from the finished work of Christ.
 - C. One thing is certain, Christians do sin, sometimes grievously.
 1. They do not practice sin, however.
 2. These sins will be judged in a temporal manner.
 - D. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not the same as the phrase, “. . . once saved, always saved.”
- II. If saints persevere, can I know I am a saint, that I’m truly saved?
 - A. There is such a thing as false or carnal security.
 - B. Genuine assurance is a promise, a hope, a possibility.
 1. True assurance is based on the integrity of God’s promises.
 2. The Spirit testifies within us of our adoption.
 3. We give evidence of spiritual graces.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is there a relationship between the amount of sin and amount of holiness?
2. Can you give some basis for false and carnal security?
3. Do Christians and non-Christians exhibit qualities that are no proof of conversion?

13

Chapter 18, Sec. 3– Chapter 19, Sec. 5

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To complete Westminster's treatment of assurance.
2. To examine the place of the law of God.

OUTLINE:

- I. A true believer may be actually saved, and yet not have assurance of it.
 - A. Luther and Calvin believed assurance was an integral part of salvation.
 - B. The law was given in three forms: moral, ceremonial, and judicial.
 1. The moral law is still binding upon the Christian.
 2. Ceremonial law has been done away with by the New Testament.
 3. The judicial law was for the nation of Israel for the most part.
 - C. Believers and unbelievers alike are bound by God's moral law.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Explain the difference between assurance of faith and assurance of hope.
2. What is the moral law to which the Christian is bound?
3. If the judicial law for the nation of Israel is no longer binding, how do we know what should be binding, or what kind of government is pleasing to God?

14

Chapter 19, Sec. 6– Chapter 20, Sec. 4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To complete our examination of God's law.
2. To examine the question of Christian liberty and conscience.

OUTLINE:

- I. Keeping God's moral law is obligatory for the Christian.
 - A. Obeying God's law does not mean that one is under the law.
 - B. Though this obedience is necessary, it is in no way meritorious.
- II. Christian liberty has both a negative and positive side.
 - A. We are free from sin, its consequences and power.
 - B. We are free to God, in willingness and obedience.
- III. Only God and His Word can bind the conscience.
 - A. No church has the right to go beyond God's commandments.
 - B. To do so is to violate a person's conscience and liberty.
- IV. There is a great difference between liberty and license.
 - A. Liberty is not freedom to sin.
 - B. Liberty is not freedom to disobey civil authorities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What aspects of the law are no longer binding upon believers?
2. What is the difference between liberty and license?
3. How does "Christian liberty" relate to issues of free will and predestination?

15

Chapter 21, Sec. 1–6

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To look at Westminster's teaching regarding worship and the Sabbath.

OUTLINE:

- I. God is to be worshiped according to his own instructions and mandates.
 - A. Nature reveals that there is a God.
 - B. God reveals in Scripture how He is to be worshiped.
 - C. Christ alone is to be our mediator before God.

- II. Every man has an obligation to pray.
 - A. This prayer must be in accordance with God's dictates.
 - B. Any prayer otherwise is sinful.
 - C. Prayer is to be made for all men present and future, but not for the dead.

- III. Worship is to be regulated by the Word.
 - A. The preaching of the Word is paramount.
 - B. The proper attentiveness to the Word is of utmost importance.
 - C. Singing should be in accordance with the Word.
 - D. Worship is to be both public and private.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why can't one say, "I worship God in my own way"?
2. Why is the Word of God the focal point of worship?
3. What specific things does Scripture say about manner of worship?
Is *worship* the focus of your church's activity?

16

Chapter 21, Sec. 7– Chapter 22, Sec. 7

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To complete the examination of worship and the Sabbath.
2. To examine the seriousness of oaths and vows.

OUTLINE:

- I. God has set aside one day a week as a Sabbath day.
 - A. First it was the last day of the week.
 - B. Since the resurrection of Christ, it is the first day of the week.
 - C. That day is for the worship of Christ, and only for the worship of Christ.
 - D. Only necessary work excuses one from Sabbath observance.
- II. Chapter Twenty-Two deals with “Of Lawful Oaths and Vows.”
 - A. God becomes the witness of a lawful oath, making it an act of worship.
 - B. Only His name is to be sworn by.
 - C. Taking an oath is a serious thing, be sure of its truthfulness.
 1. A false oath must be broken.
 2. Only a lawful oath is binding.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why isn't the Sabbath still the last day of the week?
2. Why can't one have one's own Sabbath in the middle of the week?
What constitutes “necessary” work?
3. What is the criteria for a lawful oath?

17

Chapter 23, Sec. 1–4

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To examine the teaching of the Westminster Confession on civil authorities.

OUTLINE:

- I. God has ordained powers for His glory and the public good.
 - A. It is God who gives authority for “the sword.”
 1. They are to defend what is good.
 2. They are to punish evil.
 - B. If a ruling body does not fit this definition, it is no government.
- II. It is possible to engage in a just and necessary war.
- III. The government has an obligation to protect *proper* religion.
 - A. The protection was for denominations of the Christian religion.
 - B. The Christian must be allowed to worship undisturbed and unhindered.
- IV. The Christian has an obligation towards authorities.
 - A. The obligation is not mitigated by a non-Christian authority.
 - B. The clergy is not exempt from this duty.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is every act of government to be interpreted as an act of God?
2. How has “pluralism” changed the protection of the Christian religion by government?
3. Is government to punish every kind of evil? Explain.

18

Chapter 24, Sec. 1– Chapter 25, Sec. 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To look at Westminster's teaching regarding marriage and divorce.
2. To begin looking at the doctrine of the church.

OUTLINE:

- I. Marriage is an institution ordained of God.
 - A. Originally, only adultery and desertion were legitimate grounds for divorce.
 - B. The revised Confession gives further guidelines for divorce, but extreme caution must be exercised.
 - C. The teaching of Scripture must be upheld, "*till death do us apart.*"
- II. The invisible church is the whole number of the elect; past, present and future.
 - A. The invisibility refers to the faith of the elect.
 - B. Their faith is not invisible to God.
- III. The visible church consists of all who *profess* orthodoxy, and their children.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How is adultery grounds for divorce in light of "*till death do us apart?*"
2. How do we as a church relate to those who have gone through divorce?
3. Can one be a member of the visible church and not the invisible? Is the reverse true?

19

Chapter 24, Sec. 3– Chapter 27, Sec. 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To further examine the church.
2. To see the responsibility of believers to commune with one another.

OUTLINE:

- I. Christ has given gifts to the visible church to perfect His saints.
 - A. A church is effective to the extent it avails itself of these means.
 - B. Even the purest church is not error free.
 - C. Christ alone is head of the church.
- II. Christians have an obligation to one another.
 - A. This obligation is to the spiritual needs of man.
 - B. It extends to the physical needs, also, based on one's resources.
 - C. James draws a parallel between communion with man and communion with God. This communion is not "communism."
- III. This communion with God is not to lead to familiarity or impropriety.
- IV. Sacraments are signs of the covenant, representing Christ and His benefits.
 - A. A sacrament signifies a spiritual truth.
 - B. It is a visible distinction between the church and the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does one know which church he should attend?
2. What is the parallel between communion with God and communion with man?
3. How do sacraments relate to communing with God and **communing** with man?

20

Chapter 27, Sec. 2– Chapter 28, Sec. 7

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To further study the sacraments.
2. To examine Westminster's teaching regarding baptism.

OUTLINE:

- I. Sacraments are signs of spiritual truths.
 - A. Any grace in the sacraments comes from the Holy Spirit.
 - B. The spirituality of the one administering the sacraments is not overly significant.
 - C. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only sacraments instituted by the Lord.
 - D. The substance of Old and New Testament sacraments is the same.
- II. Baptism is a New Testament sacrament.
 - A. It is an initiatory rite of admission to the visible church.
 - B. It is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace.
 - C. Immersion is permissible, certainly, but not necessary.
 - D. Westminster calls for infant baptism.
 1. The church has, since its inception, baptized its infants.
 2. Believers, not baptized in infancy, must undergo believers' baptism.
 3. The rationale for infant baptism is the parallel between circumcision in the old covenant, an baptism in the new.
 - E. Baptism and regeneration are not to be equated.
 - F. Baptism is a one-time event.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How could one accept the Lord's Supper from an unbeliever?
2. Why wouldn't one baptized as an infant, who became converted later, be baptized again?
3. What does the Confession mean by "sign and seal"?

21

Chapter 29, Sec. 1–8

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To study the second sacrament, the Lord's Supper.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Lord's Supper is a primary means of communion with Christ.
 - A. It reminds us of His sacrifice.
 - B. It reminds us of our obligations to Him and to each other.
 - C. The Supper is but a commemoration of Christ's one-time offering.
 - D. There are guidelines for administering the Supper, and to whom.
 - E. The elements signify the body and blood of Christ, but their substance remains that of bread and wine.
 1. The doctrine of transubstantiation is rejected by Westminster.
 2. It leads to the practice of idolatry.
 - F. It is sinful to partake of the Supper apart from open fellowship with Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does transubstantiation lead to idolatry?
2. Why do Protestants reject this doctrine?
3. How often do you celebrate the Lord's Supper? Why?

22

Chapter 30, Sec. 1– Chapter 31, Sec. 4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine church discipline.
2. To look at the place of synods and councils in the life of the church.

OUTLINE:

- I. Church government is appointed by the head of the church, Christ.
 - A. This is not the same as civil authorities.
 - B. Only the impenitent can be shut out of the kingdom.
 - C. The main function of church discipline is restoration of the sinner.
 1. Discipline should deter others from similar sins.
 2. It is to weed out the unbeliever or impenitent.
 3. It is to vindicate the honor of Christ.
 4. It is to stay God's wrath.
 - D. Depending upon the situation, there are ascending steps of discipline.
- II. Synods and councils are forms of church government.
 - A. These assemblies are not infallible.
 - B. Their function is to settle theological controversies and maintain church order.
 - C. Government is to aid in faith and practice.
 - D. They are to handle church matters alone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why should the church have anything to say about a person's private life?
2. Why do you feel church discipline is an important practice? When was the last time you saw it administered in your church?
3. What should we do when our church fails to exercise discipline?

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Chapter 32, Sec. 1– Chapter 33, Sec. 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the teaching of Westminster on life after death and the Resurrection.
2. To follow the doctrine of the Last Judgment.

OUTLINE:

- I. The soul is immortal, not in and of itself, but because God has so designated.
 - A. Immediately after death, the soul is judged.
 1. The righteous are taken into God's presence.
 2. The impenitent sinner goes to hell to await the final Judgment.
 - B. There is no purgatory found in Scripture.
 - C. Those alive at the Last Day shall not die, but be changed.
 1. The bodies of the unjust will be raised to dishonor.
 2. The bodies of the just will be raised to honor by the Spirit.
- II. There is a Day of Judgment coming.
 - A. Not only men, but apostate angels will face judgment.
 - B. They will give account for their lives.
 - C. This judgment is to manifest God's mercy and justice.
 - D. The knowledge of this should deter men from sin and console the godly during their adverse times.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is hell eternal?
2. How is the justice of God seen in the salvation of the elect?
3. How might the Day of Judgment console the godly who are suffering?

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Chapter 34–35

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the Revised Confession on the Holy Spirit.
2. To study the Gospel of the love of God and of missions.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Holy Spirit is defined more clearly by this revision.
 - A. He gives life and thoughts to men.
 - B. He spoke through the writers of Scripture infallibly.
 - C. God gives the Holy Spirit to all who ask Him.
 - D. It is the Holy Spirit who is active in justification and sanctification.
- II. The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for all men.
 - A. The offer of the Gospel is universal.
 - B. The content of the Gospel will only reach those who believe and repent.
 - C. God's decrees leave no room for human irresponsibility.
 - D. God's predestination should be the ultimate motive for missions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can the call of the Gospel be universal when salvation is particular?
2. Was the Spirit present in the Old Testament? Explain.
3. How would predestination further motivate men to missions?