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PREPARATION

<i>The principal use of the cross is, that it in various ways accustoms us to despise the present, and excites us to aspire to the future life, sec. 1, 2.</i>		<i>By our tribulations God weans us from excessive love of this present life, 1-2</i>
1.	The design of God in afflicting his people. 1. To accustom us to despise the present life. Our infatuated love of it. Afflictions employed as the cure. 2. To lead us to aspire to heaven.	The vanity of this life
2.	Excessive love of the present life prevents us from duly aspiring to the other. Hence the disadvantages of prosperity. Blindness of the human judgment. Our philosophizing on the vanity of life only of momentary influence. The necessity of the cross.	Our tendency to leave unnoticed the vanity of this life
<i>In withdrawing from the present life we must neither shun it nor feel hatred for it; but desiring the future life, gladly quit the present at the command of our sovereign Master, sec. 3, 4</i>		<i>A right estimate of the present life, which is transient and unsatisfying, leads us to meditate on the life to come, 3-6</i>
3.	The present life an evidence of the divine favour to his people; and therefore, not to be detested. On the contrary, should call forth thanksgiving. The crown of victory in heaven after the contest on earth.	Gratitude for earthly life!
4.	Weariness of the present life how to be tempered. The believer's estimate of life. Comparison of the present and the future life. How far the present life should be hated.	The right longing for eternal life
5.	Christians should not tremble at the fear of death. Two reasons. Objection. Answer. Other reasons.	Against the fear of death!
<i>Our infirmity in dreading death described. The correction and safe remedy, sec. 6</i>		
6.	Reasons continued. Conclusion.	The comfort prepared for believers by aspiration for the life to come

EXPLORATORY

1. What impression do we all wish to give? (712, 20f)
 - a. We wish to, *seem throughout life to aspire and strive after heavenly immortality.*

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What great obstacle do we encounter that conflicts with this and prevents it being genuinely the case? (712, 16f)

- a. *...we are inclined by nature to a brutish love of this world.*

Why, *brutish*? (712, 22f)

- a. *...brüte beasts, whose condition would be no whit inferior to our own if there were Not left to us hope of eternity After death.*

712, 25 *...there you will find Nothing else but earth.* How does this Manifest itself in our plans, efforts and deeds? (712, 26ff)

- a. *...our minds, stunned by the empty dazzlement of riches, Power and honours become so deadened that they can see no farther.*
- b. *The heart also, occupied with avarice, ambition and lust, is so weighed down that it cannot rise Up higher.*
- c. *...the whole soul, enmeshed in the allurements of the flesh, seeks its happiness on **earth**.*

With what does God furnish us, in order to counter this evil? (712, 32f)

- a. *...continual proof of [this life's] miseries.*

What are all God's efforts designed to teach us about this world's goods? (713, 20ff)

- a. *...all those things....are uncertain , fleeting, vain and vitiated by many intermingled evils.*

Why is this absolutely necessary? (713, 25ff)

- a. *...the mind is never serioiusly aroused to desire and ponder the life to come unless it is previously imbued with contempt For the present life.*
2. How do we Know that it would be very uhelpful for us to enjoy here an enduring round of wealth and happiness? (713, 37ff)
- a. *...we cannot, even with evil goading us, be sufficiently awakened to weigh the misery of this life.*

What words and phrases does Calvin use in this first paragraph to express the Iron grip that this world has on our hearts and minds? (713, 28ff)

- a. *...there is no middle ground;*
- b. *...the world must become worthless to us Or hold us bound by intemperate love of it.*
- c. *...we must strive diligently to strike off these evil fetters.*
- d. *...the present life has very many allurements with which to entice us, and much show of pleasantness, grace and sweetness wherewith to wheedle us...*

714, 8ff: *If some corpse is being buried, or we walk among graves, because the likeness of death meets our eyes, we, I confess, philosophise brilliantly concerning the vanity of this life.* What's wrong with that? (714, 12ff)

- a. *...our philosophy is for the moment; it vanishes as soon as we turn our backs, and leaves not a trace of remembrance behind it.*

How thoroughly do we need to be convinced of the miserable condition of earthly life? (714, 22)

- a. *...it is very much worth-while for all of us.*

If words alone are insufficient to provide the degree of conviction needed, what will convince us? (714, 23)

- a. *...experiences.*

When it comes to profiting in this way from our experiences do we have any part to play? (714, 27ff)

- a. *...God has to instruct us, it is our duty, in turn, to listen...*
- b. *...holding the world in contempt, we may **strive with all our heart** to meditate upon the life to come.*

3. What two things should not characterise our contempt of the present life? (714, 33)

- a. *...hatred of it;*
- b. *...ingratitude against God.*

How does a recognition of the divine benevolence promote our salvation? (714, 38f)

- a. *It enables us to receive earthly goods as coming from the hand of God and as being, **lesser proofs** (lesser than admission into heavenly glory) by which he shows, *himself to be [our] father.**

What two further reasons does Calvin give for regarding our earthly experiences positively, even if they are not enjoyable? (715, 14ff & 20ff)

- a. *...we are in preparation...the Lord has ordained that those who are one day to be crowned in heaven should first undergo struggles on earth...they may not triumph until they have overcome the difficulties of war, and attained victory.*
- b. *...in order to whet our hope and desire to seek after the full revelation of...the sweetness of the divine generosity.*

4. What four heavenly characteristics does Calvin identify, that mean we should, *with greater eagerness and dispatch* betake [ourselves] wholly to meditate on that eternal life to come? (716, 11ff)

- a. *...heaven is our homeland;*
- b. *...departure from the world is entry into life;*
- c. *...to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom;*
- d. *...to enjoy the presence of God is the summit of happiness.*

What is the implication of these four characteristics for comparisons between this life and the next? (716, 19ff)

- a. *...if the earthly life be compared with the heavenly, it is doubtless to be at once despised and trampled under foot.*

How does Paul display the appropriate attitude to our bodily sojourn? (716, 29ff)

- a. *...that he may obey God's command he professes himself ready for either...the bonds of the body, or, redemption.*

What truths did Paul need to keep in view if he was to maintain this truly Christian attitude towards life and death? (716, 33f)

- a. *...he owes it to God to glorify his name, whether through death or through life;*
- b. *...it is for God to determine what best conduces to his glory.*

In his concluding two sentences (716, 35ff) Calvin sums up what it means, *to live and die to the Lord*. Of what elements does this consist?

- a. *...leave to his decision the hour of our death or life;*
- b. *...in such a way that we may both burn with the zeal for death and be constant in meditation;*
- c. *...in comparison with the immortality to come, let us despise this life and long to renounce it....*

Calvin has been at pains to point out that we should not be ungrateful for this life. What is his reason for saying, at this particular point, that we should long to renounce it? (717, 1)

- a. *...on account of bondage to sin.*

5. What appears to be Calvin's target in this section? (717, 3ff)

- a. Those who, boast themselves Christians, but who, *are gripped by such a fear of death...that they tremble at the least mention of it, as of something utterly dire and disastrous.* They have no, *light of piety to overcome and suppress that fear...by a greater consolation.*

What six adjectives does Calvin use to describe the human body on earth? (717, 10f)

- a. Unstable;
- b. Defective;
- c. Corruptible;
- d. Fleeting;
- e. Wasting;
- f. Rotting.

What four adjectives does he use to describe the glory that awaits our bodies after the resurrection? (717, 12f)

- a. Firm;
- b. Perfect;
- c. Incorruptible;
- d. Heavenly.

If we understand the contrast expressed by these sets of adjectives, what will be the outcome? (717, 13f)

- a. *...will not faith compel us ardently to seek what nature dreads?*

What potentially comforting fact does Calvin mention as he closes the first paragraph? (717, 15f)

- a. *...through death we are recalled from exile to dwell...in the heavenly fatherland.*

If all Calvin has stated thus far is true, why do we have a problem viewing death in this positive way? (717, 18f)

- a. *...there is nothing that does not crave to endure.*

What is the only thing that will overcome that craving in us? (717, 20)

- a. *...regard for the immortality to come.*

What illustration does Paul use to teach the preferableness of the heavenly state over the earthly? (717, 21ff)

- a. Clothing.

How does creation teach us to long for the future state? (717, 24ff)

- a. *...brute animals, and even inanimate creatures...long for the final day of resurrection...*

What advantage have we over the rest of creation? (717, 29)

- a. We are...*illuminated with the Spirit of God.*

What does Calvin identify as a sign of having made progress in the school of Christ? (718, 2f)

- a. Joyfully awaiting, *the day of death and the final resurrection.*

What is it about the Lord's coming that should encourage us to look forward to it as, the happiest thing of all? (718, 14ff)

- a. *He will come to us as Redeemer, and rescuing us from this boundless abyss of all evils and miseries, he will lead us into that blessed inheritance of his life and glory.*

6. In order to be conformed to Christ our head, what must we become like in this life? (718, 9)

- a. *...sheep destined for the slaughter.*

In this condition, what is our one source of sustenance? (718, 21ff)

- a. Having our minds, *intent upon heaven*, surmounting, *whatever is in this world*, and passing beyond, *the present aspect of affairs*.

How do we know from the Bible, that this is necessary? (719, 12ff)

- a. *Even the prophet confesses that his steps had well-nigh wavered when he stopped too long to dwell upon the present prosperity of the wicked.*

Why can Calvin confidently assert that Christians will without difficulty bear up under evils? He has been describing how believers are troubled by others' wickedness, bear their arrogant insults, are robbed through their greed, or harried by any other sort of inordinate desire on their part... (718, 32ff)

- a. *...before their eyes will be that day when the Lord will receive his faithful people into the peace of his Kingdom, "will wipe away every tear from their eyes", will clothe them with "a robe of glory...and rejoicing", will feed them with the unspeakable sweetness of his delights, will elevate them to his sublime fellowship – in fine, will deign to make them sharers in his happiness.*

What scripture passage tells us that God will do all the above for his people and punish the wicked at the same time? (719, 9)

- a. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7.

FOR REFLECTION

1.