

## *Correspondence Course on Reformed Doctrine*

A number of people have expressed interest in a correspondence course on Reformed doctrine. There are many saints throughout the world who have become acquainted with the truths of the Reformed faith, but who are unable to find a church near them that preaches this truth soundly. There are also those who are hearing sound preaching from Sunday to Sunday, but who recognize that they could still benefit from some one-on-one instruction in the fundamentals of the Reformed faith, with the doctrines being taught to them one at a time, with illustrations and tables that help them to see and grasp these truths. This correspondence course was designed with these people in mind.

But the course was also designed to serve as a study guide for those who would like to instruct their children, or to lead a Bible study in an effort to lead others to the truth of the Reformed faith. We often search the Scriptures more thoroughly when we are preparing to express these truths to others. So this course was designed also with a view to providing some assistance to those who intend to do this.

Each lesson consists of a number of parts. It starts with a brief explanation of a certain fundamental truth taught in Scripture. Key Scripture passages are not merely cited, but explained. At various points common false teachings are briefly refuted. It helps to get a clearer understanding of a truth when we can see that truth over against some of the false teachings that are commonly maintained in our day.

The next part of the lesson is found only in some of the lessons. It consists of a number of quotes from the Reformed confessions. They are called *Reformed* confessions because they were written around the time of the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, when many churches broke away from the Roman Catholic Church because of its many false teachings. The three Reformed confessions are the Heidelberg Catechism (written in 1563), the Belgic Confession (written two years earlier, in 1561), and the Canons of Dordt (written and adopted by the Synod of Dordt in 1618 and 1619). Though written a few centuries ago, there are still churches today who continue to hold faithfully to these glorious truths. References to these confessions are included to show that what is taught in this course is in agreement with what has been taught by Reformed churches for centuries.

The last part of the lesson consists of two pages of study guide questions. The pages contain a list of some key Scripture texts, with a number of questions under each one of them. After reading the Scripture passage, answer the questions that pertain to it. These Scripture passages are often the same ones referred to in the first part of the lesson. So one can often go back into the first part of the lesson to find the subject discussed.

If someone intends to use the lesson to lead a Bible study or to teach his or her children, another two pages will be included. These pages will be identical to those that

contain the questions, but in these pages a brief answer to each question will be provided. These pages are designed to help the Bible study leader or the parent. Those who are planning to use the lesson only for their own personal instruction, may receive the lesson without the sheets that contain the answers. Then they can email their answers to me, and I will discuss the answers with them.

The course consists of a number of sections, with each section consisting of a number of lessons. The first section consists of six lessons that go over the truth of what it means to be saved by grace alone—a truth that relatively few still confess today, even though many falsely claim to hold to it. The first lesson is an overview of this centrally important subject. And, being merely an overview, it is common for people to still have a number of questions after they go through it. The next five lessons go through the different aspects of this truth in more detail.

The lessons are sent out one at a time, with the desire that there be some correspondence between lessons. If you are using the material for your own instruction, then simply send your answers to me, along with any questions you may have, and then we will discuss them. If you are using the material to instruct others, then please let me know how the instruction goes, and what questions arose during the discussion.

Your response may be submitted in a number of different ways. It can be mailed (we will gladly send you the address), faxed (616-453-3253), or emailed. Those emailing it can send back just their answers or both the questions and answers together. It can be sent either within an email message or as an attachment. For example, one could copy the questions, paste them into a new Word document, then write out the answers and send the Word document as an attachment. There are many ways to do it, and if you need any assistance, please do not hesitate to ask. If you intend to fax it make sure you write your answers using a dark pen or marker, with a thick stroke being preferred. Otherwise it will be hard for me to read.

May our heavenly Father use this course for the glory of His name and the gathering of His covenant people.

James A. Laning

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