

Catechetical Sermon, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

**Belgic Confession, Article 32, “The Power of the Church”**

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 66:1-4

<b>Lesson Aim</b>	To understand three things: First, how churches struggle to be true to God’s Word, second, the church is to focus on regulating worship by the God’s Word and third, Christian liberty and church discipline is balanced correctly when God’s Word is honored in the church.
<b>Steps to Learning</b>	Read <a href="#">Belgic Confession, Article 32</a> and <a href="#">Isaiah 66:1-4</a> . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
<b>Discuss</b>	<p><b>What does the Bible say about churches struggling to be true to God’s Word?</b> <a href="#">Ezekiel chapter 22</a> mentions the prophets, priests, kings and the people ignoring God’s Word. Likewise, <a href="#">2 Peter 2</a> warns that the church in the New Testament era and beyond will be characterized by false teachers and their teaching.</p> <p><b>How has the church responded to the problems with false teachers and false teaching?</b> Councils were called in which creeds were written in addition to written confessions of faith.</p> <p><b>Churches also employed different ordinances. What are these and how do we accept them?</b> Ordinances would be things like the church order and forms used in the worship service. These help the church keep order but they must agree with what Christ has instituted in God’s Word.</p> <p><b>The church must regulate worship according to the Word of God. To that end, churches must employ the “regulative principle of worship.” What is this?</b> The regulative principle of worship is applied when the church does in worship only what God requires or has prescribed according to the Scriptures. The question to ask is, “what does God want in HIS worship service? The principle is based on the second commandment, which says that we are not to make any images of God.</p> <p><b>Specifically, what does this mean for the worshipper?</b> That our hearts have the right attitude to submit ourselves to God and that we make sure we are doing the right things in worship.</p> <p><b>In the context of article 32 of the Belgic, how are we to think about Christian liberty?</b> In worship, our conscience shall not be bound by human opinions. Outside of worship, we are free to act according to our conscience but our conscience must be informed by the Word of God.</p>
<b>Bible Reading</b>	<a href="#">Ezra 1-5</a> [The exiles return to the Promised Land] (covering the great Bible stories)