

The Study Catechism: Confirmation Version

[approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)]

Question 1. What is God's purpose for your life?

God wills that I should live by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the love of God, and in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Question 2. How do you live by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?

I am not my own. I have been bought with a price. The Lord Jesus Christ loved me and gave himself for me. I entrust myself completely to his care, giving thanks each day for his wonderful goodness.

Question 3. How do you live for the love of God?

I love because God first loved me. Amazed by grace, I live for the Lord who died and rose again, triumphant over death, for my sake. Therefore, I take those around me to heart, especially those in need, knowing that Christ died for them no less than for me.

Question 4. How do you live in the communion of the Holy Spirit?

By the Holy Spirit, I am made one with the Lord Jesus Christ. I am baptized into Christ's body, the church. As a member of this community, I trust in God's Word, share in the Lord's Supper, and turn to God in prayer. As I grow in grace and knowledge, I am led to do the good works that God intends for my life

I. The Apostles' Creed

Question 5. What does a Christian believe?

All that is promised in the gospel. A summary is found in the Apostles' Creed, which affirms the main content of the Christian faith.

Question 6. What is the first article of the Apostles' Creed?

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Question 7. What do you believe when you confess your faith in "God the Father Almighty"?

That God is a God of love, and that God's love is powerful beyond measure.

Question 8. How do you understand the love and power of God?

Through Jesus Christ. In his life of compassion, his death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead, I see how vast is God's love for the world — a love that is ready to suffer for our sakes, yet so strong that nothing will prevail against it.

Question 9. What comfort do you receive from this truth?

This powerful and loving God is the one whose promises I may trust in all the circumstances of my life, and to whom I belong in life and in death.

Question 10. Do you make this confession by yourself?

No. With all those before me who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and with all who serve him on earth here and now, I confess my faith in this loving and powerful God.

Question 11. When the creed speaks of "God the Father," does it mean that God is male?

No. Only creatures having bodies can be either male or female. But God has no body, since by nature God is Spirit. Holy Scripture reveals God as a living God beyond all sexual distinctions. Scripture uses diverse images for God, female as well as male.

Question 12. Why then does the creed speak of God the Father?

Because God is identified in the New Testament as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Question 13. When you confess God as our Father, do you mean that men should dominate women?

No. All human beings, male or female, ought to conform their lives to the love, humility and kindness of God. In fact God calls women and men to all ministries of the church. Any abuse or domination in human relationships is a direct violation of God's Fatherhood.

Question 14. If God's love is so powerful, why is there evil in the world?

No one can say why, for evil is a terrible mystery. Still, we know that God's triumph over evil is certain. Our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is himself God's promise that suffering will come to an end, that death shall be no more, and that all things will be made new.

Question 15. What do you believe when you say that God is "Maker of heaven and earth"?

First, that God called heaven and earth, with all that is in them, into being out of nothing. Second, that God rules and supports the creation in perfect wisdom, according to God's eternal purpose.

Question 16. Did God need to make the world?

No. God would still be God even if heaven and earth had never been made.

Question 17. Why then did God create the world?

God's creation of the world was an act of grace. God granted existence to the world simply in order to bless it. God created the world to reveal God's glory, to share the love and freedom at the heart of God's being, and to give us eternal life in fellowship with God.

Question 18. Does your confession of God as Creator contradict the findings of modern science?

No. Natural science has much to teach us about the particular mechanisms of nature, but it is not equipped to answer questions about ultimate reality. Nothing basic to the Christian faith contradicts the findings of modern science, nor does anything essential to modern science contradict the Christian faith.

Question 19. What does it mean to say that human beings are created in the image of God?

God created us to live together in love and freedom — with God, with one another, and with the world. We are created to be loving companions of others so that something of God's goodness may be reflected in our lives.

Question 20. What does our creation in God's image reflect about God?

Our being created for loving relationships is a reflection of the Holy Trinity. In the mystery of the one God, the three divine persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — live eternally in perfect love and freedom.

Question 21. What does our creation in God's image say about our responsibility for the earth?

We are responsible for seeing that the earth's gifts are used fairly and wisely. We must take care that no creature suffers from the abuse of what we are given, and that future generations may continue to enjoy the earth's abundance in praise to God.

Question 22. What is God's providence?

God not only preserves the world, but also continually rules over it. God cares for every creature and brings good out of evil, so that nothing evil is permitted to occur that God does not bend finally to the good.

Question 23. What comfort do you receive by trusting in God's providence?

The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ watches over me each day of my life, blessing and guiding me wherever I may be. God strengthens me when I am faithful, comforts me when I am discouraged or sorrowful, raises me up if I fall, and brings me at last to eternal life.

Question 24. What is the second article of the Apostles' Creed?

"And I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead."

Question 25. What do you believe when you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as "God's only Son"?

No one else will ever be God incarnate. No one else will ever die for the sins of the world. Only Jesus Christ is such a person, only he could do such a work, and he in fact has done it.

Question 26. What do you affirm when you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as "our Lord"?

That having been raised from the dead Christ reigns with compassion and justice over all things in heaven and on earth, especially over those who confess him by faith. By loving and serving him above all else, I give glory and honor to God.

Question 27. How did the coming of Jesus confirm God's covenant with Israel?

God made a covenant with Israel, promising that God would be their God, that they would be God's people, and that through them all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. With the coming of Jesus the covenant was thrown open to the world. By faith in him all peoples were welcomed into the covenant. This throwing open of the gates confirmed the promise that through Israel God's blessing would come to all.

Question 28. Was the covenant with Israel an everlasting covenant?

Yes. Although for the most part Israel has not accepted Jesus as the Messiah, God has not rejected Israel. God still loves Israel, and God is their hope, "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29).

Question 29. What do you affirm when you say he was "conceived by the Holy

Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary"?

First, that being born of Mary, Jesus was truly a human being. Second, that our Lord's incarnation was a holy and mysterious event. Third, that he was set apart by his unique origin for the sake of accomplishing our salvation.

Question 30. What is the significance of affirming that Jesus is truly God?

Only God can properly deserve worship. Only God can reveal to us who God is. And only God can save us from our sins. Being truly God, Jesus meets these conditions. He is the proper object of our worship, the self-revelation of God, and the Savior of the world.

Question 31. What is the significance of affirming that Jesus is also truly a human being?

Being truly human, Jesus entered fully into our fallen situation and overcame it. He lived a life of pure obedience to God, even to the point of accepting a violent death. When we accept him by faith, he removes our disobedience and clothes us with his perfect righteousness.

Question 32. What do you affirm when you say that he "suffered under Pontius Pilate"?

First, that our Lord was rejected and abused by the authorities of that time, both religious and political. Second, and even more importantly, that he submitted to condemnation by an earthly judge so that we might be acquitted before our heavenly Judge.

Question 33. What do you affirm when you say that he was "crucified, dead and buried"?

From Christ's lonely and terrible death we learn that there is no sorrow he has not known, no grief he has not borne, and no price he was unwilling to pay in order to reconcile us to God.

Question 34. What do you affirm when you say that he "descended into hell"?

That our Lord took upon himself the full consequences of our sinfulness in order that we might be spared.

Question 35. What do you affirm when you say that "on the third day he rose again from the dead"?

Our Lord could not be held by the power of death. Having died on the cross, he appeared to his followers, and revealed himself to them as the Lord and Savior of the world.

Question 36. What do you affirm when you say that "he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father"?

First, that Christ has gone to be with his loving Father so that he is now hidden except to the eyes of faith. Second, however, that he is not cut off from us but is present here and now by grace. He reigns with divine authority, protecting us, guiding us, and interceding for us until he returns in glory.

Question 37. How do you understand the words that "he will come again to judge the living and the dead"?

Like everyone else, I too must stand in fear and trembling before the judgment seat of Christ. But the Judge is the one who submitted to judgment for my sake. Nothing will be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord.

Question 38. Will all human beings be saved?

No one will be lost who can be saved. The limits to salvation, whatever they may be, are known only to God. Three truths above all are certain. God is a holy God who is not to be trifled with. No one will be saved except by grace alone. And no judge could possibly be more gracious than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Question 39. How should I treat non-Christians and people of other religions?

I should meet friendship with friendship, hostility with kindness, generosity with gratitude, persecution with forbearance, truth with agreement, and error with truth. I should express my faith by word and by deed. I should avoid compromising the truth on the one hand and being narrow-minded on the other. In short, I should welcome and accept these others in a way that honors and reflects the Lord's welcome and acceptance of me.

Question 40. How will God deal with the followers of other religions?

God offers salvation to all human beings through Jesus Christ. How God will deal with those who do not know or follow Christ, but who follow another tradition, we cannot finally say. We can say, however, that God is gracious and merciful, and that God will not deal with people in any other way than we see in Jesus Christ, who came as the Savior of the world.

Question 41. Is Christianity the only true religion?

By the grace of God, Christianity offers the truth of the gospel. Although other religions may contain various truths, no other can or does affirm the name of Jesus Christ as the hope of the world.

Question 42. What is the third article of the Apostles' Creed?

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

Question 43. What do you believe when you confess your faith in the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the divine person who enables us to love, know and serve Jesus Christ.

Question 44. How do we receive the Holy Spirit?

By receiving the Word of God. The Spirit arrives with the Word, brings us to rebirth, and assures us of eternal life. The Spirit nurtures, corrects and strengthens us with the truth of the Word.

Question 45. What do you mean when you speak of "the Word of God"?

"Jesus Christ as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture is the one Word of God whom we have to hear, and whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death" (Barmen Declaration, Article I).

Question 46. Isn't Holy Scripture also the Word of God?

Yes. Holy Scripture is also God's Word because of its focus, its function and its founder. Its central focus is Jesus Christ, the living Word. Its basic function is to deepen our love, knowledge and service of him as our Savior and Lord. And its dependable founder is the Holy Spirit, who spoke through the prophets and apostles, and who inspires us with eager desire for the truths that Scripture contains.

Question 47. Isn't preaching also the Word of God?

Yes. Preaching is God's Word when it is faithful to the witness of Holy Scripture. Faith comes by hearing God's Word in the form of faithful preaching and teaching.

Question 48. What do you affirm when you speak of "the holy catholic church"?

The church is the community of all faithful people who have given their lives to Jesus Christ with thanksgiving. The church is holy because he is holy, and universal (or "catholic") in significance because he is universal in significance. Despite all its remaining imperfections here and now, the church is called to become ever more holy and catholic, for that is what it already is in Christ.

Question 49. What is the mission of the church?

The mission of the church is to bear witness to God's love for the world in Jesus Christ.

Question 50. What forms does this mission take?

The church's mission takes a wide variety of forms, including evangelism, work for social justice, and ministries of care. Yet the center is always the same: Jesus Christ. In every case the church extends mercy and forgiveness to the needy in a way that points finally to him.

Question 51. Who are the needy?

The hungry need bread, the homeless need a roof, the oppressed need justice, and the lonely need fellowship. At the same time — on another and deeper level — the hopeless need hope, sinners need forgiveness, and the world needs the gospel. On this level no one is excluded, and all the needy are one. Our mission as the church is to bring hope to a desperate world by declaring God's undying love — as one beggar tells another where to find bread.

Question 52. What do you affirm when you speak of "the communion of saints"?

All those who live in union with Christ, whether on earth or with God in heaven, are "saints." Our communion with Christ makes us members one of another. The ties that bind us in Christ are deeper than any other human relationship.

Question 53. How do you enter into communion with Christ and so with one another?

By the power of the Holy Spirit as it works through Word and sacrament. The Scriptures acknowledge two sacraments as instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ — baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Question 54. What is a sacrament?

A sacrament is a special act of Christian worship, instituted by Christ, which uses a visible sign to proclaim the promise of the gospel for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In baptism the sign is that of water; in the Lord's Supper, that of bread and wine.

Question 55. What is baptism?

Baptism is the sign and seal through which we are joined to Christ.

Question 56. What does it mean to be baptized?

My baptism means that I am joined to Jesus Christ forever. As I am baptized with water, he baptizes me with his Spirit, washing away all my sins and freeing me from their control. My baptism is a sign that one day I will rise with him in glory, and may walk with him even now in newness of life.

Question 57. Are infants also to be baptized?

Yes. Along with their believing parents, they are included in the great hope of the gospel and belong to the people of God. Forgiveness and faith are both promised to them through Christ's covenant with his people.

Question 58. Why are you baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?

Because of the command Jesus gave his disciples. After he was raised from the dead, he appeared to them and said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

Question 59. What is the meaning of this name?

It is the name of the Holy Trinity. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three gods, but one God in three persons. We worship God in this mystery.

Question 60. What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is the sign and seal by which our communion with Christ is renewed.

Question 61. What does it mean to share in the Lord's Supper?

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, the Lord Jesus Christ is truly present, pouring out his Spirit upon us. By his Spirit, the bread that we break and the cup that we bless share in his body and blood. As I receive the bread and the cup, remembering that Christ died even for me, I feed on him in my heart by faith with thanksgiving. His life becomes mine, and my life becomes his, to all eternity.

Question 62. What do you mean when you speak of "the forgiveness of sins"?

Because of Jesus Christ, God no longer holds my sins against me. Christ alone is my righteousness and my life. Grace alone is the basis on which God has forgiven me in him. Faith alone is the means by which I receive Christ into my heart, and with him the forgiveness that makes me whole.

Question 63. Does forgiveness mean that God excuses sin?

No. God does not cease to be God. Although God is merciful to the sinner, God does not excuse the evil of sin. For to forgive is not to excuse.

Question 64. Does your forgiveness of those who have harmed you depend on their repentance?

No. I am to forgive as I have been forgiven. Just as God's forgiveness of me does not depend on my first confessing and repenting of my sins, so my forgiveness of those who harm me does not depend on their doing so. However, when I forgive the person who has harmed me, I do not deny or excuse the harm that was done.

Question 65. What do you mean when you speak of "the resurrection of the body"?

Because Christ lives, we will live also. Death is not the end of human life. The whole person, body and soul, will be raised from death to eternal life with God.

Question 66. What do you affirm when you speak of "the life everlasting"?

God does not will to be God without us, but instead grants to us creatures — fallen and mortal as we are — eternal life. Communion with Jesus Christ is eternal life itself.

Question 67. Won't heaven be a boring place?

No. Heaven is our true home, a world of love. There we shall at last see face to face what we now only glimpse as through a distant mirror. Our deepest, truest delights in this life are only a dim foreshadowing of the delights that await us in heaven.

II. The Ten Commandments

Question 68. What are the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments give a summary of God's law for our lives. They teach us how to live rightly with God and one another.

Question 69. Why should you obey this law?

Not to win God's love, for God already loves me. Not to earn my salvation, for Christ has earned it for me. Not to avoid being punished, for then I would obey out of fear. With gladness in my heart I should obey God's law out of gratitude, for God has blessed me by it and given it for my well-being.

Question 70. What is the first commandment?

You shall have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7).

Question 71. What do you learn from this commandment?

No loyalty comes before my loyalty to God. I should worship and serve only God, expect all good from God alone, and love, fear and honor God with all my heart.

Question 72. What is the second commandment?

You shall not make for yourself an idol (Ex. 20:4; Deut. 5:8).

Question 73. What do you learn from this commandment?

First, when I treat anything other than God as though it were God, I make it an idol. Second, when I assume that my own interests are more important than anything else, I make them into idols, and in effect I also make an idol of myself.

Question 74. What is the third commandment?

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11).

Question 75. What do you learn from this commandment?

I should use God's name with reverence and awe. God's name is holy and deserves the highest honor from us. It is insulted when used carelessly, as in a curse or a pious cliché.

Question 76. What is the fourth commandment?

Remember the Sabbath Day, and keep it holy (Ex. 20:8; Deut. 5:12).

Question 77. What do you learn from this commandment?

God requires a special day to be set apart so that worship can be at the center of my life. It is right to honor God with thanks and praise, and to hear and receive God's Word.

Question 78. What is the best summary of the first four commandments?

These teach me how to live rightly with God. Jesus summed them up with the commandment he called the first and greatest: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matt. 22:37; Deut. 6:5).

Question 79. What is the fifth commandment?

Honor your father and your mother (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16).

Question 80. What do you learn from this commandment?

Though I owe reverence to God alone, I owe genuine respect to my parents, both my mother and father. God wills me to listen to them, be thankful for the benefits I receive from them, and be considerate of their needs, especially in old age.

Question 81. Are there limits to your obligation to obey them?

Yes. No mere human being is God. Blind obedience is not required, for everything should be tested by loyalty and obedience to God.

Question 82. What is the sixth commandment?

You shall not murder (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17).

Question 83. What do you learn from this commandment?

God forbids anything that harms my neighbor unfairly. Murder or injury can be done not only by direct violence but also by an angry word or a clever plan, and

not only by an individual but also by unjust social institutions. I should honor every human being, including my enemy, as a person made in God's image.

Question 84. What is the seventh commandment?

You shall not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18).

Question 85. What do you learn from this commandment?

God requires fidelity and purity in sexual relations. Since love is God's great gift, God expects me not to corrupt it, or confuse it with momentary desire or the selfish fulfillment of my own pleasures. God forbids all sexual immorality, whether in married or in single life.

Question 86. What is the eighth commandment?

You shall not steal (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19).

Question 87. What do you learn from this commandment?

God forbids all theft and robbery, including schemes, tricks or systems that unjustly take what belongs to someone else. God requires me not to be driven by greed, not to misuse or waste the gifts I have been given, and not to distrust the promise that God will supply my needs.

Question 88. What is the ninth commandment?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20).

Question 89. What do you learn from this commandment?

God forbids me to damage the honor or reputation of my neighbor. I should not say false things against anyone for the sake of money, favor or friendship, for the sake of revenge, or for any other reason. God requires me to speak well of my neighbor when I can, and to view the faults of my neighbor with tolerance when I cannot.

Question 90. Does this commandment forbid racism and other forms of negative stereotyping?

Yes. In forbidding false witness against my neighbor, God forbids me to be prejudiced against people who belong to any vulnerable, different or disfavored social group. Jews, women, homosexuals, racial and ethnic minorities, and national enemies are among those who have suffered terribly from being subjected to the slurs of social prejudice.

Question 91. What is the tenth commandment?

You shall not covet what is your neighbor's (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21).

Question 92. What do you learn from this commandment?

My whole heart should belong to God alone, not to money or the things of this world. "Coveting" means desiring something wrongfully. I should not resent the good fortune or success of my neighbor or allow envy to corrupt my heart.

Question 93. What is the best summary of the last six commandments?

These teach me how to live rightly with my neighbor. Jesus summed them up with a commandment which is like the greatest one about loving God: You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:39; Lev. 19:18).

Question 94. Can you obey these commandments perfectly?

No. Yet there is more grace in God than sin in me. While I must confess my sins to God and resolve not to commit them, I can be confident that God is forgiving, and will give me the grace grow in love and knowledge day by day.

III. The Lord's Prayer

Question 95. What is prayer?

Prayer means calling upon God whose Spirit is always present with us. In prayer we approach God with reverence, confidence and humility. Prayer involves both addressing God in praise, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, and listening for God's word within our hearts. When we adore God, we are filled with wonder, love and praise before God's heavenly glory. When we confess our sins to God, we ask for forgiveness with sorry hearts. When we give thanks to God, we acknowledge God's great goodness in all that has been provided for us. Finally, when we call upon God to hear our requests, we affirm that God is always near to us in times of need and sorrow.

Question 96. What is the purpose of prayer?

Prayer brings us into communion with God. The more our lives are rooted in prayer, the more we sense how wonderful God is in grace, purity, majesty and love. Prayer means offering our lives completely to God, submitting ourselves to God's will, and waiting faithfully for God's grace. Through prayer God frees us from anxiety, equips us for service, and deepens our faith.

Question 97. What prayer serves as our rule or pattern?

Our rule or pattern is found in the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus taught to his disciples:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

These words express everything that we may desire and expect from God.

Question 98. What is meant by addressing God as "Our Father in heaven"?

When we pray to God as "our Father in heaven," we draw near with childlike reverence, and place ourselves securely in God's hands. We express our confidence that God cares for us, and that nothing on earth is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Question 99. What is meant by the first petition, "Hallowed be your name"?

This petition is placed first, because it expresses the goal and purpose of the whole prayer. When we pray for God's name to be "hallowed," we ask that we will know and glorify God as God really is, and that all things will truly come to serve God.

Question 100. What is meant by the second petition, "Your kingdom come"?

We ask God to come and rule among us through faith, love and justice. We pray for both the church and the world, that God will rule in our hearts through faith, in our personal relationships through love, and in our institutional affairs through justice.

Question 101. What is meant by the third petition, "Your will be done, on earth as in heaven"?

Of course, God's will is always done, and will surely come to pass, whether we desire it or not. But the phrase "on earth as in heaven" means that we ask for the grace to do God's will on earth in the way that it is done in heaven — gladly and from the heart. We yield ourselves, in life and in death, to God's will.

Question 102. What is meant by the fourth petition, "Give us today our daily bread"?

We ask God to supply all our needs, for we know that God, who cares for us in every area of our life, has promised to give us temporal as well as spiritual blessings. God commands us to pray each day for all that we need and no more, so that we will learn to rely completely on God.

Question 103. What is meant by the fifth petition, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us"?

We pray that a new and right spirit will be put within us. We ask for the grace to treat others with the same mercy we have received from God. We ask that we will not resent or strike back at those who harm us, but that our hearts will be knit together with the merciful heart of God.

Question 104. What is meant by the final petition, "Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil"?

We ask God to protect us from all that threatens to hurt or destroy us. We pray for the ability to resist sin and evil in our own lives, and for the grace to endure suffering in trust and without bitterness when it is unavoidable. We ask for the grace to believe in the love of God that will finally swallow up all the evil and hatred in the world.

Question 105. What is meant by the closing doxology, "For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever"?

We give God thanks and praise for the kingdom more powerful than all enemies, for the power perfected in the weakness of love, and for the glory that includes our well-being and that of the whole creation, both now and to all eternity.

Question 106. What is meant by the word, "Amen"?

"Amen" means "so be it" or "let it be so." It expresses our complete confidence in the triune God, the God of the covenant with Israel as fulfilled through our Lord Jesus Christ, who makes no promise that will not be kept, and whose mercy endures forever.