

THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE

A Study Guide

by

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Introduction

This II-part Study Guide has been prepared as a companion to *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* (Crown and Covenant, 2022). This modern edition of the Reformed classic by David Dickson and James Durham has been prepared with small groups in mind and can be used as an evangelistic study, an introduction to Reformed theology, a theological refresher for seasoned Christians, or as a supplement for personal devotions.

The Sum was originally written by two pastors for the people in the pew—each chapter containing a Scripture reading, followed by a brief exposition and, in most cases, a personal meditation or prayer for application. Participants in this study will thus need a Bible, *The Sum*, and a pen to note their answers. The study questions are designed to dig deeper into this work, into the Scriptures that it expounds, and into the soul of the participant—calling us to discuss and apply what we have learned.

References to *The Sum* throughout this study guide make use of a three-tiered apparatus (III.A.4, etc.) to help the reader find their way easily around a historic text that might otherwise prove challenging to navigate. The book has four *chapters*, which are given a Roman numeral, like the *Westminster Confession* (I, II, III, IV). The *sections of each chapter* are given a capital letter (A, B, C, D) corresponding to the chapter's theme. Individual *paragraphs in each section* are then given an Arabic numeral (0, 1, 2, 3, 4). Thus, the three figures in the apparatus refer to *chapters*, *sections*, and *paragraphs*. For example (III.A.4) directs the reader to Chapter III (“The Warrants and Motives to Believe”), Section A (“Warrant and Motive A: God’s Hearty Invitation”), and the fourth paragraph of that section. These references are printed at the bottom of each page of *The Sum* for ease of access.

We hope that readers will benefit from this study, not only to increase their knowledge of salvation, but of the Savior who is made known in the Gospel.



STUDY I

Chapter I: The Sum of Saving Knowledge Doctrines A & B

Introduction

1. Please read the Introduction to the book, and make sure you understand the apparatus for navigating the work (pages ix-xviii). Discuss why the book was originally written, and for whom. What do you hope to gain from this study?
2. “The sum of saving knowledge” is a seventeenth-century way of saying, “A summary of what you need to know to be saved.” The opening words of the book say this may be found in just “four doctrines” (I, *Introduction*).
 - a. Can you summarize them in your own words?
 - b. How might such a summary be useful in personal evangelism and discipleship?

DOCTRINE A: Our Woeful Condition by Nature, Through Breaking the Covenant of Works

3. Read I.A.1: *The Nature of God*.
 - a. Make a list of the words the authors use to describe God’s nature and attributes.
 - b. What Scriptures can you think of that reveal God as “three distinct persons in one and the same undivided Godhead?”
 - c. How can God not be “a partaker of the sin of any creature,” yet still “most wisely decree for His own glory whatever comes to pass in time?”
4. Read I.A.2: *Creation and the Covenant of Works*.
 - a. Can you identify the following aspects of the Covenant of Works?
 - i. Its contracting parties?
 - ii. Its terms and conditions?
 - iii. Its rewards?
 - iv. Its curses?
 - b. Is there anything gracious about the Covenant of Works?
5. Read I.A.3: *The Fall and Original Sin*.
 - a. How is the free will of men and angels different before and after the Fall?
 - b. What phrases are used to describe our condition of original sin? Are the authors overstating things? Use Scripture proofs to support your answer.
 - c. How does Romans 5:12–21 show Adam’s breach of the Covenant of Works applying to us as his seed?

DOCTRINE B: *The Remedy Provided in Jesus Christ for the Elect by the Covenant of Grace*

6. Read I.B.1: *Man's Inability and God's Gospel Plan.*
 - a. How does this statement exemplify the Reformation doctrine of Sola Gratia (by grace alone)?

7. Read I.B.2: *The Covenant of Redemption.*
 - a. Can you identify the following aspects of the Covenant of Redemption (sometimes called the *pactum salutis*)?
 - i. Its contracting parties?
 - ii. Its terms and conditions?
 - iii. Its rewards?

 - b. What do the following texts tell us about this covenant? Psalm 40:7–8; John 6:38–39; John 17:4–5; Ephesians 3:11.

 - c. How does the Covenant of Redemption differ from the Covenant of Free Grace and Reconciliation?

8. Read I.B.3: *Christ's Offices.*
 - a. What are Christ's three offices?

 - b. What aspects of salvation does He accomplish for His people in each of them (sometimes called the *Historia Salutis*; The Story of Salvation)?

 - c. What difference should it make to your daily Christian life that Christ is still:
 - i. Persuading you to believe and obey?
 - ii. Interceding continually with the Father, making you and your services acceptable to Him?
 - iii. Feeding and ruling you by His own appointed ordinances, and defending you from your enemies?

9. Review. Consider today's lesson from *The Sum* and take some time to pray:
 - a. Confessing "Our Woeful Condition by Nature, Through Breaking the Covenant of Works" (Doctrine A), and,

 - b. Thanking God for "The Remedy Provided in Jesus Christ for the Elect by the Covenant of Grace" (Doctrine B).

STUDY 2

Chapter I: The Sum of Saving Knowledge Doctrines C & D

Review and Introduction

1. Why was *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* written?
2. In your own words, summarize Doctrines A and B from the previous study.

DOCTRINE C: The Outward Means Appointed to Make the Elect Partakers of This Covenant and to Make All the Rest That Are Called Inexcusable.

3. Read I.C.1: *The Means of Grace*.
 - a. What are the two purposes of the means of grace (or “ordinances”) for believers and unbelievers? Do either surprise you?
 - b. What were the marks of the early church in Acts 2:41–42? According to Dickson, what role does each of these ordinances play in the Christian life?
 - i. The Word of God?
 - ii. The Sacraments?
 - iii. Church Discipline?
 - iv. Prayer?
 - c. Discuss how each of these ordinances have either been over-emphasized or downplayed, both in the history of the church and in the church of today.
 - d. How does the quality of the covenanters make a difference to the benefits they derive from the means of grace?
 - e. What points of practical application can you draw from this paragraph for your own Christian experience?

For Further Study: Westminster Shorter Catechism, 88–107

4. Read I.C.2: *The Twofold Administration of the Covenant of Grace*.
 - a. Review: What is the Covenant of Grace? (See I.B.1–I.B.3)
 - b. How were God’s people in the Old Testament saved?
 - c. If the Covenant of Grace is the same in the Old and New Testaments, why is their way of administration so different?

For Further Study: Westminster Confession Ch.7, Of God’s Covenant with Man.

DOCTRINE D: The Blessings that Are Effectually Conveyed by these Means to the Lord's Elect, or Chosen Ones.

5. Read I.D.1: *How the Spirit uses the Means of Grace to Change our Persons.*
 - a. How do the authors' choice of words in this paragraph exemplify the Reformed doctrines of effectual calling and irresistible grace? What Scriptures teach this?
 - b. What is involved when God regenerates, and why must it come first in the Order of Salvation (sometimes called the *ordo salutis*)? What other words or metaphors does the Bible use to describe this change?
 - c. Do newly-regenerated Christians exercise saving faith and repentance, and do they "persevere in faith and spiritual obedience to the Law of God," or does God do these things for them? Explain.

6. Read I.D.2: *How the Spirit Uses the Means of Grace to Change our State.*
 - a. What twofold imputation makes our justification (and thus our reconciliation and adoption) possible? Where do you find this in the Bible?
 - b. When do justification, reconciliation, and adoption occur in point of time, and why is this important?
 - c. Using the table below, discuss the difference between what the authors call the "inward change of their persons" (I.D.1) and the "change of their state" (I.D.2).

Sum of Saving Knowledge, Doctrine D	
I.D.1 "Inward Change of their Persons" <i>(Transformative dimensions of salvation)</i>	I.D.2 "[Outward] Change of their State" <i>(Forensic dimensions of salvation)</i>
Regeneration	Justification
Saving Faith	Reconciliation
Repentance	Adoption
Sanctification	

7. Read I.D.3: *The Eternal State of Glorification.*
 - a. The authors describe glorification as God "perfect[ing] the holiness and blessedness . . . of [our] souls and bodies." When will this take place in our experience?
 - b. How do the authors describe the present lives of those who will one day inherit heaven or hell, and how might these descriptions challenge you in daily life?

For Further Study: Westminster Shorter Catechism, 29–38

8. Review: Discuss the summary of Chapter I, “The Sum of Saving Knowledge,” contained in the table below:

Chapter I: The Sum of Saving Knowledge					
<i>Aspects of Salvation:</i>	<i>Shorter Catechism cross-refs:</i>	<i>When it happens:</i>	<i>Who does it:</i>	<i>How we define it:</i>	
	Q.12-19	Salvation <i>ordained before history</i>	God the Father <i>elects</i>	Covenant of Redemption Plan of Salvation (<i>Pactum Salutis</i>)	
<p>Doctrine A</p> <p><i>“Our woeful condition by nature through breaking the Covenant of Works.”</i></p> <p>Doctrine B</p> <p><i>“The remedy provided in Jesus Christ for the elect by the Covenant of Grace.”</i></p>	Q.20-28	Salvation <i>accomplished in history</i>	God the Son <i>redeems</i> the elect in offices of Prophet, Priest, and King	Covenant of Grace	Story of Salvation (<i>Historia Salutis</i>)
<p>Doctrine C</p> <p><i>“The means appointed to make them partakers of this Covenant.”</i></p> <p>Doctrine D</p> <p><i>“The blessings effectually conveyed to the elect by these means.”</i></p>	Q.29-38	Salvation <i>applied in your history</i>	God the Holy Spirit <i>effectually applies</i> Christ’s redeeming work to the elect during their earthly life		Order of Salvation (<i>Ordo Salutis</i>)

STUDY 3
Chapter II: The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge
Uses A & B

Review and Introduction

- I. Our first two studies covered Chapter I, which the authors entitled, “The Sum of Saving Knowledge”—or a summary of what you need to know to be saved.
 - a. They summed up this saving knowledge in four doctrines. What were they?
 - i. Doctrine A
 - ii. Doctrine B
 - iii. Doctrine C
 - iv. Doctrine D
 - b. What four ordinances, or means of grace, has Christ given to His Church to apply to her the benefits of His redemptive work?
2. Read II, *Introduction*.
 - a. The “Practical Use of Saving Knowledge” (or “chief general use of Christian doctrine”) follows “The Sum of Saving Knowledge.” Why is it always important to progress from doctrine to practical application? What are the particular dangers of having a “sum of saving knowledge” but not putting it to “practical use?”
3. The author reviews Chapter I by reminding us of the “the sum of the Law” and “the sum of the Gospel,” which the reader is now challenged to make practical use of, “so that he may become a sincere believer in Jesus Christ.”
 - a. Look up Romans 10:5 and Galations 3:10,12. How does Paul summarize the terms of the Law (or Covenant of Works)?
 - b. Look up Romans 10:8–9, 11. How does Paul summarize the terms of the Gospel (or Covenant of Grace)?

PRACTICAL USE A: For Convincing a Man of Sin by the Law

4. Read II.A.0–II.A.1. *The Source of our Sin*. In the next several studies, the authors will take us through John 16:8 phrase by phrase to show us how we may apply the sum of saving knowledge from Chapter I to our own lives. They begin by showing how it “convince a man of sin by the Law,” using the familiar words of Jeremiah 17:9–10.
 - a. Why does man need convincing of sin?
 - b. In your own words, how do the authors say sin has corrupted (i) the mind? (ii) the will and emotions? What two witnesses do they rally in support of their claims?
5. Read II.A.2. *The Judgment Seat of Christ*.
 - a. What do we learn about the judgment-seat of Christ in the following Scriptures? (i) Romans 14:10–12 (ii) 1 Corinthians 4:5 (iii) 2 Corinthians 5:10 (iv) Revelation 20:12 (v) Revelation 22:12.
 - b. Explain why even man’s “original sin, or wicked inclination”—and not just “its actual fruits”—will be brought to a reckoning on Judgment Day.

6. Read II.A.3. *How We Are Convinced of Sin*.
 - a. The authors offer a simple logical argument (a syllogism), exhorting you to talk to yourself and put the doctrine to practical use by being “convinced of sin by the Law.” What two witnesses are summoned against you? Discuss how they leave you inexcusable.
 - b. Remember that the authors are explaining how the Law and its threatenings are intended to convict an unbeliever of sin. To what extent will Judgment Day be different for the believer and the unbeliever? How should the biblical warnings of a coming day of reckoning affect the present life of (i) the believer and (ii) the unbeliever?

PRACTICAL USE B: For Convincing a Man of Righteousness by the Law

7. Read II.B.0–II.B.1. *No Justification by Works of the Law*. Next, the authors show how the sum of saving knowledge should also lead practically to being “convinced of righteousness by the Law,” using Galatians 3:10 as a guide.
 - a. What exactly is righteousness, and how is it connected to justification?
 - b. What prevents man being justified by the Law?
8. Read II.B.2. *Perfect Obedience Impossible*.
 - a. In a previous study, the authors reminded us that the Law (or Covenant of Works) demands perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. What half-measures of obedience do people and many professing churches attempt to become righteous before God?
 - b. How does James 2:10–11 speak to this issue?
9. Read II.B.3. *The Curse of the Law*.
 - a. What do the authors say is involved in God’s curse, and what is the only way to avoid it?
10. Read II.B.4. *How We are Convinced of Righteousness*. The authors again exhort you to talk to yourself, putting the doctrine to practical use by being “convinced of righteousness by the Law”—that is, persuaded *you have no righteousness* by trying to keep the Law perfectly, personally, and perpetually.
 - a. Why is the Covenant of Works so important to the Gospel?
 - b. What place does the Law have in personal evangelism? What might we expect to happen if we preached only the Gospel without the Law?
 - c. Have you come to the place in your life where you have been “convinced of sin and righteousness by the Law?”

STUDY 4
Chapter II: The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge
Uses C & D

Review and Introduction

In the first chapter of *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, Dickson and Durham presented doctrinal teaching, specifically, man's woeful condition under the Law (or Covenant of Works), and his glorious redemption through the Gospel (or Covenant of Grace). In other words, what we need to know to be saved.

In this second chapter of *The Sum*, they are applying this doctrine to their readers under the title, "The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge," which is "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). In other words, to bring us to salvation.

PRACTICAL USE C: For Convincing a Man of Judgment by the Law

1. Read II.C.0–II.C.1. *The Day of Judgment*. Having shown us how God's Law convicts of sin and righteousness (Uses A & B), we now learn how it convicts of judgment.
 - a. What specific characteristics of the Day of Judgment are listed in this paragraph?
 - b. What specific characteristics of the judged are listed in this paragraph?
 - c. What other elements of the Day of Judgment can you list from 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10?
2. Read II.C.2. *Responding to God's Gracious Warning*. Confronting us with this text, the authors once again encourage us to have a talk with ourselves!
 - a. Three times you are urged to say, "the Righteous Judge has forewarned me." What does this tell you about God? What should be your response to this fact? Has God forewarned those who have never heard the Gospel?
 - b. Twice you are urged to say, "I am sure/convicted that this is a just judgment." What stands in the way of people accepting this truth?
 - c. Four times your response to the Gospel is described in terms of obedience. Does the idea of "obeying" the Gospel call make any difference to our evangelism (see e.g. Acts 17:30–31)? Does this confuse Law and Gospel?

PRACTICAL USE D: For Convincing a Man of Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment by the Gospel

3. Read II.D.0–II.D.1. *How the Gospel Convinces us of Sin*. The authors briefly show how not only the Law, but the Gospel convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 - a. Why is "refusing the Covenant of Grace . . . a greater and more dangerous sin than all other sins against the Law"?

4. Read II.D.2. *How the Gospel Convinces us of Righteousness.*
 - a. Using II.D.2, how might you explain the Reformation doctrine of *Sola Fide* (by faith alone) to an enquirer?
5. Read II.D.3. *How the Gospel Convinces us of Judgment.*
 - a. In what sense does the Gospel bring judgment upon the believer? Upon the unbeliever?
6. Read II.D.4–II.D.5. *Responding to the Gospel.* The authors return to “the greatness of the sin of not believing in Christ,” which lies in the greatness of the offer it rejects.
 - a. What great encouragements to believe in Christ are found in the following texts?
 - i. Isaiah 55:3? (II.D.4)
 - ii. Acts 16:31? (II.D.5)
 - iii. John 3:16? (II.D.5)
 - b. “Christ testifies to the fact that no sin against the Law is like this sin” (II.D.5). As well as the greatness of the Gospel that is rejected, discuss the additional reasons for this sin’s particular gravity from the following texts (II.D.5):
 - i. Jonah 2:8–9
 - ii. 1 John 5:10–11
 - iii. John 15:22
 - c. How does this relate to the unforgivable sin in Matthew 12:31–32?
7. Summary: To grasp this section of *The Sum*, review the table below, line by line.

The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge		
John 16:8	<i>...By the Law</i> (or Covenant of Works)	<i>...By the Gospel</i> (or Covenant of Grace)
A. “To Convince of Sin...”	The Law exposes our sinful nature and deeds [Use A]	The Gospel carries greater penalties for rejection than the Law [Use D]
B. “To Convince of Righteousness...”	The Law exposes our lack of original and personal righteousness [Use B]	The Gospel shows us that justification is only by Christ’s righteousness [Use D]
C. “To Convince of Judgment...”	The Law forewarns of just judgment upon us for both of the above [Use C]	The Gospel brings either judgment upon indwelling sin in the believer or judgment on the one refusing Christ [Use D]

- a. What responsibilities lie upon us as those familiar with the Law?
- b. What responsibilities lie upon us as those familiar with the Gospel?
- c. What difference should this knowledge make in your daily life?

STUDY 5

Chapter II: The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge

Uses E & F

Review and Introduction

The first chapter of Dickson and Durham’s book (also entitled “The Sum of Saving Knowledge”) was doctrinal: a summary of what you need to know to be saved. This second chapter (entitled “The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge”) deals with the application of that doctrine—to actually be saved by it! In the words of John 16:18, God wants us to be “convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment” by both the Law and the Gospel. Having built this case in Practical Uses A–D, the authors now bring us in Practical Uses E and F to the crisis point where the reader is urged to say from the heart, “I do heartily embrace Your offer!” (II.E.3). This done, the chapter concludes with a pastoral effort to clear away several obstacles to the weak and faltering first steps of new faith.

PRACTICAL USE E: For Convincing a Man that Righteousness Is to be Had Only by Faith in Jesus Christ

1. Read II.E.1. *Righteousness by Faith.*
 - a. What teaching do the texts cited in this paragraph all have in common?
 - b. What are the respective judgments a person will face:
 - i. “if he embraces this righteousness”?
 - ii. “if [he] will not embrace this righteousness”?
2. Read II.E.2. *Being Convinced of Righteousness by Faith.*
 - a. Once again, we’re urged to talk to ourselves and see the reasonableness and truth of the argument before embracing it. This thought process is summarized in the words, “Whatever is enough to convince all the elect in the world . . . will be enough to convince me also! And whatever the Spirit has said in these Scriptures . . . will serve to convince me also.” What four things must we be convinced of?
3. Read II.E.3. *A Prayer for Salvation.*
 - a. Having summarized the knowledge of salvation in *The Sum*, and convinced the reader of its Practical Use— i.e., to actually save, the authors finally urge the reader to pray for salvation: “And that is how a man may be made a sincere believer in Christ.” What stands out to you about the content of this prayer? Is this prayer (or one similar) something that you have prayed personally?

PRACTICAL USE F: For Strengthening the Man’s Faith Who Has Agreed to the Covenant of Grace.

4. Read II.F.1. *Why True Believers Struggle with Doubt.*
 - a. What specific concern of the believer does *The Sum* address under this last section, and how does this problem arise?
5. Read II.F.2. *A Study of 2 Peter 1:10.*
 - a. In your own words, summarize the four points drawn from this verse to “lay solid foundations of faith.” Which do you find most helpful and why?

6. Read II.F.3. *A Study of Romans 8:1–4*.
 - a. In your own words, summarize the first three points drawn from this passage, which help the believer attain assurance of salvation. Which do you find most helpful and why?
 - b. The Covenant of Redemption is called “the fountain and primary grounds [of] our freedom from the curse of the Law.” (For review, see I.B.2).
 - i. Who are the parties of this covenant?
 - ii. What do they covenant together to do?
 - iii. Based on their study of Romans 8:1–4, the authors assert that this doctrine contains four branches. Try to summarize them in your own words. Discuss how these together might contribute to a growing personal assurance of your salvation.

STUDY 6

Chapter III: The Warrants and Motives to Believe Warrant and Motive A

Review and Introduction

The first chapter of Dickson and Durham’s book (also entitled “The Sum of Saving Knowledge”) was doctrinal: a summary of what you need to know to be saved. The second chapter (entitled “The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge”) deals with the application of that doctrine—to actually be saved by it! In this third chapter (entitled “The Warrants and Motives to Believe”), our authors’ goal is to build “our confidence upon this solid foundation”—that is, to strengthen weak believers by reminding them of the sure grounds (“warrants”) upon which they trusted in Jesus Christ. In four Bible studies, they explore four distinct motives for saving faith: (A) God’s hearty invitation, (B) God’s earnest desire to be reconciled to us, (C) God’s command that all should believe, and (D) the assurance of eternal life that comes by believing the Gospel promise.

WARRANT AND MOTIVE A: *God’s Hearty Invitation*

1. Read III, *Introduction*—III.A.2. *The Free Offer of the Gospel*.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q & A 31

Q. What is effectual calling? A. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel.”

- a. What is the scope of the free offer of the Gospel?
 - b. Besides Isaiah 55:1–5, what other Scriptures illustrate the scope of God’s offer?
 - c. Should the doctrine of election limit the scope of the Gospel offer? Why or why not?
 - d. If Christ’s atonement is *limited* to the elect only, does that make a *universal* free offer insincere? Discuss.
 - e. Read Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 31. Why is a distinction between the *external* call of the Gospel (the “free offer”) and the *effectual* call of the Holy Spirit important to this discussion?
2. Read III.A.3–III.A.6. *Hindrances and Helps to Accept the Gospel Offer*.
 - a. What may prevent someone from responding to this Gospel offer, and what inducements are given for them to respond anyway?
 - b. What examples of marketplace language do you find in III.D.4? Is this an appropriate way to speak of coming to faith in Christ? Why or why not?
 3. Read III.A.7. *The Covenant of Grace as a Covenant of Perpetual Reconciliation and Peace*.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q & A 90

Q: *How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.*

- a. Practically speaking, how might we best incline our ears to the preaching of the Gospel? (See Shorter Catechism Q & A 90).
 - b. How do the authors describe the Covenant of Grace? How might this build our confidence as Christians?
 - c. We are reminded that the “substance of this Covenant” is found in what Isaiah calls the “sure mercies of David.” What does this mean?
4. Read III.A.8. *The Gift of Christ*. Dickson and Durham return to their opening purpose: To confirm, assure, persuade us that our salvation is real.
- a. How does this section chart Christ’s witness to the people of the certainty of the Covenant of Grace throughout the different stages of Redemptive History (sometimes called the *historia salutis*)?
 - b. How does this section then chart Christ’s witness to the certainty of the Covenant of Grace in your own personal history of salvation (sometimes called the *ordo salutis*)?
 - c. How is Christ a witness to the certainty of the Covenant of Grace in the Visible Church?
5. Read III.A.9. *Application*.
- a. In your own words, what is the authors’ counsel to the weak believer to strengthen his faith?

STUDY 7
Chapter III: The Warrants and Motives to Believe
Warrant and Motive B

Review and Introduction

The authors of *The Sum* continue to remind us of the “warrants and motives to believe” in order to “let the weak believer strengthen his faith” (III.B.10). In our last study, we explored the first of these: “God’s hearty invitation,” in a study of Isaiah 55:1–5. The second warrant is God’s attitude and disposition toward the unbeliever that undergirds the free offer of the Gospel, namely “God’s earnest request to be reconciled” to us, which is drawn from a study of 2 Corinthians 5:19–21.

WARRANT AND MOTIVE B: God’s Earnest Request to be Reconciled

- I. Read III.B.0–III.B.3. *God’s Genuine Desire to Save.*
 - a. How do the authors interpret the word *world* (III.B.1 and III.B.2), and why? Do you agree or disagree with their definition?
 - b. How do we reconcile God’s earnest request to be reconciled with His decree that not all will in fact be saved?
 - c. How might you interpret the following texts in light of this discussion?
 - i. Matthew 22:14
 - ii. I Timothy 2:3–4
 - iii. Acts 13:48
 - iv. Acts 18:9–11
 - d. How were Old Testament believers reconciled to God? (III.B.3)
2. Read III.B.4. *The Goal and Scope of the Gospel.*
 - a. Paul calls the Gospel “the word of reconciliation.” In your own words, summarize the threefold goal and scope of the Gospel in this paragraph.
3. Read III.B.5–III.B.6. *God’s Commissioned Ambassadors.*

Westminster Larger Catechism Q & A 158

Q. *By whom is the word of God to be preached? A.* *The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.*

Westminster Larger Catechism Q & A 159

Q. *How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto? A.* *They that are called to labor in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.*

- a. Should evangelizing the lost be restricted to “such as God calls to His ministry . . . with a commission for this work?” Support your answer with Scripture.
 - b. What specific kind of ministry do Dickson and Durham say applies only to commissioned ambassadors? What Scriptures support his position? Compare *Westminster Larger Catechism* 158–159.
4. Read III.B.7–III.B.8. *Heeding God’s Ambassadors*.
- a. What do the authors say about the tone and the content of the ambassador’s ministry (III.B.7)?
 - b. Explain what they regard as a “wonder of wonders” (III.B.8).
5. Read III.B.9. *The Roots of Reconciliation: The Covenant of Redemption*. *The Sum* returns again to the covenant origins and foundations of our salvation to encourage the doubting believer. The cause of the Covenant of Reconciliation (i.e. Covenant of Grace) is the eternal Covenant of Redemption. How might this eternal, inter-Trinitarian covenant minister to:
- a. A Christian who struggles with a lack of assurance?
 - b. A Christian struggling with besetting sins?
 - c. A Christian who relates to God on the basis of their religious performances?
6. Read III.B.10. *Application*. This section closes with another simple logical argument, designed to reassure the weak believer that the warrant to believe found in 2 Corinthians 5:19–21 is a solid ground for assurance. Follow the logical argument below to discover the authors’ formula for assurance:
- a. First proposition:
 - b. Second proposition:
 - c. Conclusion:

STUDY 8

Chapter III: The Warrants and Motives to Believe Warrant and Motive C

Review and Introduction

In this third chapter of *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, the authors particularly have in mind weak believers (III.C.6), that is, Christians who are questioning where they stand with God. Having prayed to be brought into the Covenant of Grace (see II.E.3), how can we really be sure that this has actually happened? So far, the approach Pastors Dickson and Durham have taken is to remind such believers of the Bible's genuine "warrants and motives to believe." If God has indeed issued a "hearty invitation" to us (Warrant A), has an "earnest desire to be reconciled" to us (Warrant B), and if we have responded to both in faith, then we need not doubt God's intentions, but can be confident that we are safe and secure in Christ. So, having thus reminded us of the "wooing" aspects of the Gospel invitation, they now come to the complementary aspect of the Gospel command, in a study of I John 3:23.

WARRANT AND MOTIVE C: *God's Command that All Should Believe*

- I. Read III.C.0–III.C.1. *God's Command to Believe.*
 - a. How can we reconcile God's hearty invitation and earnest desire to be reconciled (in Warrants A and B) with His "stern and momentous command . . . charging all hearers of the Gospel" to believe in Him?
 - b. How might that play out in (a) preaching the Gospel from the pulpit? (b) our personal evangelism?
 - c. What might be the consequences of an unbalanced emphasis on either the hearty invitation and humble and loving request of God on the one hand, or the stern and momentous command of God on the other? Have you ever encountered specific examples of either?
2. Read III.C.2. *The Seriousness of the Gospel Command.*
 - a. What is the difference between a commandment of the Law and the commandment of the Gospel? Why is breaking the latter far more serious (see Hebrews 10:28–31)?
 - b. What is the connection with Matthew 12:31–32 and Hebrews 6:4–8?
3. Read III.C.3. *How to Receive the Gospel Command.* As the Gospel comes to believers and unbelievers alike, all are called to "the duty of lively faith in Christ." What specific counsel do the authors provide to each of the following kinds of people? Which can you most identify with personally?
 - a. The weak believer.
 - b. The believer inclined to desperation.
 - c. The strong believer.
 - d. The most impenitent, profane, and wicked person.

4. Read III.C.4. *Building your Salvation on Solid Ground.*
 - a. In this paragraph, the authors hold up Jesus as the only solid ground of salvation. What specific examples do they give of:
 - i. His names/titles?
 - ii. His offices?
 - iii. His accomplishments?
 - b. Why do you think the authors prioritize the objective person and work of Christ as a solid ground of assurance more than our own subjective spiritual experience? Which have you found to be so?
5. Read III.C.5. *A Life Consistent with the Gospel Command.*
 - a. What have we been freed from and freed to?
 - b. Where do we find help to keep this new obligation and new command?
 - c. What do the following verses say about the person who is saved by faith in Jesus?
 - i. Romans 6:5–6, 11–13.
 - ii. Romans 8:1, 4–5, 29.
 - iii. Titus 2:14.
 - d. How does 1 John 3:23 bind the Christian to keep both tables of the Ten Commandments? How is this different from legalism?
6. Read III.C.6. *Application.* The authors conclude with another piece of deductive reasoning, by which “the weak believer [may] strengthen himself.” Complete their logical argument below and discuss the strengths and/or weaknesses of their approach to counseling the struggling believer.
 - a. First proposition:
 - b. Second proposition:
 - c. Conclusion:

Study 9
Chapter III: The Warrants and Motives to Believe
Warrant and Motive D

Review and Introduction

The authors of *The Sum* now wrap up the third chapter of their book, in which they have sought to strengthen the faith of weak believers (III.D.6), who question their standing with God. By reminding us of the Bible’s genuine “warrants and motives to believe,” we have been exhorted to find confidence in the sure promises of the Gospel. In a study of Jesus’ words in John 3:35–36, our author concludes this theme by again showing that “great assurance of life is given” by God to Christians (III.D.o).

WARRANT AND MOTIVE D: *The Believer’s Assurance of Salvation*

- I. Read III.D.o–III.D.I. *The Father’s Delight in the Son*.
 - a. Make a list of all the Scriptures you can think of that express the Father’s love for His Son.
 - b. What reasons (if any) are given for this love in these texts?
 - c. What reasons does *The Sum* give for this love (III.D.I)?
 - d. What fruits of the Father’s love for His Son come to be bestowed on you as a believer (III.D.I)?
2. Read III.D.2. *Christ Equipped to Redeem His People*.
 - a. Make a list of all the Scriptures you can think of that show Christ has received all authority in heaven and earth.
 - b. If God the Son already possesses all authority as God (His essential kingship), why do the authors stress that all authority is also given to Him in His capacity as Mediator (His mediatorial kingship)?
3. Read III.D.3. *Six Guarantees of Eternal Life*. List the six grounds of assurance in this paragraph and discuss to what extent you personally find them a source of assurance of salvation.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.

4. Read III.D.4–III.D.5. *The Negative Warrant to Believe: Fear of Judgment*.
 - a. Explain what the authors mean by “burdened twice with the wrath of God” and “double wrath” (III.D.5). How might this motivate you to evangelize (1) the world, and (2) covenant children?
 - b. To what extent should the fear of God’s wrath play a role in drawing a soul to Christ? To what extent did it play a role in your conversion? To what extent should you use it in personal evangelism?
5. Read III.D.6. *Application*. The authors conclude this chapter of *The Sum* with yet another exhortation to the weak believer to strengthen his faith by what he’s just read. Apply the teaching to your own heart by completing the logical argument below:
 - a. First proposition:
 - b. Second proposition:
 - c. Conclusion:

STUDY 10

Chapter IV: The Evidences of True Faith

Evidences A & B

Review and Introduction

We have come to the final chapter of the book. Time to review!

In chapter 1, “The Sum of Saving Knowledge,” the authors laid the doctrinal foundations for faith by summarizing the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, especially its Covenant Theology and Doctrine of Salvation.

In chapter 2, “The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge,” this doctrine was applied to us by exhorting us to put that “saving knowledge” to “practical use,” and actually be saved by it: repenting of our sins and trusting Christ as personal Savior and Lord.

In chapter 3, “The Warrants and Motives to Believe,” believers were reminded of the genuineness of the free Gospel promises and commands, which, having now believed and received, provide the objective grounds for assurance of salvation.

In chapter 4, “The Evidences of True Faith,” we find four instructions on how to live holy lives as the subjective grounds for assurance of salvation: Read IV, *Introduction*.

EVIDENCE A: The Christian’s Obligation to Keep the Law

- I. Read IV.A.0–IV.A.3. *The Moral Law is for Christians.*
 - a. What is the purpose of the Christian’s keeping of the Moral Law?
 - b. What is the inducement to do so?
 - c. What is the rule for doing so, and why do you think *The Sum* stresses that there is no other rule?
 - d. Why do you think the Christian’s obedience is called new obedience? How would you describe the old obedience you offered to God’s Law before conversion?
2. Read IV.A.4–IV.A.7. *The Law as a Rule of Life for the Christian.*
 - a. Why do many people assume that the doctrine of grace will lead to lawlessness (antinomianism)? How would you respond to this argument? (See Romans 6:1–2, 15–16; Ephesians 2:8–10).
 - b. Discuss the assertion that “the purpose of His coming” (IV.A.4) and “the purpose of the Gospel and Covenant of Grace” (IV.A.5) is that we might keep the Law.
 - c. Why will the Law of God and its obligation last to the world’s end?
3. Read IV.A.8–IV.A.9. *The Christian’s Obedience and Righteousness.*
 - a. What impact does obedience or disobedience to the Law have on our relationship to God? To Church membership? (IV.A.8)

- b. Compare and contrast the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees with the righteousness of the true believer (IV.A.9). Where does the Christian's righteousness lie, and where might he be tempted to find it instead?

EVIDENCE B: The Christian's Obligation to Practice Godliness

4. Read IV.B.0–IV.B.1. *The Graces that Prove Saving Faith*. Divide into pairs. Each pair take one of the “seven sister graces” that Peter lists in 2 Peter 1:5–8 and using the authors' commentary as a guide:
 - a. Define the term.
 - b. Suggest what makes it difficult.
 - c. Give one practical way in which you can “grow in the daily exercise” of it.
 - d. Share your findings with the whole group.
5. Read IV.B.2–IV.B.3. *Growing in Grace*.
 - a. *The Sum* urges its readers to be “doing their best as they are able” to grow in these graces. What do you find stands in the way of this goal, and what incentives do the writers give you to press on in your Christian growth?

STUDY II
Chapter IV: The Evidences of True Faith
Evidences C & D

Review and Introduction

In this final chapter of their book, Pastors Dickson and Durham complete their discussion of the evidences for true faith in a believer. Having shown us the obligation to keep the Law and practice godliness (Evidences A & B), they close by showing us exactly how to do so (Evidence C) and the importance of maintaining close communion with Christ (Evidence D).

EVIDENCE C: Obedience to the Law is through Faith in Christ

- I. Read IV.C.0–IV.C.7. *Love that Works*.
 - a. What is “the only right channel of good works” (IV.C.1)? What lesser motivations to keep the Law are common among believers and what makes them inadequate?
 - b. What practical steps would you suggest to help ensure that your obedience flows from love?
 - c. Why should pastors preach the Law as well as the Gospel (IV.C.3)? What happens when they don’t (IV.C.5)?
 - d. What is the conscience, and why does it need quieting (IV.C.4)? Why does *The Sum* say, “no man can set himself in love to obey the Law” without a quiet conscience?
 - e. How is the conscience quieted? (See Hebrews 10:19–23 and IV.C.7)
 - f. Discuss some ways you might learn to hate sin more (IV.C.6).

EVIDENCE D: The Necessity of Communion with Christ

2. Read IV.D.0–IV.D.3. *Mutual Inhabitation*.
 - a. Explain how the metaphor of the vine describes the believer’s union with Christ (IV.D.1).
 - b. Discuss how the Christian inhabits Christ and how Christ inhabits the Christian (IV.D.2).
 - c. Why is this mutual inhabitation so necessary in the Christian life (IV.D.3)?
3. Read IV.D.4. *The Fruits of Mutual Inhabitation*.
 - a. Where does abiding in Christ begin?
 - b. What do the authors mean when they say you are to be “employing . . . Christ?”
 - c. How might you express “a contentedness with His sufficiency” in the

following areas, and what might tempt you away from such a contentment?

- i. Your daily callings? (See Hebrews 13:5–6)
 - ii. Your sufferings? (See 2 Corinthians 12:8–9)
 - iii. Your struggles with depression? (See 1 Peter 5:6–7)
 - iv. Your decision-making? (See Proverbs 16:1–3)
 - v. Your parenting? (See 1 Chronicles 28:9–10)
 - vi. Your aging? (See Psalm 71:18–19)
- d. The authors tell us that abiding in Christ involves fixedness, contentment, adherence, constant avowing, and obeying. Discuss to what extent abiding in Christ is a passive thing or an active thing.
4. Read IV.D.5–IV.D.7. *Application.* *The Sum* ends with exhortations to three different kinds of readers in the form of the authors’ customary logical arguments:
- a. The “watchful believer who wants to strengthen himself in faith and obedience.” How might such a person gain the evidence of true faith (IV.D.5)?
 - b. The “sleepy and sluggish believer.” What should this person do, and how should he do it (IV.D.6)?
 - c. The “person who does not make earnest use of Christ for remission of sin.” What should this person do, and how should he do it (IV.D.7)?
5. Closing Reflections. Share with the group some specific ways that your study of *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* has:
- a. Helped you grow in your appreciation of the Gospel.
 - b. Convicted you of sin.
 - c. Increased your love for God.
 - d. Strengthened your assurance of salvation.
 - e. Challenged you to personal growth in grace.
 - f. Deepened your understanding of Reformed Theology.