



Thoughts from the Bible and Books Devotions from The Heidelberg Catechism

University Reformed Church

4930 S. Hagadorn Rd., E. Lansing, MI 48823 - 517.351.6810

Lord's Day 52 - December 28, 2008

127 **Q.** *What does the sixth request mean?*

A. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one* means, By ourselves we are too weak to hold our own even for a moment. And our sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and our own flesh—never stop attacking us. And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong with the strength of your Holy Spirit, so that we may not go down to defeat in this spiritual struggle, but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory.

128 **Q.** *What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?*

A. *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever* means, We have made all these requests of you because, as our all-powerful king, you not only want to, but are able to give us all that is good; and because your holy name, and not we ourselves, should receive all the praise, forever.

129 **Q.** *What does that little word “Amen” express?*

A. *Amen* means, This is sure to be! It is even more sure that God listens to my prayer, than that I really desire what I pray for.

The sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer reminds us that life is a spiritual struggle. It is the measure of our carelessness that we pray the sixth request so infrequently. (In fact, it's not a bad idea to pray the Lord's Prayer every day. At the very least, it would be good for our spiritual lives to very often make the substance of these requests are personal requests.) Too many of us face the day giving little thought to our enemies. If we were in a physical war, we would scout out our enemies' position each morning and plan carefully for possible attacks and counter-attacks. But when it comes to spiritual battle, we suffer from gross overconfidence. Our sworn enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil—are not at rest, so neither should we. This very day we will face temptations to cave to peer pressure, temptations to follow that alluring link on the internet, temptations to bad mouth our parents, temptations to make shipwreck of the faith. How earnestly we ought to pray for protection against our thoughts, the world's lies, and the devil's stratagems. There is no cruise control for Christianity. Each day is a fight. Daily we must look for the Lord's mercy that we might keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21).

The reason we pray with such vigor is for our own survival and for the glory of the Lord. I often think of what a disaster for the Lord's glory I could become. I don't think this with morbid fear, but with a healthy sense of my own sinfulness and my desperate need for God's daily grace. I want my life to make God look precious, powerful, and pure, not weak, duplicitous, and insignificant. This is where the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer is so helpful. Granted, the last line of the Lord's Prayer, because of poor manuscript evidence, is not found in newer English translations. But we can still say the line with confidence, knowing it is an allusion to David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:11. The end of the Lord's Prayer reminds us that God is an all-powerful King able to help us, and all-glorious King who deserves our praise forever.

The last Q/A is one of my absolute favorites. The Catechism explains that “Amen” is not short for “prayer over” but means “Truly!”, “Verily!” or “This is sure to be!” I knew a guy in college who, in an act of quasi-rebellion, decided to end all his prayers with “Groovy” instead of “Amen.” Thankfully most people found “groovy” lacking in neces-

sary gravitas, so the world hasn't switched over yet. Even more importantly, I love what the Catechism says about the promise we have in "Amen." "It is even more sure that God listens to my prayer, than that I really desire what I pray for." Think of that next time you "Amen" your prayer. God is so gracious that he is more willing to hear our requests than we are sure that we actually want what we pray for. How liberating! Go ahead and pray to God better than you feel and you may just find that in his mercy you end up better than you deserve.

The End of the Road

Well, here we are, one year and 75,000 words later, at Lord's Day 52. The astute observer will remember that I missed seven Lord's Days along the way, which I will make up sometime in the next few months. Besides your desire to fill up your notebooks with the remaining seven pages, I have motivation to fill in the gaps because I'm pretty sure these devotionals will eventually be published as a book (although it may not be for another year or more). But please be patient as you wait with baited breath for the missing Lord's Days. I will get to them in time, but my spring semester is very full and in the short term I need a break.

When I set out to write a weekly devotional-commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism I wondered if I would regret the decision. A year later I can yell you I most definitely do not. Admittedly, I am looking forward to having another two hours back in my schedule. But even though the discipline of writing 1500 words each week was demanding at times, it was worth it. The weekly practice of writing an essay was good. Learning more about the Catechism was great. Coming face to face with the gospel over and over again was the best.

Over the past two years I feel like the Lord has done a work in my heart to reinvigorate my love for the gospel and recommit myself to the centrality of the gospel in my ministry. His heart work has come through two means. First, in writing a book on the emergent church I came to see that the main problem with emergents is that they do not understand the gospel. Too many have traded the gospel of God's grace through Christ's death and resurrection into a nebulous message of spiritual uplift, or worse, into a summons to do more for God. Seeing

this gospel-rewrite in scores of books and hearing it dozens of times has alerted me to the central importance of getting the good news right and getting it out.

Second, God has used the Heidelberg Catechism to ignite a fresh zeal for the gospel. The Catechism, above all else, is relentlessly focused on the comfort God provides us through the cross of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The three pronged theme of guilt, grace, and gratitude sprinkles a gospel flavor throughout the 52 Lord's Days. The truth found in the Heidelberg Catechism is not academic or complex. Rather, its truth is both simple and profound, which makes for the best kind of profundity and the best kind of simplicity. Children and new believers can study the Heidelberg Catechism with great profit, as can senior saints and sincere scholars. All who wish for gospel tidings can find some here. All who want to meet the Savior can find him here. All who need rest for their sin-sick souls will find it here.

Creedal comforts from a 450 year old catechism—how very strange. There must be some good news here that never gets old.

written by Kevin DeYoung