



## Thoughts from the Bible and Books Devotions from The Heidelberg Catechism

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*Lord's Day 50* - December 14, 2008

125 **Q.** *What does the fourth request mean?*

**A.** *Give us today our daily bread* means, do take care of all our physical needs so that we come to know that you are the only source of everything good, and that neither our work and worry nor your gifts can do us any good without your blessings. And so help us to give up our trust in creatures and to put trust in your alone.

Lord's Day 125 is brief, and brief was my time this week to write on it, so I will make my comments brief as well. Let me make three observations.

First, I can't decide if this is the request we pray the most or pray the least. On the one hand, it seems that we pray this prayer more than any other. It's easy for us to think of our needs (and wants!) and ask God to give us things. But on the other hand, how often do we really pray for our daily bread. Sure, we pray when tragedies strike or peculiar difficulties show us our need of God. But day after day, we neglect this most basic request. Almost all of us assume there will be food. We assume we will be taken care of. For most of our lives, we even assume we will be healthy. We see the need for the kingdom, our need for forgiveness, even the need for God's name to be hallowed. But simply don't think our daily bread demands our daily attention.

This leads to my second observation. Our gratitude to God for his daily provision should be passionate and frequent because his grace to us has been so mind-boggling. Living in America, we are the recipients of so much common grace. Because of advances in agriculture and technology we do not worry about the lack of rain in July. Sure, the farmers worry what it will do to their crops, but we don't seriously worry that a dry summer will mean starvation for us in the winter. We have grocery stores filled with food all year long; all we have to do is take an hour and go fill up our carts. The hardest parts of getting our daily bread are the choices we must make among so many options and the pounds we must shed afterward. Granted, even in America there are millions who go hungry and plenty of families who do worry about next week's groceries. I'm not suggesting we have food issues taken

care of in this country, and certainly not in other parts of the world. For a myriad of reasons hunger and malnutrition continue to be one of the most pressing problems on the planet. All the more reason we have to give abundant thanks to God for giving almost all of us our daily bread day after ungrateful day.

Third, I'm struck by the line in the Catechism that our work, our worry and our gifts cannot do any good without God's blessings. The great danger we have, living in such an affluent society, is the evil of self-reliance. How tempted we are to think that we are in control, that we are gifted enough, hard working enough, and rich enough to tackle any problem. But the reality is God can frustrate the best laid plans of mice and men. Or to put it more biblically, unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain (Psalm 127:1).

This is why prayer is so essential for the Christians. The simple act of getting on our knees (or faces or feet or whatever) for 5 or 50 minutes every day is the surest sign of our humility and dependence on God. There may be many reasons for our prayerlessness—time management, busyness, lack of concentration—but most fundamentally, we ask not because we think we need not. Deep down we feel secure when we have money in the bank, a healthy report from the doctor, and powerful people on our side. We do not trust in God alone. Prayerlessness is an expression of our meager confidence in God's ability to provide and of our strong confidence in our ability to take care of ourselves without God's help. The opposite of this attitude? "Give us this day our daily bread."

- written by Kevin DeYoung