

# The Heidelberg Catechism



**WESTSIDE**  
christian church

## **Outline:**

- Introduction (Q & A 1-2)
- Part I: Human Misery (Q & A 3-11)
- Part II: Deliverance (Q & A 12-85)
  - God the Father (Q & A 26-28)
  - God the Son (Q & A 29-52)
  - God the Holy Spirit (Q & A 53-64)
  - The Sacraments (Q & A 65-85)
  - Baptism (Q & A 69-74)
  - The Lord's Supper (Q & A 75-85)
- Part III: Gratitude (Q & A 86-129)
  - The Ten Commandments (Q & A 92-115)
  - Prayer (Q & A 116-129)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **LORD'S DAY 1**

Question 1: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Answer: That I am not my own, but belong - body and soul, in life and in death - to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to Him, Christ, by His Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

Question 2: What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

Answer: Three things: first, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

## **PART I: HUMAN MISERY**

### **LORD'S DAY 2**

Question 3: How do you come to know your misery?

Answer: The law of God tells me.

Question 4: What does God's law require of us?

Answer: Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22 - Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Question 5: Can you live up to all this perfectly?

Answer: No. I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbour.

### LORD'S DAY 3

Question 6: Did God create people so wicked and perverse?

Answer: No. God created them good and in His own image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that they might truly know God their creator, love Him with all their heart, and live with Him in eternal happiness for His praise and glory.

Question 7: Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

Answer: From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise. This fall has so poisoned our nature that we are born sinners - corrupt from conception on.

Question 8: But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?

Answer: Yes, unless we are born again, by the Spirit of God.

### LORD'S DAY 4

Question 9: But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in His law what we are unable to do?

Answer: No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law. They, however, tempted by the devil, in reckless disobedience robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

Question 10: Will God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

Answer: Certainly not. He is terribly angry about the sin we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit. As a just judge He punishes them now and in eternity. He has declared: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Question 11: But isn't God also merciful?

Answer: God is certainly merciful, but He is also just. His justice demands that sin, committed against His supreme majesty, be punished with the supreme penalty - eternal punishment of body and soul.

## **PART II: DELIVERANCE**

### LORD'S DAY 5

Question 12: According to God's righteous judgement we deserve punishment both in this world and forever after: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favour?

Answer: God requires that His justice be satisfied. Therefore the claims of His justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or another.

Question 13: Can we pay this debt ourselves?

Answer: Certainly not. Actually, we increase our guilt every day.

Question 14: Can another creature - any at all - pay this debt for us?

Answer: No. To begin with, God will not punish another creature for what a human is guilty of. Besides, no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal anger against sin and release others from it.

Question 15: What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

Answer: One who is truly human and truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.

## LORD'S DAY 6

Question 16: Why must He be truly human and truly righteous?

Answer: God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for its sin; but a sinner could never pay for others.

Question 17: Why must He also be true God?

Answer: So that, by the power of His divinity, He might bear the weight of God's anger in His humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

Question 18: And who is this mediator - true God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous?

Answer: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given us to set us completely free and to make us right with God.

Question 19: How do you come to know this?

Answer: The holy gospel tells me. God Himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise; later, He proclaimed it by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and portrayed it by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; finally, He fulfilled it through His own dear Son.

## LORD'S DAY 7

Question 20: Are all saved through Christ just as all were lost through Adam?

Answer: No. Only those are saved who by true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all His blessings.

Question 21: What is true faith?

Answer: True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in His Word is true; it is also a deep rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation.

Question 22: What then must a Christian believe?

Answer: Everything God promises us in the gospel. That gospel is summarised for us in the articles of our Christian faith - a creed beyond doubt, and confessed throughout the world.

Question 23: What are these articles?

Answer: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. 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.

## LORD'S DAY 8

Question 24: How are these articles divided?

Answer: Into three parts: God the Father and our creation; God the Son and our deliverance; God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

Question 25: Since there is but one God, why do you speak of three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Answer: Because that is how God has revealed Himself in His Word: these three distinct persons are one, true, eternal God.

### **God the Father**

#### **LORD'S DAY 9**

Question 26: What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

Answer: That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by His eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ His Son. I trust Him so much that I do not doubt He will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and He will turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this sad world. He is able to do this because He is almighty God; He desires to do this because He is a faithful Father.

#### **LORD'S DAY 10**

Question 27: What do you understand by the providence of God?

Answer: Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which He upholds, as with His hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty - all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from His fatherly hand.

Question 28: How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?

Answer: We can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that nothing will separate us from His love. All creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they can neither move nor be moved.

### **God the Son**

#### **LORD'S DAY 11**

Question 29: Why is the Son of God called "Jesus", meaning "saviour"?

Answer: Because He saves us from our sins. Salvation cannot be found in anyone else; it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere.

Question 30: Do those who look for their salvation and security in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only saviour Jesus?

Answer: No. Although they boast of being His, by their deeds they deny the only Saviour and deliverer, Jesus. Either Jesus is not a perfect saviour, or those who in true faith accept this saviour have in Him all they need for their salvation.

#### **LORD'S DAY 12**

Question 31: Why is He called "Christ", meaning "anointed"?

Answer: Because He has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance; our only high priest who has set us free by the one sacrifice of His body, and

who continually pleads our cause with the Father; and our eternal king who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom He has won for us.

Question 32: But why are you called a Christian?

Answer: Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so I share in His anointing. I am anointed to confess His name, to present myself to Him as a living sacrifice of thanks, to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterwards to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity.

#### LORD'S DAY 13

Question 33: Why is He called God's "only Son" when we also are God's children?

Answer: Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God. We, however, are adopted children of God - adopted by grace through Christ.

Question 34: Why do you call Him "our Lord"?

Answer: Because - not with gold or silver, but with His precious blood - He has set us free from sin and from the tyranny of the devil, and has bought us, body and soul, to be His very own.

#### LORD'S DAY 14

Question 35: What does it mean that He "was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary"?

Answer: That the eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took to Himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit, from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, a truly human nature so that He might become David's true descendant, like His brothers in every way except for sin.

Question 36: How does the holy conception and birth of Christ benefit you?

Answer: He is our mediator, and with His innocence and perfect holiness He removes from God's sight my sin - mine since I was conceived.

#### LORD'S DAY 15

Question 37: What do you understand by the word "suffered"?

Answer: That during His whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained in body and soul the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race. This He did in order that, by His suffering as the only atoning sacrifice, He might set us free, body and soul, from eternal condemnation, and gain for us God's grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

Question 38: Why did He suffer "under Pontius Pilate" as judge?

Answer: So that He, though innocent, might be condemned by a civil judge, and so free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us.

Question 39: Is it significant that He was "crucified" instead of dying some other way?

Answer: Yes. This death convinces me that He shouldered the curse which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was accursed by God.

## LORD'S DAY 16

Question 40: Why did Christ have to go all the way to death?

Answer: Because God's justice and truth demand it: only the death of God's Son could pay for our sin.

Question 41: Why was He "buried"?

Answer: His burial testifies that He really died.

Question 42: Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?

Answer: Our death does not pay the debt of our sins. Rather, it puts an end to our sinning and is our entrance into eternal life.

Question 43: What further advantage do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?

Answer: Through Christ's death our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with Him, so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us, but that instead we may dedicate ourselves as an offering of gratitude to Him.

Question 44: Why does the creed add, "He descended into hell"?

Answer: To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain and terror of soul, especially on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.

## LORD'S DAY 17

Question 45: How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

Answer: First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He might make us share in the righteousness He won for us by His death. Second, by His power we too are already now resurrected to a new life. Third, Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection.

## LORD'S DAY 18

Question 46: What do you mean by saying, "He ascended into heaven"?

Answer: That Christ, while His disciples watched, was lifted up from the earth to heaven and will be there for our good until He comes again to judge the living and the dead.

Question 47: But isn't Christ with us until the end of the world as He promised us?

Answer: Christ is truly human and truly God. In His human nature Christ is not now on earth; but in His divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit He is not absent from us for a moment.

Question 48: If His humanity is not present wherever His divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?

Answer: Certainly not. Since divinity is not limited and is present everywhere, it is evident that Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of the humanity He has taken on, but at the same time His divinity is in and remains personally united to His humanity.

Question 49: How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

Answer: First, He pleads our cause in heaven in the presence of His Father. Second, we have our own flesh in heaven - a guarantee that Christ our head will take us, His members, to Himself in heaven. Third, He sends His Spirit to us on earth as a further guarantee. By the Spirit's power we make the goal of our lives, not earthly things, but the things above where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.

## LORD'S DAY 19

Question 50: Why the next words: "and is seated at the right hand of God"?

Answer: Christ ascended to heaven, there to show that He is head of His church, and that the Father rules all things through Him.

Question 51: How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

Answer: First, through His Holy Spirit He pours out His gifts from heaven upon us His members. Second, by His power He defends us and keeps us safe from all enemies.

Question 52: How does Christ's return "to judge the living and the dead" comfort you?

Answer: In all my distress and persecution I turn my eyes to the heavens and confidently await as judge the very One who has already stood trial in my place before God and so has removed the whole curse from me. All His enemies and mine He will condemn to everlasting punishment: but me and all His chosen ones He will take along with Him into the joy and the glory of heaven.

## **God the Holy Spirit**

## LORD'S DAY 20

Question 53: What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?

Answer: First, He, as well as the Father and the Son, is eternal God. Second, He has been given to me personally, so that, by true faith, He makes me share in Christ and all His blessings, comforts me, and remains with me forever.

## LORD'S DAY 21

Question 54: What do you believe concerning "the holy catholic church"?

Answer: I believe that the Son of God through His Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for Himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community I am and always will be a living member.

Question 55: What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

Answer: First, that believers, one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all His treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.

Question 56: What do you believe concerning "the forgiveness of sins"?

Answer: I believe that God, because of Christ's atonement, will never hold against me any of my sins nor my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life. Rather, in His grace God grants me the righteousness of Christ to free me forever from judgment.

## LORD'S DAY 22

Question 57: How does "the resurrection of the body" comfort you?

Answer: Not only my soul will be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head, but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ, will be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body.

Question 58: How does the article concerning “life everlasting” comfort you?

Answer: Even as I already now experience in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, so after this life I will have perfect blessedness such as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart has ever imagined: a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.

#### LORD’S DAY 23

Question 59: What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?

Answer: In Christ I am right with God and heir to life everlasting.

Question 60: How are you right with God?

Answer: Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments and of never having kept any of them, and even though I am still inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without my deserving it at all, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. All I need to do is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.

Question 61: Why do you say that by faith alone you are right with God?

Answer: It is not because of any value my faith has that God is pleased with me. Only Christ’s satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness make me right with God. And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone.

#### LORD’S DAY 24

Question 62: Why can’t the good we do make us right with God, or at least help make us right with Him?

Answer: Because the righteousness which can pass God’s scrutiny must be entirely perfect and must in every way measure up to the divine law. Even the very best we do in this life is imperfect and stained with sin.

Question 63: How can you say that the good we do doesn’t earn anything when God promises to reward it in this life and the next?

Answer: This reward is not earned; it is a gift of grace.

Question 64: But doesn’t this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

Answer: No. It is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude.

### **The Sacraments**

#### LORD’S DAY 25

Question 65: It is by faith alone that we share in Christ and all His blessings: where then does that faith come from?

Answer: The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it through our use of the holy sacraments.

Question 66: What are sacraments?

Answer: Sacraments are holy signs and seals for us to see. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them He might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and might

put His seal on that promise. And this is God's gospel promise: to forgive our sins and give us eternal life by grace alone because of Christ's one sacrifice finished on the cross.

Question 67: Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

Answer: Right! In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and through the holy sacraments He assures us that our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.

Question 68: How many sacraments did Christ institute in the New Testament?

Answer: Two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

## **Baptism**

### **LORD'S DAY 26**

Question 69: How does baptism remind you and assure you that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross is for you personally?

Answer: In this way: Christ instituted this outward washing and with it gave the promise that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly His blood and His Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, in other words, all my sins.

Question 70: What does it mean to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?

Answer: To be washed with Christ's blood means that God, by grace, has forgiven my sins because of Christ's blood poured out for me in His sacrifice on the cross. To be washed with Christ's Spirit means that the Holy Spirit has renewed me and set me apart to be a member of Christ so that more and more I become dead to sin and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.

Question 71: Where does Christ promise that we are washed with His blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

Answer: In the institution of baptism, where He says: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." "Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins.

### **LORD'S DAY 27**

Question 72: Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

Answer: No, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.

Question 73: Why then does the Holy Spirit call baptism the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

Answer: God has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that the blood and Spirit of Christ wash away our sins just as water washes away dirt from our bodies. But more important, He wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign, that the washing away of our sins spiritually is as real as physical washing with water.

Question 74: Should infants, too, be baptised?

Answer: Yes. Infants as well as adults are in God's covenant and are His people. They, no less than adults, are promised the forgiveness of sin through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit who produces faith. Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant, infants should be received into the Christian church and should be distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.

## The Lord's Supper

### LORD'S DAY 28

Question 75: How does the Lord's Supper remind you and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all His gifts?

Answer: In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup. With this command He gave this promise: First, as surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup given to me, so surely His body was offered and broken for me and His blood poured out for me on the cross. Second, as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely He nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with His crucified body and poured out blood.

Question 76: What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink His poured out blood?

Answer: It means to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ and by believing to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. But it means more. Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us, we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body. And so, although He is in heaven and we are on earth, we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit, as members of our body are by one soul.

Question 77: Where does Christ promise to nourish and refresh believers with His body and blood as surely as they eat this broken bread and drink this cup?

Answer: In the institution of the Lord's Supper: "The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me'. In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me'. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." This promise is repeated by Paul in these words: "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

### LORD'S DAY 29

Question 78: Are the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

Answer: No. Just as the water of baptism is not changed into Christ's blood and does not itself wash away sins but is simply God's sign and assurance, so too the bread of the Lord's Supper is not changed into the actual body of Christ even though it is called the body of Christ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.

Question 79: Why then does Christ call the bread His body and the cup His blood or the new covenant in His blood?

Answer: Christ has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that as bread and wine nourish our temporal life, so too His crucified body and poured out blood truly nourish our souls for eternal life. But more important, He wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that we, through the Holy Spirit's work, share in His true body and blood as surely as our mouths receive these holy signs in His remembrance, and that all of His suffering and obedience are as definitely ours as if we personally had suffered and paid for our sins.

## LORD'S DAY 30

Question 80: How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

Answer: The Lord's Supper declares to us that our sins have been completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which He Himself finished on the cross once and for all. It also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ, who with His very body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father where He wants us to worship Him. But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests. It also teaches that Christ is bodily present in the form of bread and wine where Christ is therefore to be worshipped. Thus the Mass is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry.

Question 81: Who are to come to the Lord's table?

Answer: Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Question 82: Are those to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they say and do that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

Answer: No, that would dishonour God's covenant and bring down God's anger upon the entire congregation. Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and His apostles, the Christian church is duty bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.

## LORD'S DAY 31

Question 83: What are the keys of the kingdom?

Answer: The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance. Both preaching and discipline open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.

Question 84: How does preaching the gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?

Answer: According to the command of Christ: The kingdom of heaven is opened by proclaiming and publicly declaring to all believers, each and every one, that, as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith, God, because of what Christ has done, truly forgives all their sins. The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to unbelievers and hypocrites that, as long as they do not repent, the anger of God and eternal condemnation rest on them. God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.

Question 85: How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline?

Answer: According to the command of Christ: Those who, though called Christians, profess unchristian teachings or live unchristian lives, and after repeated and loving counsel refuse to abandon their errors and wickedness, and after being reported to the church, that is, to its officers, fail to respond also to their admonition - such persons the officers exclude from the Christian fellowship by withholding the sacraments from them, and God Himself excludes them from the kingdom of Christ. Such persons, when promising and demonstrating genuine reform, are received again as members of Christ and of His church.

### **PART III: GRATITUDE**

#### **LORD'S DAY 32**

Question 86: We have been delivered from our misery by God's grace alone through Christ and not because we have earned it: why then must we still do good?

Answer: To be sure, Christ has redeemed us by His blood. But we do good because Christ by His Spirit is also renewing us to be like Himself, so that in all our living we may show that we are thankful to God for all He has done for us, and so that He may be praised through us. And we do good so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits, and so that by our godly living our neighbours may be won over to Christ.

Question 87: Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent ways?

Answer: By no means. Scripture tells us that no unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like is going to inherit the kingdom of God.

#### **LORD'S DAY 33**

Question 88: What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

Answer: Two things: the dying away of the old self, and the coming to life of the new.

Question 89: What is the dying away of the old self?

Answer: It is to be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to run away from it.

Question 90: What is the coming to life of the new self?

Answer: It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ and a delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to.

Question 91: What do we do that is good?

Answer: Only that which arises out of true faith, conforms to God's law, and is done for His glory; and not that which is based on what we think is right or on established human tradition.

### **The Ten Commandments**

#### **LORD'S DAY 34**

Question 92: What does the Lord say in His law?

Answer: God spoke all these words:

The First Commandment - I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.

The Second Commandment - You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

The Third Commandment - You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.

The Fourth Commandment - Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your

animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The Fifth Commandment - Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

The Sixth Commandment - You shall not murder.

The Seventh Commandment - You shall not commit adultery.

The Eighth Commandment - You shall not steal.

The Ninth Commandment - You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

The Tenth Commandment - You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Question 93: How are these commandments divided?

Answer: Into two tables. The first has four commandments, teaching us what our relation to God should be. The second has six commandments, teaching us what we owe our neighbour.

Question 94: What does the Lord require in the first commandment?

Answer: That I, not wanting to endanger my very salvation, avoid and shun all idolatry, magic, superstitious rites, and prayer to saints or to other creatures. That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God, trust Him alone, look to Him for every good thing humbly and patiently, love Him, fear Him, and honour Him with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against His will in any way.

Question 95: What is idolatry?

Answer: Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who has revealed Himself in His Word.

#### LORD'S DAY 35

Question 96: What is God's will for us in the second commandment?

Answer: That we in no way make any image of God nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.

Question 97: May we then not make any image at all?

Answer: God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.

Question 98: But may not images be permitted in the churches as teaching aids for the unlearned?

Answer: No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God. He wants His people instructed by the living preaching of His Word - not by idols that cannot even talk.

#### LORD'S DAY 36

Question 99: What is God's will for us in the third commandment?

Answer: That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing, perjury, or unnecessary oaths, nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders. In a word, it requires that we use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe, so that we may properly confess Him, pray to Him, and praise Him in everything we do and say.

Question 100: Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent it and forbid it?

Answer: Yes, indeed. No sin is greater, no sin makes God more angry, than blaspheming His name. That is why He commanded the death penalty for it.

#### LORD'S DAY 37

Question 101: But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

Answer: Yes, when the government demands it, or when necessity requires it, in order to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness for God's glory and our neighbour's good. Such oaths are approved in God's Word and were rightly used by Old and New Testament believers.

Question 102: May we swear by saints or other creatures?

Answer: No. A legitimate oath means calling upon God as the one who knows my heart to witness to my truthfulness and to punish me if I swear falsely. No creature is worthy of such honour.

#### LORD'S DAY 38

Question 103: What is God's will for you in the fourth commandment?

Answer: First, that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained, and that, especially on the festive day of rest, I regularly attend the assembly of God's people to learn what God's Word teaches, to participate in the sacraments, to pray to God publicly, and to bring Christian offerings for the poor. Second, that every day of my life I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through His Spirit, and so begin already in this life the eternal Sabbath.

#### LORD'S DAY 39

Question 104: What is God's will for you in the fifth commandment?

Answer: That I honour, love, and be loyal to my father and mother and all those in authority over me; that I obey and submit to them, as is proper, when they correct and punish me; and also that I be patient with their failings - for through them God chooses to rule us.

#### LORD'S DAY 40

Question 105: What is God's will for you in the sixth commandment?

Answer: I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbour - not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds - and I am not to be party to this in others; rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge. I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either. Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.

Question 106: Does this commandment refer only to killing?

Answer: By forbidding murder God teaches us that He hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness. In God's sight all such are murder.

Question 107: Is it enough then that we do not kill our neighbour in any such way?

Answer: No. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God tells us to love our neighbours as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly to them to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies.

#### LORD'S DAY 41

Question 108: What is God's will for us in the seventh commandment?

Answer: God condemns all unchastity. We should therefore thoroughly detest it and, married or single, live decent and chaste lives.

Question 109: Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?

Answer: We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy. That is why He forbids everything which incites unchastity, whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires.

#### LORD'S DAY 42

Question 110: What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

Answer: He forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law. But in God's sight theft also includes cheating and swindling our neighbour by schemes made to appear legitimate, such as: inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume; fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money; excessive interest; or any other means forbidden by God. In addition He forbids all greed and pointless squandering of His gifts.

Question 111: What does God require of you in this commandment?

Answer: That I do whatever I can for my neighbour's good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.

#### LORD'S DAY 43

Question 112: What is God's will for you in the ninth commandment?

Answer: God's will is that I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone without a hearing or without a just cause. Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are devices the devil himself uses, and they would call down on me God's intense anger. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbour's good name.

#### LORD'S DAY 44

Question 113: What is God's will for you in the tenth commandment?

Answer: That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in my heart. Rather, with all my heart I should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right.

Question 114: But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

Answer: No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience. Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.

Question 115: No one in this life can obey the ten commandments perfectly: why then does God want them preached so pointedly?

Answer: First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness. Second, so that, while praying

to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **LORD'S DAY 45**

Question 116: Why do Christians need to pray?

Answer: Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God gives His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking Him for them.

Question 117: How does God want us to pray so that He will listen to us?

Answer: First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, who has revealed Himself in His Word, asking for everything He has commanded us to ask for. Second, we must acknowledge our need and misery, hiding nothing, and humble ourselves in His majestic presence. Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what He promised us in His Word.

Question 118: What did God command us to pray for?

Answer: Everything we need, spiritually and physically, as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord Himself taught us.

Question 119: What is this prayer?

Answer: 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours, now and for ever. Amen.

#### **LORD'S DAY 46**

Question 120: Why did Christ command us to call God "our Father"?

Answer: At the very beginning of our prayer Christ wants to kindle in us what is basic to our prayer - the childlike awe and trust that God through Christ has become our Father. Our fathers do not refuse us the things of this life; God our Father will even less refuse to give us what we ask in faith.

Question 121: Why the words "in heaven"?

Answer: These words teach us not to think of God's heavenly majesty as something earthly, and to expect everything for body and soul from His almighty power.

#### **LORD'S DAY 47**

Question 122: What does the first request mean?

Answer: Hallowed be Your name means, Help us to really know You, to bless, worship, and praise You for all Your works and for all that shines forth from them: Your almighty power, wisdom, kindness, justice, mercy, and truth. And it means, Help us to direct all our living - what we think, say, and do - so that Your name will never be blasphemed because of us but always honoured and praised.

#### LORD'S DAY 48

Question 123: What does the second request mean?

Answer: Your kingdom come means, Rule us by Your Word and Spirit in such a way that more and more we submit to You. Keep Your church strong, and add to it. Destroy the devil's work; destroy every force which revolts against You and every conspiracy against Your Word. Do this until Your kingdom is so complete and perfect that in it You are all in all.

#### LORD'S DAY 49

Question 124: What does the third request mean?

Answer: Your will be done on earth as in heaven means, Help us and all people to reject our own wills and to obey Your will without any back talk. Your will alone is good. Help us one and all to carry out the work we are called to, as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.

#### LORD'S DAY 50

Question 125: What does the fourth request mean?

Answer: 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 blessing. And so help us to give up our trust in creatures and to put trust in You alone.

#### LORD'S DAY 51

Question 126: What does the fifth request mean?

Answer: Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us means, Because of Christ's blood, do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we do or the evil that constantly clings to us. Forgive us just as we are fully determined, as evidence of Your grace in us, to forgive our neighbours.

#### LORD'S DAY 52

Question 127: What does the sixth request mean?

Answer: 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.

Question 128: What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?

Answer: For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours, now and for ever 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.

Question 129: What does that little word "Amen" express?

Answer: 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 Heidelberg Catechism

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The Heidelberg Catechism was composed in Heidelberg at the request of Elector Frederick III, who ruled the Palatinate, an influential German province, from 1559 to 1576. An old tradition credits Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus with being co-authors of the new catechism. Both were certainly involved in its composition, although one of them may have had primary responsibility. All we know for sure is reported by the Elector in his preface of January 19, 1563. It was, he writes, 'with the advice and cooperation of our entire theological faculty in this place, and of all superintendents and distinguished servants of the church' that he secured the preparation of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The catechism was approved by a synod in Heidelberg in January 1563. A second and third German edition, each with small additions, as well as a Latin translation were published the same year in Heidelberg. Soon the catechism was divided into fifty two sections so that one Lord's Day could be explained in preaching each Sunday of the year.

The Synod of Dort in 1618-1619 approved the Heidelberg Catechism, and it soon became the most ecumenical of the Reformed catechisms and confessions. The catechism has been translated into many European, Asian, and African languages and is the most widely used and most warmly praised catechism of the Reformation period.

The 1968 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America appointed a committee to prepare 'a modern and accurate translation... which will serve as the official text of the Heidelberg Catechism and as a guide for catechism preaching.' A translation was adopted by the Synod of 1975, and some editorial revisions were approved by the CRC Synod of 1988. This version was accepted by the CRCA Synods of 1985 and 1991; translation used by permission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.