

Heidelberg Catechism Spring 2020 Week 12

“We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all.”

~Oswald Chambers

Lesson Objective: We will learn that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. It will be heard only when it is addressed to the one true God and proceeds from a humble heart, and when it is offered in full reliance on the promises of God. We are to pray for all spiritual and bodily needs, as the model prayer of our Lord teaches us.

Lesson

114. Can those who are converted to God keep these commandments perfectly?

No, but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of such obedience,¹ yet so that with earnest purpose they begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God.²

[1] 1 Jn. 1:8–10; Rom. 7:14–15; Eccl. 7:20. [2] Rom. 7:22; Jas. 2:10–11; *Job 9:2–3; *Ps. 19:13.

115. Why then does God so strictly enjoin the Ten Commandments upon us, since in this life no one can keep them?

First, that as long as we live we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature,¹ and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ;² second, that without ceasing we diligently ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we be renewed more and more after the image of God, until we attain the goal of perfection after this life.³

[1] 1 Jn. 1:9; Ps. 32:5. [2] Rom. 7:24–25. [3] 1 Cor. 9:24–25; Phil. 3:12–14; *Matt. 5:6; *Ps. 51:12.

Prayer

116. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us,¹ and because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who earnestly and without ceasing ask them of Him, and render thanks unto Him for them.²

[1] Ps. 50:14–15. [2] Matt. 7:7–8; Lk. 11:9–10, 13; Matt. 13:12; *Eph. 6:18.

117. What belongs to such prayer which is acceptable to God and which He will hear?

First, that with our whole heart¹ we call only upon the one true God, who has revealed Himself to us in His Word,² for all that He has commanded us to ask of Him;³ second, that we thoroughly know our need and misery,⁴ so as to humble ourselves in the presence of His divine majesty;⁵ third, that

we be firmly assured⁶ that notwithstanding our unworthiness, He will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer,⁷ as He has promised us in His Word.⁸

[1] Jn. 4:22–24. [2] Rom. 8:26; 1 Jn. 5:14. [3] Ps. 27:8. [4] 2 Chron. 20:12. [5] Ps. 2:10; 34:18; Isa. 66:2. [6] Rom. 10:14; Jas. 1:6. [7] Jn. 14:13–16; Dan. 9:17–18. [8] Matt. 7:8; Ps. 143:1; *Lk. 18:13.

118. What has God commanded us to ask of Him?

All things necessary for soul and body,¹ which Christ our Lord comprised in the prayer which He Himself taught us.

[1] Jas. 1:17. Matt. 6:33. *1 Pet. 5:7. *Phil. 4:6.

119. What is the Lord's Prayer?

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.¹

[1] Matt. 6:9–13; Lk. 11:2–4.

120. Why did Christ command us to address God thus: "Our Father"?

To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer that childlike reverence for and trust in God, which are to be the ground of our prayer, namely, that God has become our Father through Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of Him in faith than our parents refuse us earthly things.¹

[1] Matt. 7:9–11; Lk. 11:11–13; *1 Pet. 1:17; *Isa. 63:16.

121. Why is it added, "in heaven"?

That we might have no earthly thought of the heavenly majesty of God,¹ and from His almighty power expect all things necessary for body and soul.²

[1] Jer. 23:23–24; Acts 17:24–25, 27. [2] Rom. 10:12; *1 Kgs. 8:28; *Ps. 115:3.

122. What is the first petition?

"Hallowed be Your name;" that is, grant us, first, rightly to know You,¹ and to sanctify, magnify, and praise You in all Your works, in which Your power, goodness, justice, mercy, and truth shine forth;² and further, that we so order our whole life, our thoughts, words, and deeds, that Your Name may not be blasphemed, but honored and praised on our account.³

[1] Jn. 17:3; Matt. 16:17; Jas. 1:5; Ps. 119:105. [2] Ps. 119:137; Rom. 11:33–36. [3] Ps. 71:8; *Ps. 100:3–4; *Ps. 92:1–2; *Eph. 1:16–17; *Ps. 71:16.

123. What is the second petition?

“Your kingdom come;” that is, so govern us by Your Word and Spirit, that we submit ourselves to You always more and more;¹ preserve and increase Your Church;² destroy the works of the devil, every power that exalts itself against You, and all wicked devices formed against Your Holy Word,³ until the fullness of Your kingdom come,⁴ wherein You shall be all in all.⁵

[1] Ps. 119:5; 143:10. [2] Ps. 51:18; 122:6–7. [3] 1 Jn. 3:8; Rom. 16:20. [4] Rev. 22:17, 20; Rom. 8:22–23. [5] 1 Cor. 15:28; *Ps. 102:12–13; *Heb. 12:28; *Rev. 11:15; *1 Cor. 15:24.

124. What is the third petition?

“Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;” that is, grant that we and all men renounce our own will,¹ and without disputing obey Your will, which alone is good;² so that every one may fulfill his office and calling as willingly and faithfully³ as the angels do in heaven.⁴

[1] Matt. 16:24. [2] Lk. 22:42; Tit. 2:12. [3] 1 Cor. 7:24. [4] Ps. 103:20–21; *Rom. 12:2; *Heb. 13:21.

125. What is the fourth petition?

“Give us this day our daily bread;” that is, be pleased to provide for all our bodily need,¹ so that we may thereby acknowledge that You are the only fountain of all good,² and that without Your blessing neither our care and labor, nor Your gifts, can profit us;³ that we may therefore withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it in You alone.⁴

[1] Ps. 104:27–28; 145:15–16; Matt. 6:25–26. [2] Acts 14:17; 17:27–28. [3] 1 Cor. 15:58; Deut. 8:3; Ps. 37:3–7, 16–17. [4] Ps. 55:22; 62:10; *Ps. 127:1–2; *Jer. 17:5, 7; *Ps. 146:2–3.

126. What is the fifth petition?

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;” that is, be pleased, for the sake of Christ’s blood, not to impute to us miserable sinners our manifold transgressions, nor the evil which always clings to us;¹ as we also find this witness of Your grace in us, that it is our full purpose heartily to forgive our neighbor.²

[1] Ps. 51:1–4; 143:2; 1 Jn. 2:1–2. [2] Matt. 6:14–15; Ps. 51:5–7; *Eph. 1:7.

127. What is the sixth petition?

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;” that is, since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment,¹ and besides, our deadly enemies, the devil,² the

world,³ and our own flesh,⁴ assail us without ceasing, be pleased to preserve and strengthen us by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that we may make firm stand against them and not be overcome in this spiritual warfare,⁵ until finally complete victory is ours.⁶

[1] Jn. 15:5; Ps. 103:14–16. [2] 1 Pet. 5:8–9; Eph. 6:12–13. [3] Jn. 15:19. [4] Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17. [5] Matt. 26:41; Mk. 13:33. [6] 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23–24; *2 Cor. 12:7.

128. How do you close this prayer?

“For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever;” that is, all this we ask of You, because as our King, having power over all things, You are willing and able to give us all good;¹ and that thereby not we, but Your holy name may be glorified for ever.²

[1] Rom. 10:11–12; 2 Pet. 2:9. [2] Jn. 14:13; Ps. 115:1.

129. What is the meaning of the word “Amen”?

“Amen” means: so shall it truly and surely be. For my prayer is much more certainly heard of God than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him.¹

[1] 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:13; *Ps. 145:18–19.

Application

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.
Amen.” —Ephesians 3:20–21

Homework

Memorize Q & A #116 Why is prayer necessary for Christians?
Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us,¹ and because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who earnestly and without ceasing ask them of Him, and render thanks unto Him for them.²

[1] Ps. 50:14–15. [2] Matt. 7:7–8; Lk. 11:9–10, 13; Matt. 13:12; *Eph. 6:18.