

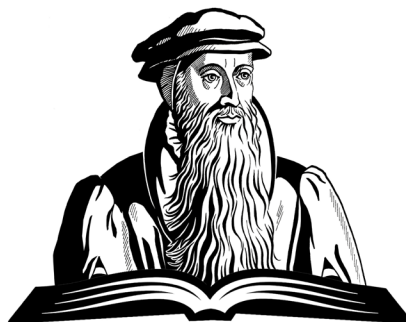
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #5, Lord's Day 4, part 1

Man's Sinnership in Light of God's Justice



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Sermon #5, Lord's Day 4, part 1

**Man's Sinnership
in Light of God's Justice**

Read: Psalm 50

Questions and Answers #9 thru #11

i. Introduction

1. God's Just Requirements

2. God's Just Wrath

3. God's Just Judgment

Introduction

Turn with me again to Psalm 50, congregation, Psalm 50, the Psalm we read, and let's look at the concluding verses, by way of introduction. Beginning at verse 21 of Psalm 50, and there, the Lord says, "These things hast thou done." And in the previous verses, God has identified several sins of which they were guilty. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." So God is saying here to these Israelites, "Just because I have not yet executed my justice and my vengeance upon thy sin, just because I have restrained myself, you have come to the wrong conclusion about who I am. You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself." So God is rebuking them and saying, "You have an entirely wrong view of who I am." And ultimately, congregation, this is indeed so very common. So many, even among professing Christians, ultimately worship a god of their own imagination. And of course, when we worship a god of our own imagination, we're ultimately worshipping an idol. This is the point of the Second Commandment. In the First Commandment, we are forbidden to worship idols. But in the Second Commandment, God specifically tells us how we are to worship him. And so, what he forbids us in the Second Commandment is to worship him according to our imagination—no graven images. So in the Second Commandment, God is saying, "You must not

worship me according to your imagination, but you are to worship me according to revelation to who I am.” And so here God rebukes the people of Israel, and he’s saying, “You have arrived at an entirely erroneous conclusion about who I am.” But he says, “I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes”—I will confront you now with who I am. I will confront you with the true nature of your sin and what the consequences are.

And then comes this stunning verse, one of the stunning verses of Scripture: “Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Consider this, ye that forget God! What an indictment that is against Israel. God was saying, “You are ignoring me. You are ignoring what I have revealed of myself in my Word.” And ultimately, of course, that’s who we are by nature. By nature, we ignore our Maker. By nature, we forget him. And so, God is saying, “Consider—consider what you are doing. Because you may ignore me, but ultimately you won’t be able to ignore me.” “Lest,” he says, “I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” That’s very graphic language, is it not? And God uses, here, the analogy of a beast of prey that tears to pieces his prey. And God uses that analogy to confront Israel with how serious the consequences are if they ignore him, and if they continue to ignore him.

Now, what we have here is that yet imbedded in this statement is the mercy of God. Look again what he says, “Consider this, ye that forget God.” Now, here’s a very important word, “lest.” “Lest I tear you in pieces.” What does that word “lest” mean? That “lest” means that God is a gracious God who delights in mercy, a God who has no pleasure in our death, but that we would turn unto him and live. But he is saying, “If you continue to ignore me, if you continue to forget me, then these will be the ultimate consequences. And then, when I execute my justice upon you, when I give you the due reward for having forgotten me, for having ignored me, then there will indeed be none to deliver.”

And yet, that’s not where the Psalm ends. Because no sooner has God pronounced the inescapable judgment upon those who choose to ignore him, who forget him, who put his Word aside; no sooner has he pronounced that judgment; no sooner has he warned with a stern warning what the consequences will be, and that when he executes justice upon unrepentant sinners, that there will be none to deliver, and how many, how many will discover that in the day of judgment? What a stunning moment that will be when many sinners will then realize that there will be no way that they can now escape the justice of the God whom they have forgotten, the God whom they have ignored. But no sooner has God pronounced his inescapable judgment upon the wicked, and he immediately, again, pronounces the gospel. Then immediately thereafter, he says, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God” (verse 23). So God is saying, “Sinner, if, however, you cease to forget me; if, however, you acknowledge me to be who I am; if, however, you offer praise unto me; if, however, you humble yourself before me; if you order your conversation aright; if you repent, and if you turn unto me, I will show you the salvation of God.”

And congregation, that’s the objective of the Heidelberg Catechism, when, in three short Lord’s Days, it sets before us the devastating reality of our sinner-ship; when it communicates to us the devastating indictment against us. But it’s doing that for a reason—it’s to set the stage for the unveiling of the gospel, the good news expressed in that last verse of Psalm 50, the good news of the gospel, that when a sinner orders his conversation aright; when a sinner humbles himself before God; when a sinner repents of his sins and takes refuge to Christ, like the thief on the cross, crying out, “Have mercy upon me,” God will show us his salvation revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, with God's help tonight, we're going to look at Lord's Day 4, the third of those three Lord's Days. And let's read together how the Heidelberg Catechism here summarized the teaching of God's Word regarding God's justice—*God's Justice*. On Lord's Day 2, we recognized that we are lawbreakers; and then in Lord's Day 3, we were confronted with our radical depravity; and now, on Lord's Day 4, we're going to deal with the ultimate consequences of our sin.

Question #9: *Doth not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in His law that which he cannot perform?*

The Answer is: *Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts.*

Question #10: *Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?*

The Answer is: *By no means; but is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in His just judgment temporally and eternally, as He hath declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them"—Galatians 3, verse 10.*

Question #11: *Is not God then also merciful?*

Answer: *God is indeed merciful, but also just; therefore His justice requires that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul.*

And so, this Lord's Day summarizes the teaching of God's Word regarding *Man's Sinnership*—your and my sinner-ship—in *Light of God's Justice*. First of all, we will consider *God's Just Requirements*, that God may justly require of you and me, that we perfectly obey his law. He may justly require that of us. Secondly, we will then focus on *His Just Wrath*. And the boys and girls that are able to read, look at Question and Answer #10, and you can read along with me. Because Question #10 asks the question, *Will God [allow] such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?* And the answer is very, very clear, that God is *terribly displeased* with our sin, and will judge us for it—*His Just Wrath*. As I already said this morning, in a way, the sermons dovetail very much today, is that the wrath of God is the response of his holy being towards sin—*His Just Wrath*. And thirdly, *God's Just Judgment*, because, when the question has been asked, *Is not God then also merciful?* Then he says, *Indeed he is, but, he is also just, and therefore His justice requires that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul. So, God's Just Requirement; God's Just Wrath; and, God's Just Judgment.*

And so, how are we to view those three Questions? Those three Questions really are questions that come out of the human heart. They are three questions of somebody who is trying to wiggle out from under the devastating indictment with which we were confronted in Lord's Day 3. Because, in Question #8, the question was asked, *Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?* Have you thought about that this week, boys and girls? We talked about that last week. Have you thought about this, congregation? Do you agree with that? Do you agree with that devastating indictment from the Word of God, that we are corrupt, that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and that we are inclined to all wickedness? That's a devastating indictment, an indictment to which we do not agree by nature. By nature, we think very highly of ourselves. And yet, this is the truth of Scripture. This is the truth that we must submit to. This is the truth that we must say "Amen" to. And if the Holy Spirit works savingly in our lives, he will lead us to recognize that this is indeed my true spiritual condition—corrupt—wholly

incapable of doing any good, and wholly inclined to all wickedness.

1. God's Just Requirements

And so, then comes the very pious question, *Doth not God do injustice to man, by requiring from His law that which he cannot perform?* If that is indeed our spiritual plight, if that is our condition, if indeed we are wholly incapable of doing any good, how then can God require of me that I obey his law perfectly? How can he require of me to perform something I am not capable of performing? And the Catechism simply responds with the Word of God. What's striking about this Lord's Day, is that the Catechism makes no effort to explain this in such a way that it is satisfactory to you and me. What the Catechism simply does, it sets before us the Word of God. In Romans 9, verses 19 and 20, Paul also anticipated a hostile reaction to the truth that he was describing. We read there, in Romans 9, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault?" That's exactly the question that's being asked here: "Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" What can I do about it that I am a fallen sinner? What can I do about it that I am a son or daughter of Adam? How can God find fault with me? And then, the Apostle answers: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Because what we find in this question is this wretched attempt to justify ourselves, and ultimately to indict God, and to declare him guilty for who we are. And so, the answer is emphatic: *Not at all*, or we would say, "Don't even go there; not at all." *For God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts.*

What's noteworthy, congregation, is that the Catechism does not use the name "Adam." Of course, that's implied. But the Catechism correctly recognizes that in Adam, we all fell, that we were all comprehended in Adam; and that in Adam, we have all fallen; and that as sons and daughters of Adam, we are now repeating Adam's sin over, and over again. That means that, as fallen sinners, we are so inclined to follow the instigation of the devil. As fallen sinners, we are so inclined to believe his lie, who is the liar from the beginning. And of course, what happened in Paradise happened at the instigation of the devil—that's true. It was the devil who came in the garden; it was the devil who, as an act of bitter hatred, took aim at God's image-bearer. It was the devil's act of vengeance against a God who had expelled him from his presence. But congregation, Adam was not a helpless victim. Adam was fully capable of resisting that temptation, and so was Eve. And so, when the devil came to her with his vile instigation, with this subtle question, "Hath God said," Eve had the capability, the moral, mental capability, the spiritual capability to recognize that question for what it was, and to have turned away from that evil instigation of the devil. It was not the devil who made her do it. It was not the devil who made Adam do what he did. And we could never say, "The devil made me do it." But why is the devil so successful? Why is it, in a way, so easy for him to instigate us? Because the devil understands our sinful nature. The devil knows exactly how to play into that sinful nature. He understands that, by nature, we are inclined towards disobedience, our wilful disobedience. That's what Adam's act was. Adam's act was an act of wilful disobedience. It was an act of his will. He chose to believe Satan's lie rather than God's truth. *God made man capable of performing it.*

Boys and girls, let me give you an illustration to help you understand this. So, let's assume that a man who has a construction business—there are several of you that are in such a business—and hires a man. And he hires a man, because he has certain skills. He has certain capabilities. And based on that assessment, he gives him a job to do. But during the day, instead of working, he drinks. And by the end of the day, he's drunk. And when the boss comes to the scene, he realizes

that this man has not performed what he expected him to do, because he was not able to perform it. His condition was such that he was not able to perform his task. And boys and girls, I think you know where I'm going. Why was he not able to do what his boss expected him to do? It was because of his sin. He rendered himself incapable by his foolish behavior, and therefore, was not able to perform what his boss expected of him. And so, let me ask you this: would it be wrong for the boss to fire the man, and to say, "You did not perform what I asked you to do"?—of course. He would be entirely justified, because the fact that he failed was because of his own sin. It was his own doing.

That's what happened here in Paradise. God made us capable of performing his law. And so, therefore, God has every right to require of us that we perfectly obey his law. In Ecclesiastes 7, verse 29, we read this: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."—they have sought out many inventions. It's like someone who takes out a loan at a bank, and based on his record, the bank grants him the loan. But then, thereafter, he engages in irresponsible behavior. And so then, when the bank calls the loan, he's not capable of paying. So does the bank have a right to prosecute him? Yes they do. Because the reason he's not able to fulfill his obligation is because of his own foolishness, and because of his own sin.

So what the Catechism here emphasizes, as it echoes the Word of God—as sinners, we are not innocent and helpless victims. No, we are guilty of wilful disobedience. Because ultimately, every sin is an exercise of our will. Because, even though our will is now in bondage to sin, we still have the capacity of exercising that will. But because we are now sinners, because we are now corrupt and depraved, we are always exercising that will in the wrong way. But every sin is an exercise of the will nevertheless. That's why language is used, *wilful disobedience*. That's why Jesus said, in Luke 19, verse 27, when he will ultimately judge his enemies, the ungodly, he says, "Those mine enemies"—now listen carefully to what he says—"Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them." That's the indictment of the Word of God.

That's why, my dear friend, if you are still unconverted, you are unconverted because you are an unbeliever. I've said it before, but let me say it again. And unconverted person is manifesting the fact that he is an unbelieving person. And so, your unconvertedness is a manifestation of your unbelieving heart. And so, we can never use that as an excuse, because ultimately, when you say it, and some people say it far too glibly. I once remember, as a young man, I was in the company of a lady who pounded her chest and she said, "I am an honestly unconverted woman," she said—honestly unconverted. She was proud of that. When you say you're unconverted, you are indicting yourself. To be unconverted means to be unturned. To be unconverted means that you are still living with your back towards God. You are still going your way rather than his way. That's why Ezekiel 33, where God declares that he has no pleasure in the death of sinners, how does he plead with sinners? He said, "Turn ye, turn ye,...for why will you die?" (verse 11). And so, when people sometimes say so easily, "I cannot," it's ultimately because we will not. And so, our real sin, our root sin is our unbelief. Our root sin, as fallen sons and daughters of Adam, is that we choose to disobey our Maker, that we are wilfully disobedient towards him. As a result of that, of course, Adam deprived himself and all of his posterity of those divine gifts.

2. God's Just Wrath

Then comes the second Question, #10: *Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?* In this instance, the person asking the question is saying, "I will grant you, I will grant you that I am responsible for my actions. I will grant you that I am guilty of wilful disobedience.

I will grant you that. But, *will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?* Or, to put it very simply, boys and girls, “Is it possible that even though I am a sinner, even though I am guilty, is it possible that God might yet look the other way? Is it possible that God will not punish me for my disobedience and rebellion towards him? Is there yet a way out?” That’s an understandable question. Because among us, as humans, of course, that happens frequently. As parents, we don’t always punish every transgression of our children. Sometimes we do look the other way. Sometimes we overlook it. Or sometimes we will say, “Well, I will let him go this time.”

And so, this person is asking, “Is there any possibility, any possibility that God would allow my disobedience and my rebellion to go unpunished?” Again, you see it even in the Questions. The Questions are always so weighty in the Heidelberg Catechism. Because the Questions themselves, again, clearly set before us what our weak condition is. We are disobedient rebels. We are, as I said this morning, we are human beings who treat our Maker as a liar. That’s what it means to sin—we treat God as a liar. And therefore, by nature, we disobey him, and we rebel against him. And again, the Answer is emphatic: *By no means*—or again, Don’t even go there! *By no means; but* [He] *is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins*. You see, that’s the reason why I began with Psalm 50. Because that’s what the Israelites thought. They thought that somehow, God was overlooking all of those transgressions. And he said, “You thought that I was altogether as you are. But I am not like you. I am God.” And so, the Answer is an emphatic “No”—an emphatic “No.”

And why is the language of the Catechism so strong here? Because we need to be confronted with this. And unless we grasp the strength of this Answer; unless we grasp what the Catechism is emphasizing, we will not appreciate the gospel. And this is the overarching objective of the Catechism. It’s addressing our misery, our wretchedness as sinners. It’s mincing no words. It is very direct and forceful in confronting us with it, but for a reason. Because only when we say “Amen” to this, only when we come to grips with this, only when we recognize this is my true state, this is my true condition, will I marvel at the Savior that God has provided for such sinners as we are, who are disobedient, who rebel against him, such sinners as we are—corrupt, wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined towards all evil.

And so, *By no means; but is terribly displeased with our original as with our actual sins*—terribly displeased. And boys and girls, you can probably remember incidents when you did something that made your moms and dads very displeased; that they were very unhappy with what you did, and they let you know that they were *terribly displeased* with what you did. But you know, that pales in comparison with how terribly God is displeased with our original and actual sin.

So, what do we mean by “original sin”? Well, that’s the sin that we inherited from Adam. In other words, the reason we commit actual sins, is because we are sinners. We are born as sinners. We are born with a sinful nature. And because we are sinners, we commit actual sin. And as all parents know, when you have a little baby that looks so innocent, so sweet, it doesn’t take very long to discover that that sweet baby is a sinner after all. It doesn’t take very long, and that sinful nature begins to manifest itself. Because when we are born with original sin, we will ultimately also commit actual sin.

And it says here God is *terribly displeased*. Congregation, I begin with myself. I think far, far too often we fail to realize how offensive sin is to God. I said it this morning—we are so inclined to make light of sin. But God’s Word tells us that God is *terribly displeased with our original and actual sins*. This is what we read in Romans 1, and verse 18: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”—and here comes another devastating indictment—“who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” That’s quite a statement: “Who hold the

truth in unrighteousness.” And congregation, that is especially true when we are born and raised in the church. When we are born, and when we have been surrounded by the truth of God’s Word, and if we then still continue in sin, if we can still continue our unbelieving existence that manifested itself in our unconverted state, that means that we are holding the truth in unrighteousness; that we are ignoring God’s truth. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven”—the wrath of God.

Again, what is the wrath of God? Listen carefully, lest I be misunderstood. The wrath of God is not an attribute of God; it is the response of all of his attributes to sin. And why can I say that it is not an attribute of God? Because, had there been no sin, there would have been no wrath. Had there been no sin, God would have never been provoked to wrath. And we know that all of God’s attributes are as eternal as God is eternal. But what the wrath of God is, is the response of God’s entire being, in all of his attributes, towards sin. Your and my sin provokes God to wrath.

Congregation, there is nothing worse for a human being than to provoke God to wrath. There’s nothing worse for a human being than to have that wrath abide on us. That’s exactly what we read in the last verse of John 3, that “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

3. God’s Just Judgment

And so, my friends, if you are still an unbeliever, you have the sword of God’s justice hanging above your head. If you are still an unbeliever, that means that the wrath of God for which you have provoked him by your sin, that wrath is abiding on you, and will ultimately manifest itself. And, again, we need to understand this. How else can we explain what happened on Calvary’s cross? How else can we explain that God’s only Son had to endure what he endured on Calvary’s cross? How else can we explain that God’s beloved Son, as we saw this morning, was forsaken by his Father? Why?—because he hung there as the substitute of rebels and sinners such as we are. And therefore God’s infinite wrath was provoked by him, not because of his sin; he had no sin. But God viewed in him all his people, that vast multitude of human beings. All their sins, he represented, all their sins he bore, and God’s wrath was poured out on the head of his only begotten Son. That’s why I said this morning, the cross is God’s object lesson for us. The cross is God’s ultimate statement of how terribly he is displeased with your and my sin, so terribly displeased that in order to save sinners like we are, he had to subject his only begotten Son, who his wrath poured out upon his head.

And it says, *Will punish them in His just judgment temporally and eternally*. So what the Catechism is saying, and what Scripture, of course, teaches throughout, is that sin has consequences. Sin has temporal consequences. That means that already in this life, we experience God’s displeasure towards sin; and of course, sin ultimately has eternal consequences. So the point that the Catechism is making, and that the Word of God makes, is that God’s character, God’s nature is such that he cannot overlook one single sin. God’s character is such that he must punish every sin. For him, to allow one sin to go unpunished, would mean that he would thereby cease to be God. But because he is God, he must punish sin, and he will punish sin, and he already is doing that in our present world.

We live in a broken world, a world that is reeling already from the judgment that God inflicted upon it with the great flood. Ultimately we can say that the world has never recovered from that event. The world is still reeling in many ways as a result of the flood. We now have an unstable atmosphere, and we have an unstable crust. That means every storm, every hurricane, every storm is an ongoing reminder that this world is already under judgment. Every earthquake, every volcanic

eruption is an ongoing reminder of God's judgment upon this world. And so, what just happened in Turkey, where so many people perished. There, we see God executing his justice upon ungodly men. Just this week now, in Mississippi and Alabama, a deadly tornado resulting in the loss of many lives. It's one of God's temporal judgments. And so, congregation, of course, the ungodly are blind to that reality. And they're trying to explain all the phenomenon of nature, all the weather phenomenon, all through a secular lens. But we have to look at it through the biblical lens. And so every thunderstorm, every tornado, every storm, every earthquake, every volcanic eruption is a message from God to a sinful human race, that he is a God who judges sin, that he's terribly displeased with sin. And so, when people perish, as they did in Turkey, and as they perish as they did in Mississippi and Alabama, sinners are getting what they deserve. That's the point Jesus makes in Luke 13. And they came to him, and said, "What about the people who were slaughtered by Pilate?" And then Jesus said, "Well, how about the people who died when the tower of Siloam collapsed?" Then what does Jesus say? "Unless you repent, you will perish likewise."

And then the Question then quotes Galatians 3, verse 10, "*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.*" That's a devastating statement: "Cursed is every one." Of course, this comes from the Old Testament, it comes from the book of Deuteronomy. And so it comes from a statement that is in parenthesis, where we're told that whoever hangs on a tree is cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23). And that parenthetical statement in Deuteronomy is ultimately so profoundly significant, we could actually say that the whole gospel actually pivots on that truth. Because that explains why Christ was not executed by the sword; why he was not hung; why he was crucified, why he was nailed to a tree, as Paul refers to in Galatians 3. Why?—because he also had to endure God's curse upon sin.

And again, what is God's curse? God's curse is God's negative Word. God's curse is the exact opposite of the gospel. The gospel is good news, but the curse of God is bad news. What is the bad news? What is the bad news for sinners? That God is so displeased with your sin that he will judge you temporally, and he will judge you eternally. Unless you believe in his only begotten Son; unless Christ has redeemed you, that curse will pursue you into hell. That curse of God, that negative word is inescapable. That negative Word of God will pursue you into hell itself. There is nothing that is more dreadful, more dreadful than to be subject to God's curse. In Deuteronomy 28:15, we read this: "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee." And it's a striking chapter, Deuteronomy 28—striking to read where God says, "Cursed is so-and-so," and all these cursers, all these curses are listed in that chapter. And God is saying, "All these curses shall come upon you and they will overtake you."

And therefore, my dear friends, if you are not a believer today, if you have not yet repented of your sin and taken refuge to Christ, God's curse will overtake you. God is still refraining himself. You are still here tonight. He is still giving you space to repent, while it is still the accepted time. That's why the words of Psalm 50 are so remarkable. They so reveal the character of God—a God who has no pleasure in the death of sinners. "O consider this," he said. It is as if he is saying there, "Sinner, do not trifle with me. Sinner, take me seriously. Do not ignore me. Do not forget me. Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

That's why the gospel is so astounding. Because that's what happened on Calvary's cross. The curse of God pursued God's Son to the cross itself, and there, he was made a curse. That's again, that's stock language as well. He didn't just endure the curse. No, Paul says he was made a curse

(Galatians 3:13). That means, he became identified with that curse. The Son of God became the curse. And he willingly submitted himself to the curse of his own Word. That's what happened on Calvary's cross. He allowed that curse to descend upon him, and as it were, he embraced that curse, and he embraced it fully, and he was able to silence that curse. That's why he cried, "It is finished" That's why the Father could rend the veil. That's why he rose again. By his sacrifice, he silenced that curse. That's why, because of him, and because of his finished work, we now proclaim good news instead of only bad news.

But the whole point of Lord's Day 4 and Lord's Day 3 and 2, is we must understand the bad news, if we are ever going to value the good news. That's how the Holy Spirit works savingly. I said that this morning already. And I realize that he works in various ways in various people, but one thing all conversions have in common is that sin becomes real. It becomes real that I am a sinner, that I have offended God. It becomes real that because I'm a sinner, I am worthy of judgment. And why does the Holy Spirit want us to understand that, not only intellectually, but experientially? Because without it, we will never embrace the good news, we will never value the good news. The good news of the gospel shines in all of its brilliance, in all of its beauty against the awful background of the bad news. And so, what a miracle it then becomes, and the Holy Spirit directs me to look upon this precious Christ, who was made a curse in the place of sinners so that we could be blessed; who endured the full consequences of that curse, in order that sinners, who are worthy of that curse, could be delivered from it. And we see the astounding blessing that God promises to all those that believe in his only begotten Son.

And of course, that brings us to Question #11, but we're going to deal with that next week, the Lord willing, because our time is now up. It's too important, I cannot gloss over that. I need to focus on that as well. There are some profoundly important truths that are articulated in that Question that need to be addressed, and I hope to do that next week, the Lord willing.

And so, let me just wrap this up then, what we have said so far. And so, what I have set before you is the dual truths from God's Word—the awful reality of our sinner-ship; and God's marvelous remedy that he has provided for sinners like we are. We, who by our sin, terribly displease God. How astonishing that is that that God whom you and I have provoked by our sin, that that God so loved the fallen world that he gave his only begotten Son, that he gave him to be a sacrifice for sin, that whosoever, no matter who we are, no matter how deeply we have sinned, that whosoever believeth in that crucified Christ will not perish but have eternal life.

But be it known, only if you believe in this Christ, will you not perish. Because, if you don't believe in him, you will perish, and the curse of God that already hangs above your head will ultimately catch up with you forever. And you will then have to eternally endure the just wrath of God upon your sins, to which you have provoked him. But thanks be to God, we are still here, you are still here. And the God against whom you have sin, he proffers to you peace and pardon, and he is as ready to forgive you as Christ was ready to forgive the thief on the cross, when, upon that simple petition, as we've seen, "Remember me"—so simple, "Remember me." And Christ said, "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Amen.

Let's pray.

Gracious God and Father in heaven, we come to thee at the end of this service, in which we were compelled to deal with the awful reality of our sinner-ship, the awful reality that we are, by nature, wilfully disobedient; that by nature, we are rebels; that by nature, we demonstrate by our very lives that we hate God and our neighbor. Oh, the indictment of thy Word is unmistakably

clear. And Lord, we pray that, by grace, we would say, “Amen” to it. So that we would recognize that our only hope is in that Christ, who is offered to us freely in the gospel, without money and without price, that precious Christ who was made a curse in order that we could be blessed. Go with us now to our homes. Go with us into this new week. Bless the labor of our hands. Be with our children and young people in school and university, wilt thou remember them as well. And grant that also, this coming Lord’s Day, we might gather here again. We ask all of this in Christ’s precious name alone. Amen.