

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #38, Lord's Day 30

The Observance of the Lord's Supper



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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VIDEO SERMON SERIES
Sermons on the
Heidelberg Catechism
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1. The Christian's Only Comfort in Life and Death (Lord's Day 1–1, Question 1)
2. The Pattern of Christian Experience (Lord's Day 1–2, Question 2)
3. The Law of God and Our Misery (Lord's Day 2, Questions 3–5)
4. The Total (Radical) Depravity of Man (Lord's Day 3, Questions 6–8)
5. Man's Sinnership in Light of God's Justice (Lord's Day 4-1, Questions 9–11)
6. The Doctrine of Hell (Lord's Day 4-2, Question 11)
7. Perfect Satisfaction: A Requirement for Deliverance (Lord's Day 5, Q. 12–15)
8. The One Mediator Between God and Man (Lord's Day 6, Questions 16–19)
9. True Saving Faith (Lord's Day 7, Questions 20–23)
10. The God of Salvation: A Triune God (Lord's Day 8, Questions 24–25)
11. Faith in God the Father (Lord's Day 9, Question 26)
12. The Providence of God (Lord's Day 10–1, Question 27)
13. Rich Benefits Derived from Believing God's Providence (Lord's Day 10–2, Q. 28)
14. Jesus, the Savior of Sinners (Lord's Day 11, Questions 29–30)
15. Faith in Christ (Lord's Day 12–1, Question 31)
16. The Identity of the True Christian (Lord's Day 12–2, Question 32)
17. The Unique Identity of Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 13–1, Question 33)
18. The Lordship of Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 13–2, Question 34)
19. The Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 14, Questions 35–36)
20. Faith in the Suffering Son of God (Lord's Day 15, Questions 37–39)
21. Christ—A Savior Who Has Paid the Wages of Sin in Full (Lord's Day 16, Q. 40–44)



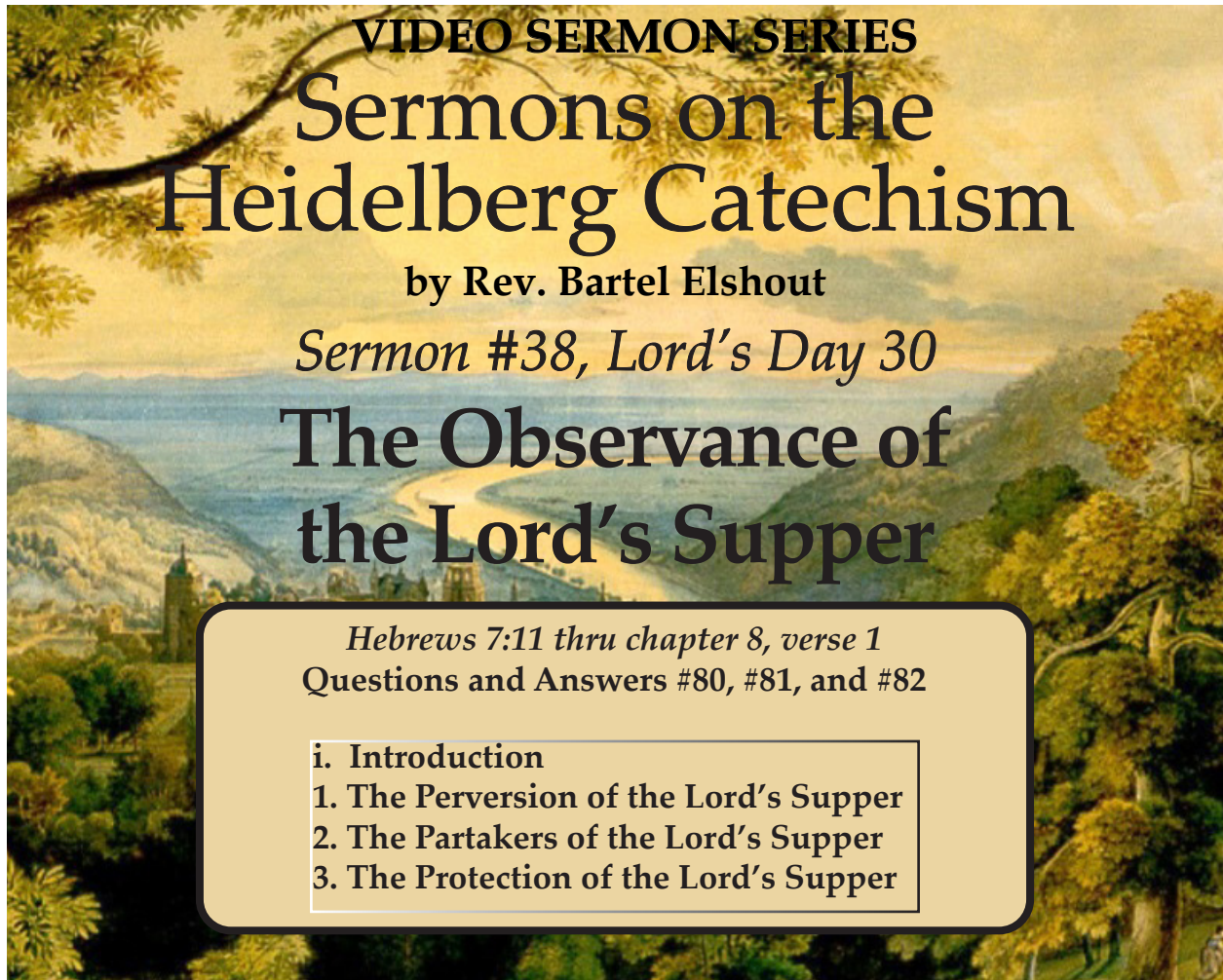
VIDEO SERMON SERIES
**Sermons on the
Heidelberg Catechism**
by Rev. Bartel Elshout

22. The Threefold Benefits of the Resurrection of Christ (Lord's Day 17, Q. 45)
23. The Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 18, Questions 46–49)
24. Faith in the Exalted Christ (Lord's Day 19–1, Questions 50–51)
25. The Second Coming of Christ (Lord's Day 19–2, Question 52)
26. Faith in God the Holy Spirit (Lord's Day 20, Question 53)
27. The Holy Catholic (Universal) Church of Christ (Lord's Day 21–1, Q. 54–56)
28. The Church's Confession Regarding the Forgiveness of Sins (Lord's Day 21–2, Q. 56)
29. The Future of the Christian (Lord's Day 22, Questions 57–58)
30. Justifying Faith (Lord's Day 23, Questions 59–61)
31. The Believer and Good Works (Lord's Day 24, Questions 62–64)
32. Faith and the Sacraments (Lord's Day 25, Questions 65–68)
33. Holy Baptism and the Promise of the Gospel (Lord's Day 26, Questions 69–71)
34. The Water of Holy Baptism (Lord's Day 27–1 Questions 72–73)
35. The Baptism of Infants (Lord's Day 27–2, Question 74)
36. The Holy Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 28, Questions 75–77)
37. The Value of the Lord's Supper (Lord's Day 29, Questions 78–79)
- 38. The Observance of the Lord's Supper (Lord's Day 30, Questions 80–82)**
39. The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (Lord's Day 31, Questions 83–85)
40. The Good Works of the Christian (Lord's Day 32, Questions 86–87)
41. The True Conversion of Man (Lord's Day 33, Questions 88–91)
42. The Transcript of God's Mind (Lord's Day 34–1, Questions 92–95)



VIDEO SERMON SERIES
Sermons on the
Heidelberg Catechism
by Rev. Bartel Elshout

43. The Holy Law of God (Lord's Day 34–2, Questions 92–95)
44. The Second Commandment (Lord's Day 35–1, Questions 96–97)
45. Preaching of God's Word and Graven Images (Lord's Day 35–2, Question 98)
46. God's Commandment Concerning His Name (Lord's Day 36, Questions 99–100)
47. God's Name and the Oath (Lord's Day 37, Questions 101–102)
48. The Fourth Commandment, part 1 (Lord's Day 38–1, Question 103)
49. The Fourth Commandment, part 2 (Lord's Day 38–2, Question 103)
50. The Threefold Requirement of the Fifth Commandment (Lord's Day 39, Q. 104)
51. The Sixth Commandment (Lord's Day 40, Questions 105–107)
52. The Seventh Commandment and Marriage (Lord's Day 41, Questions 108–109)
53. The Eighth Commandment (Lord's Day 42, Questions 110–111)
54. The Ninth Commandment (Lord's Day 43, Question 112)
55. Final Observations About the Law of God (Lord's Day 44, Questions 113–115)
56. The Prayer of the Christian (Lord's Day 45, Questions 116–119)
57. The Address of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 46, Questions 120–121)
58. Hallowing of God's "Father" Name (Lord's Day 47, Question 122)
59. The Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 48, Question 123)
60. The Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer, (Lord's Day 49, Question 124)
61. The Christian's Petition for Daily Bread (Lord's Day 50, Question 125)
62. Readiness to Forgive (Lord's Day 51, Question 126)
63. The Last Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 52, Questions 127–129)



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Sermon #38, Lord's Day 30

**The Observance of
the Lord's Supper**

Hebrews 7:11 thru chapter 8, verse 1
Questions and Answers #80, #81, and #82

i. Introduction

- 1. The Perversion of the Lord's Supper**
- 2. The Partakers of the Lord's Supper**
- 3. The Protection of the Lord's Supper**

Introduction

Boys and girls, the last few weeks, we have heard a lot about the Lord's Supper. So, do you ever think about the Lord's Supper? Do you ever ask your mom and dad questions about the Lord's Supper? And so, when it is announced that the Lord's Supper will be administered, do you ever bow your knees and pray about this? Because, even though you do not have yet what we call "a church right" to come to the Lord's Table, we don't want to suggest in any way that salvation is something that is only experienced by adults. So, what a blessing it would be if you would also listen carefully tonight, because tonight we're going to deal with a very important Question, and it is, *For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?* (Question #81)—for whom? And as we will see in the Heidelberg Catechism, as we will receive some very clear biblical direction as to who they are for whom that Supper is instituted.

And so, let's turn to Lord's Day 30 of our Heidelberg Catechism. There, we read, in Question #80: *What difference there between the Lord's Supper and the popish Mass?*

And as we read this Answer, I want you to pay attention how it begins with a beautiful, positive statement about the Lord's Supper, before it deals with the negative.

The Answer is: *The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself has once accomplished on the cross; and that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, who, according to His human nature is now not on earth,*

but in heaven, at the right hand of God His Father, and will there be worshipped by us—but the Mass teaches that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests; and further, that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshipped in them; so that the Mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.

Question #81: *For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?*

The Answer: *For those who are truly sorrowful for their sins, and yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ; and that their remaining infirmities are covered by His passion and death;—"passion" here, means suffering—and who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy; but hypocrites, and such as turn not to God with sincere hearts, eat and drink judgment to themselves.*

Question #82: *Are they also to be admitted to this supper, who, by confession and life, declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly?*

The Answer is: *No; for by this, the covenant of God would be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation; therefore it is the duty of the Christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and His apostles, to exclude such persons by the keys of the kingdom of heaven till they show amendment of life.*

Thus far, the Heidelberg Catechism.

So, Lord's Day 28 gave us the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Lord's Day 29, we dealt with the errors regarding the Lord's Supper. This Lord's Day focuses on *The Observance of the Lord's Supper*. So first of all, we will focus on *The Perversion of the Lord's Supper* in the Roman Catholic Mass. Secondly, we will focus on *The Partakers of the Lord's Supper*—for whom is the Lord's Supper instituted? And thirdly, we will focus on *The Protection of the Lord's Supper*—what must the Christian church do to protect the sanctity of the Lord's Table? So, *The Perversion of the Lord's Supper; The Partakers of the Lord's Supper; and, The Protection of the Lord's Supper*.

1. The Perversion of the Lord's Supper

And congregation, I'm going to be very brief about my first point. It's a very lengthy Question and Answer, and you need to understand the historical reason for the inclusion of this Question, because, in the original publication of the Heidelberg Catechism, this Question was not included. But it was upon the insistence of John Calvin¹ himself, who was really the primary author of this Question and Answer, that this Question was inserted here. And that had to do very much with the great need of that day. We have to realize that in the early Reformation, all of these people came out of a church setting in which the Mass was at the very center of their worship. That's why, in the Roman Catholic Church today, still, we do not find a pulpit in the center of the sanctuary; instead you find an altar in the center of the sanctuary. The entire Roman Catholic worship revolves around the Mass. And so, in this Answer, Calvin masterfully, masterfully defined the essential difference between the Lord's Supper and between the Roman Catholic Mass.

And so, let me just be very brief, because what is said in the opening paragraph is basically everything we have considered about the Lord's Supper so far. And we need to realize that this Question and Answer is more current than you think, because Roman Catholicism has not changed. And Roman Catholicism still have a very dominant present around the world. So what the Council of Trent said about the Mass remains unchanged until this day. Some of our older boys and girls may

¹ John Calvin, or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) – was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and well-known Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

have studied this in school. We know that the Council of Trent was a reaction to the Reformation. And so, in the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church pronounced an *anathema*, a divine curse, upon the doctrines that had been recovered by the church. So this is what the Council of Trent said about the Mass, and this is still in force until this day:

“The Mass is an external but true sacrifice for the remission of sin, at which time, the true body and blood of Christ, represented by bread and wine, is sacrificed by the priest for the sins of the living and the dead.”

So, in other words, this is echoed here in this Answer. So let me just very briefly show you the contrast. You can take more time to examine this in detail, but I want to get to a far more important Question tonight, and that is, *For whom, is the Lord’s Supper instituted?* (Question #81). So, as we contrast the two, you can do this yourself at home, and you can do it, even with your children. So,

- The Lord’s Supper teaches that we have a full pardon of our sins through the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
—The Mass teaches that we have a full pardon, only through the repeated sacrifice of Christ in the Mass.
- The Lord’s Supper teaches that, as believers, we are ingrafted into Christ, and that at the Lord’s Table, we experience that spiritual union with Christ.
—The Mass ultimately teaches that that union is ultimately always in doubt.

What’s stunning is that the Council of Trent actually pronounced an *anathema*—a divine curse—on anyone who teaches that you can be sure of your salvation. Think about that. That’s why in our Canons of Dort, there is an article in one of the Refutations of Error that addresses that, that we cannot allow the error of the Pope which denies the ability to attain to an assured knowledge of your salvation, to allow that error to find its way back into the church.

- The Lord’s Supper teaches that Christ is present spiritually, but that he is at the right hand of God, and that we worship a Christ who is ascended on high and who is seated at the right hand of the Father.
—But the Mass teaches that we are actually, by means of bread and wine, we are actually worshipping a physical Christ, who is physically present at the time of the Mass.

That’s why the priest occupies such an enormously powerful position. That’s why Martin Luther,² the very first time he performed the Mass, he was trembling; he was shaking; he was overwhelmed, because he had been taught that by what he was saying and about what he was doing, that he was transforming that bread and that wine into the physical body of Christ.

And so, what that means, of course, is that in the Mass, the sacrifice of Christ is repeated, not only, but that actually, the people are worshipping bread and wine; they are worshipping a created object, rather than the Christ of the Scriptures. And that’s why, the bottom line of Question and Answer #80 is not stating it too strongly when it says, *So that the Mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.* Because, if you actually believe that that bread and wine is the real Christ, you are worshipping a god of your imagination; you are worshipping a false Christ; you are worshipping an idol. And so this was not a minor issue. This was especially important during the time of the Reformation.

The language of Scripture is so clear: Hebrews 1, verse 3, where it says, “When he”—that is,

² Martin Luther (1483–1546), was a German priest, theologian, author, hymn writer, professor, and former Augustinian friar, who was the seminal figure of the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

Christ—“When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” In other words, he did a perfect work; he did a complete work. “By one sacrifice, he has perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). Hebrews 8, verse 1—we just read it together, this lovely, this wonderful verse, “We have such an high priest”—and I know that the portion we read is a bit difficult, and I hope, fathers, that you will sit down with your children, and you will explain to them what it was that the Apostle was arguing in the book of Hebrews. He wants to make the point that that whole system of sacrifices, of bloody sacrifices, has been done away with, because we have such an high priest, we have a perfect high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, with one sacrifice, with one perfect sacrifice, has merited an everlasting salvation. That’s why verse 1 of chapter 8 is so profoundly beautiful and so moving, when the Apostle says, “We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” And that resembles what we heard this morning when we considered the first two verses of 1 John 2, “If any man sin, we have”—“we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous [who] is the propitiation for our sins.”

And yet, congregation, I was struck by several commentators who said, “But let’s not brush this Question and Answer aside too quickly.” Because, what’s really going on here is the seemingly incurable tendency that we want to add something to the sacrifice of Christ. And we can do that in very subtle ways. We can even do that experientially. We can do that in our closet when we are on our knees, when somehow we think that we have to move God by our tears; that we have to move God by the intensity of our prayers, by the multitude of our words. And then secretly—I catch myself at it so many times—secretly, somehow we think that we still need to negotiate with God to secure his favor. Then we’re adding something, we’re adding something to Christ.

That means that we fail to understand what we so glibly often say, “For Jesus’ sake.” Parents, do you ever explain to your children what that means? You teach them to pray, “for Jesus sake.” What that means is, we confess at the end of our prayer that there is nothing in our prayer that will move God to be gracious except Christ. Our only hope is in Christ. Our only hope is in his perfect, finished work. It is for Christ’s sake that God is gracious with us. It is for Christ’s sake that he will never forsake the work of his own hands. And we all confess that, and we all believe it, but we need to learn that experientially. I found it convicting when I read in several commentators, they pointed this out, that ultimately, all heresy, all false teaching has its origin in the human heart.

That’s why I said this morning, that’s why we need to keep preaching the biblical gospel in all of its simplicity, because the gospel is so counterintuitive. It runs so directly contrary to our natural way of thinking. Time and again, we have to be taught by the Holy Spirit that there is nothing in me, nothing, but that it is in Christ alone. That’s why John Calvin said, as I’ve quoted here before. Think about this again; he says, “Faith is a humbling grace.” What did he mean by that?—it is when we exercise faith in Christ, we are literally confessing, “Lord, I have nothing. I am bankrupt in myself. I am bankrupt. Even my righteousness are as filthy rags. And therefore, my only hope is in thy well-beloved Son.”

2. The Partakers of the Lord’s Supper

And that comes to the fore, also when we go to the next important question, Question #81: *For whom is the Lord’s Supper Instituted?* And the formulation of this Question testifies of great wisdom by these young authors of the Heidelberg Catechism. Notice what the Question does not say. The Question does not say, “Who may partake of the Lord’s Table?” “Who may sit at the Lord’s Table?” And so, the Question, “Who may partake of the Lord’s Table?” can be answered very quickly—all professing members of the congregation have a “church right” to partake of the

Lord's Table. But that's not the question that's being asked. The question that's being asked is, *For whom is the Lord's Supper Instituted?*—who did Christ have in mind? Who is it that Christ desires to minister to? Who are they? They are the real and worthy participants at the Lord's Table. So, who are they that have biblical grounds, are genuine believers? Because, congregation, I've said it before, sitting at the Lord's Table will not help you a bit. Sitting at the Lord's Table will not earn you a place in heaven. You will only benefit from the Lord's Table if you are a genuine believer, and if by faith, you partake of the bread and wine. Only then will you genuinely benefit.

And so, the Question implies, of course, that partaking of the Lord's Supper is not automatic. That's why we have preparatory sermons. That's a very long-standing tradition. And where does that tradition come out of? Well, what do we read in 1 Corinthians 11:28? "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." So, the Apostle clearly, inspired by the Holy Spirit, tells us that a requirement for a proper partaking of the Lord's Table is self-examination—examination by biblical standards.

And again, notice that the Answer does not simply say, "Well, it's instituted for believers," or, "It's instituted for converted people," or, "It's instituted for those who profess the name of Christ." In a sense, there is some truth to these statements. But the wisdom of this Answer is that it does not focus on what I look like on the outside. It does not focus on what I profess on the outside. It does not focus on what people think of me, or how people judge me. But the Answer focuses on the heart. The Answer focuses on that which God sees. And so that's why this Answer is so important. And as you will see, it is an Answer that really parallels the entire Heidelberg Catechism. It is an answer, that you can find, actually you can find it expounded in far greater detail in the Form for the Lord's Supper, which we read every time. And those young authors, Caspar Olevianus³ and Zacharias Ursinus,⁴ were very much involved in the formulation of that Lord's Supper Form, that's why there is such a similarity. That's why that form continues to be so precious. And I would encourage you again, congregation, is that when we do have the Lord's Supper, it is a very proper exercise for you to carefully read that Form, to read what is said about how we examine ourselves.

And so, what are we to examine ourselves by? The answer is, first of all, *For those who are truly sorrowful for their sins*—so that's criterion number one. Criterion number two: *And yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ*—so, in other words, faith in the promise of the gospel. The third criterion is, *And who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy*—in other words, an earnest desire for spiritual growth, and for spiritual prosperity.

Criterion number one: *For those who are truly sorrowful for their sins*. Now, let me immediately emphasize that sorrow for sin all by itself will not save a soul. No one is saved because they happen to be sorrowful for their sins. That's why we need to look at the Answer as a unit. Those components, they belong inseparably together. And why is true sorrow for sin mentioned first? Because, congregation, without a genuine sorrow for sin, there will never be a real desire for Christ and his work. That's why, when we expounded the Beatitudes for you, we emphasized how Christ orders these Beatitudes. He's saying, Where is the entry requirement? Where does it all begin?—with being poor in spirit, becoming aware, spiritually aware of your spiritual poverty, and your spiritual bankruptcy. And then, blessed are they that mourn; blessed are they that grieve over this. In other words, in a true believer, he doesn't just talk about his sin intellectually. No, for a true believer, it moves him in his very own heart, in his affections. Blessed are they that mourn.

3 Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587).

4 Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), was a German Reformed theologian and Protestant Reformer who became the leading theologian of the Reformed Protestant movement of the Palatinate, serving both at the University of Heidelberg and the College of Wisdom.

Blessed are they that are meek. Blessed are they who, in the recognition of their poverty, of their sinfulness, of their wretchedness, humble themselves before God, and therefore, hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ. We all need Christ. But by nature, there's no room for Christ, and that's why the Holy Spirit has to make room for Christ. And as you recall, the Beatitudes are all in the present tense. So this is always true. Those three marks that are given here—a sorrow for sin, a trusting in Christ, and desiring to be more godly and Christlike—those three belong inseparably together. And this is always true in the life of the believer, a pattern that repeats itself over and over again.

And so what are some of the essential components of this true sorrow for sin? It's especially important in our culture today, in also the evangelical context that we emphasize this. I fear there are far, far too many who glibly profess the name of Christ, who are utterly ignorant of this. And so, what we don't want, we don't want a Christless conviction. We don't want a focus on our sin that does not lead us to Christ. But we also don't want a conviction-less Christianity—that's just as dangerous and just as wrong. That's why, when we spoke to you about John 16, we spoke about the work of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit who convinces of righteousness, convinces of sin first. It's interesting that the Dutch version of the Heidelberg Catechism has a more powerful word than the English. You know what it says in the Dutch Heidelberg Catechism, it says, “those who *loathe* themselves because of their sins”—loathe themselves. In Ezekiel 36, where we have a promise about the work of the Spirit, the work of the Spirit that is promised in Ezekiel 36, that remarkable passage, what does it say about the outworking of the work of that Spirit? It says, “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations” (Ezekiel 36:31). I can assure you, congregation, when the Holy Spirit shows you who you are in God's sight, when you begin to see yourselves the way God sees, you begin to loathe yourselves. And that stays with us until we die, that loathing. As a matter of fact, the more we grow, the more we grow in Christ, the more we become aware of who we are and remain, the more we will begin to loathe sin and all that relates to it, the more tired we become of sinning. We loathe it. In the German version, in the original version, it says, “For those who are *displeased* with themselves because of their sins.” That's what we hear in Romans 7, “O wretched man that I am” (verse 24). There is this great man of God, the Apostle Paul, who does get beyond this loathing of himself. You read Romans 7, verses 14 through 25, and then you hear that holy man of God groaning, groaning about that bitter reality.

And so, this sorrow for sin, a loathing of yourself, being displeased, and grieving over sin itself rather than its consequences. In Psalm 51, we hear David loathing himself before God He said, “Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight” (verse 4). But you see, it is against that background, when that becomes real, that the Holy Spirit then opens up the gospel, then sheds light upon the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why the Answer does not end there, it says, *And yet—and yet*, or nevertheless; in spite of that bitter reality of sin, who nevertheless *trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ*. That's the second criterion, the second mark of the true believer. You see that in Psalm 130, do you not? “LORD, if thou shouldest mark iniquities...who shall stand?” the psalmist says. I am done. But—“But with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared.” That's what the answer is, and where the one is, the other will always follow. The Holy Spirit never convinces of sin and leaves us there. His goal is to lead us to Christ. His goal is to make room for Christ. His goal is to make Christ precious and irresistibly attractive to my soul, so that I will be compelled to look outside of myself, and put all of my trust alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. *Trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ*.

In the Form for the Lord's Supper, there's this beautiful paragraph, where it talks about trusting in the promises of God. I want to read that to you a moment, because there's a lot of misunderstanding about that paragraph, where it talks about self-examination. "And secondly," it says, "secondly, that everyone examine his own heart whether he doth believe this faithful promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him, only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given him as his own, yea, so perfectly, as if he had satisfied in his own person for all his sins, and fulfilled all righteousness." Some have misread this as if it says that you have to be fully assured that your sins are forgiven. That's not what it says. It says, whether you believe this faithful promise. Do you believe the promise of the gospel? Do you believe that the promise of the gospel is that, if you put your trust in Christ, that your sins will be fully and completely pardoned—*Yet trust that these are forgiven*. That's why I keep emphasizing, congregation, as often as I can that this is at the heart of the gospel. This is the foundation of the gospel, that trusting in Christ yields to me the pardon of my sins, the complete pardon of my sins, the radical pardon of all of my sins. And so, it's not presumptuous of a believer to believe that your sins are forgiven.

But congregation, let me emphasize it again. The God who has loved you with an everlasting love; the God who has chosen you in Christ, who has given you to Christ, who has redeemed you in Christ, who has united you to Christ, wants you to enjoy the full benefits of that salvation, the full benefits of that union in Christ. And that means that it is God's desire that you be fully assured that your sins are pardoned. And that's the purpose of the Lord's Supper. The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to reaffirm those foundational gospel truths.

And yet trust—they chose the word "trust" here because that's such an essential component of faith. We know from Lord's Day 7, that *True faith* consists of *a certain knowledge*, but also a firm trust. Sometimes our forefathers, they say, "knowledge, assent, and trust." But this trust element, that's it, you see. When the Spirit of God works faith, when he reveals Christ to my soul, when my eyes are opened for the beauty, and the preciousness, and the suitability of that Savior, that he so works in me, that I put my trust in that Savior.

That's what moved the leper to leave the camp and to come to the multitude, knowing that this could be his death. But it didn't matter to him anymore. He had but one desire, and that is to cast himself at the feet of that Christ. He had heard of him that he was able to heal him from his leprosy. And this man was full of leprosy, he was near death. There was but one only hope for him, and he came and he cast himself at the feet of Christ (Matthew 8:3). So did the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43–48). So did the Canaanitish woman, the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:25–30). And Jesus said, "Woman, great is thy faith." And she took hold of him, she took hold of Christ. And that's the mark of the believer, the true believer, that this awareness of sin brings us to Christ.

That's why Jesus said—I quoted it often; I quoted it in the confession class today in our last session—John 6, verse 45, "Every man...that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." That's the goal, the Father's goal, by his Spirit, so works in us, that that awareness of who I am in myself, that loathing of myself, that being displeased with myself, makes me look outside of myself and trust alone in Christ and his finished work; trusting in him, that in him, that in him, I have the complete remedy for the guilt of my sin; trusting in him, that in him, I have the complete remedy for the pollution, the defilement of my sin; trusting in him as a complete remedy for all the consequences of sin.

But notice what's added, *And*, it says, *that their remaining infirmities are covered by His passion and death*. Let me say it again. Dear believer, the work of Christ covers your entire life,

from your conception until your last breath. It covers everything. It covers that which yet remains. And what remains, we know that between now and your last breath, you will continue to sin, sadly. We focused on that this morning. And what a comfort to know that what Christ has done is a complete work. We read it. “He saves to the uttermost.” His saving work covers your entire life, all of it. All of it is covered by his passion and death. And Christ wants you to understand that. He wants you to rejoice in that. He wants you to come to his Table and to remember him, to focus on him, who he is, what he has done, what he has accomplished for you, so that you may experience at his Table the joy of his salvation. But you see, only those will rejoice in that salvation who know why they are rejoicing in it. And that’s why loathing yourself because of your sin, and trusting in Christ, they are two inseparable sides of one coin.

And then, the third criterion, also important, it says, *And who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy.* You see, that’s the longing of the true believer. The true believer longs to know more of Christ. The true believer longs to grow in Christ. The true believer often grieves over the weakness of his faith, and longs for that faith to be strengthened so that we become more steadfast in the faith. That’s the very purpose of the Lord’s Supper. It’s instituted because we so often are struggling believers. And we struggle because of our battle with sin. That’s why we need to be reestablished time and again; we need to be redirected time and again, to look to Christ. And that’s why, in the Lord’s Supper, Christ comes to us, he condescends to us, and he uses visible instruction to reassure us of his work, of what he has accomplished for us.

Oh, the mark of a true believer is, “Oh, that I might know more of him.” That’s what Paul said, the great Apostle Paul, “O that I might know him.” He knew so much of him already. No man on earth ever knew so much about Christ. And yet, for Paul, he felt as if he was at the beginning. “O that I might know him, that I might know more of him, that I might know the power of his resurrection, and be made conformable, even unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). “O, that I might be so Christlike,” Paul was saying, “that I might be so Christlike that I am even willing to die for it, to be made conformable unto his death.” And when Paul wrote that, he was in jail, writing to the Philippians. He was waiting to be executed. It didn’t happen at that time, but he said, “Christ means so much to me, that I so desire to know him and to know more of him, that I want to be made willing even to die for him if that should be necessary.” Oh, the true believer, they yearn to grow in conformity to Christ. Because, you see, the true believer wants to honor the Savior, to honor him by honoring his Word. That is such an essential connection, congregation. And through the Lord’s Supper, Christ wants to stimulate in his people that desire ultimately to be with him, to be delivered from the body of this death; to be translated into his presence; to be with him forever, which is far better.

But hypocrites, and such as do not turn to God with sincere hearts eat and drink judgment to themselves. Hypocrites—what are hypocrites? Well it’s the Greek word for “actor”. A real hypocrite knows that he is a hypocrite. A real hypocrite lives a double life. He is one way in church, and he is one way in the world. He lives a double life. God forbid that that would be true of any of us, that we are one way here, and entirely different elsewhere; that we are a saint in church, and a monster at home. Sadly, that happens far too often. God forbid. Now, the church cannot ultimately determine who are hypocrites. Even among the twelve, there was a hypocrite—there was Judas (Iscariot). And Judas had his act together. He had his act together so well that the disciples did not suspect him. He was a hypocrite. He was an actor. In the Greek culture it means that you had a mask, and you would put on a mask and hide your real face behind that mask.

And then, there are also those who do not turn to God with sincere hearts, and who eat and drink

judgment to themselves. Those are the self-deceived, sometimes sincerely self-deceived; those whose profession does not really match their lives. In the twenty-six years I'm in the ministry, also in the previous congregations that I've served, I've heard that question from older people more than I care for. They would say to me, "Pastor, we've got all these people flocking towards the Table like never before. We're not used to this. But why do their lives not match the fact that they sit at the Lord's Table?" Congregation, God forbid, God forbid that that would be said of me or of you. That's why true preaching has to be discriminating. We have to discriminate. We have to preach like this. That's why we're called to self-examination. "Examine yourselves," the Apostle says, "whether ye be in the faith," lest you be a reprobate (2 Corinthians 13:5). The faith, the real faith, the genuine faith, the faith that manifests itself in this way; that saving faith that includes this loathing of myself, and yet trusting in Christ and desiring to serve him and to be more like him. That's the picture. That's the picture we see in Psalm 130, this beautiful, beautiful Psalm, this the paradigm of true Christian experience.

And so, congregation, do we belong? Boys and girls, I started with you tonight. Do you recognize this in yourself? Like I said, you don't have to be old like me. At your age, this can begin, this work of God can begin, as you begin to realize what a sinful boy or girl you are, as you begin to realize that you need Christ. That would be wonderful! What a wonderful thing it would be for your parents to witness that in your young life.

3. The Protection of the Lord's Supper

And so, the Lord's Supper is a blessed sacrament. And that's why it needs to be protected. I didn't get a chance to expound Question #82, but all of that is going to be unpacked in the next Lord's Day, Lord's Day 31, when we deal with *The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*—keys whereby we open the kingdom; keys whereby we close the kingdom of heaven.

But one thing I want to say in conclusion is that the Lord Supper is a sacred moment. That's why it must be protected by the church. We must protect the sanctity of the Lord's Table. So when you see the two Table Watchers, that's not just a Dutch tradition. There's a profound significance there. That is a visible statement that we recognize, especially as your church leaders, we recognize our responsibility to protect the sanctity of the Lord's Table. And, of course, we don't stand there as policemen. But we are duty-bound, should anyone—God forbid that that would ever happen here—but should anyone be subject to church discipline, that means that you will not be able to partake of the sacraments.

And so, why do we have to protect that Table?—lest we make a mockery out of the Lord's Table; lest God's covenant be profaned. That's a remarkable statement. Because that Table is a visible statement; that is a special covenant relationship between God and his people; and that relationship manifests itself in a godly life. So if someone were to come to the Table who is living a sinful life, it would make a mockery of what the Lord's Table is all about. It would make a mockery of the Word of God. That's why our forefathers have always recognized, and that's expressed here very powerfully, our duty—*It is the duty of the Christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and His apostles to exclude such persons by the keys of the kingdom of heaven till they show amendment of life*. What people?—people who are unbelieving, and therefore ungodly, lest God's wrath be kindled against the whole congregation, as was the case with Achan, a very obvious example that's quoted by all commentators (Joshua 7:19–26).

And so, let us bring this now to a conclusion. Oh, congregation, did you recognize yourself? These are the basics. What is set before us here, are the biblical basics. This is what Christ unpacks for us in the Beatitudes. This is what Psalm 130 is all about. Do you recognize yourself? Because,

ultimately, it's not whether I come to the Lord's Table, as beautiful and as wonderful as it is for the believer, ultimately it matters whether I am truly united to Christ. Because that's the criterion by which we will be judged in the final day when we appear before God.

And so, may God grant that by grace, you and I may belong to those who are sorrowful for their sins, and yet trust they are forgiven them for Christ's sake, and whose remaining infirmities are covered by his passion and death; that we belong to those who earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank thee for thy blessing today, granted to us and to our children that we could be in thy house, that we could hear thy Word proclaimed. Lord, we have set before our people today the witness of the Scriptures also articulated for us in our Heidelberg Catechism, as we have dealt with the weighty question, *For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?* Lord, may we take it to heart, and may those in our midst in whose heart thou hast wrought by thy Spirit, may they have recognized thy work in their hearts and souls, and may that encourage them to continue to trust in Christ alone, to learn an important lesson that there is no rest outside of him; and that so we may find our peace in him alone, whom to know is life eternal. Remember all in our midst who do not yet know this Christ in a saving way. Lord, bind upon their heart what a serious thing it is to be outside of Christ; that they would yet seek thee while thou art to be found; that they would heed the earnest call of the gospel to come unto him, having promised that he will not cast us out. Go with us this coming week. Bless again the labor of our hands. Bless those families that are vacationing, that are travelling. Be with my wife and I as we travel to New Jersey, grant us travelling mercies and bring us back again. Bless the minister next Lord's Day, as he brings thy Word to us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.