

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #63, Lord's Day 52

The Last Petition of the Lord's Prayer



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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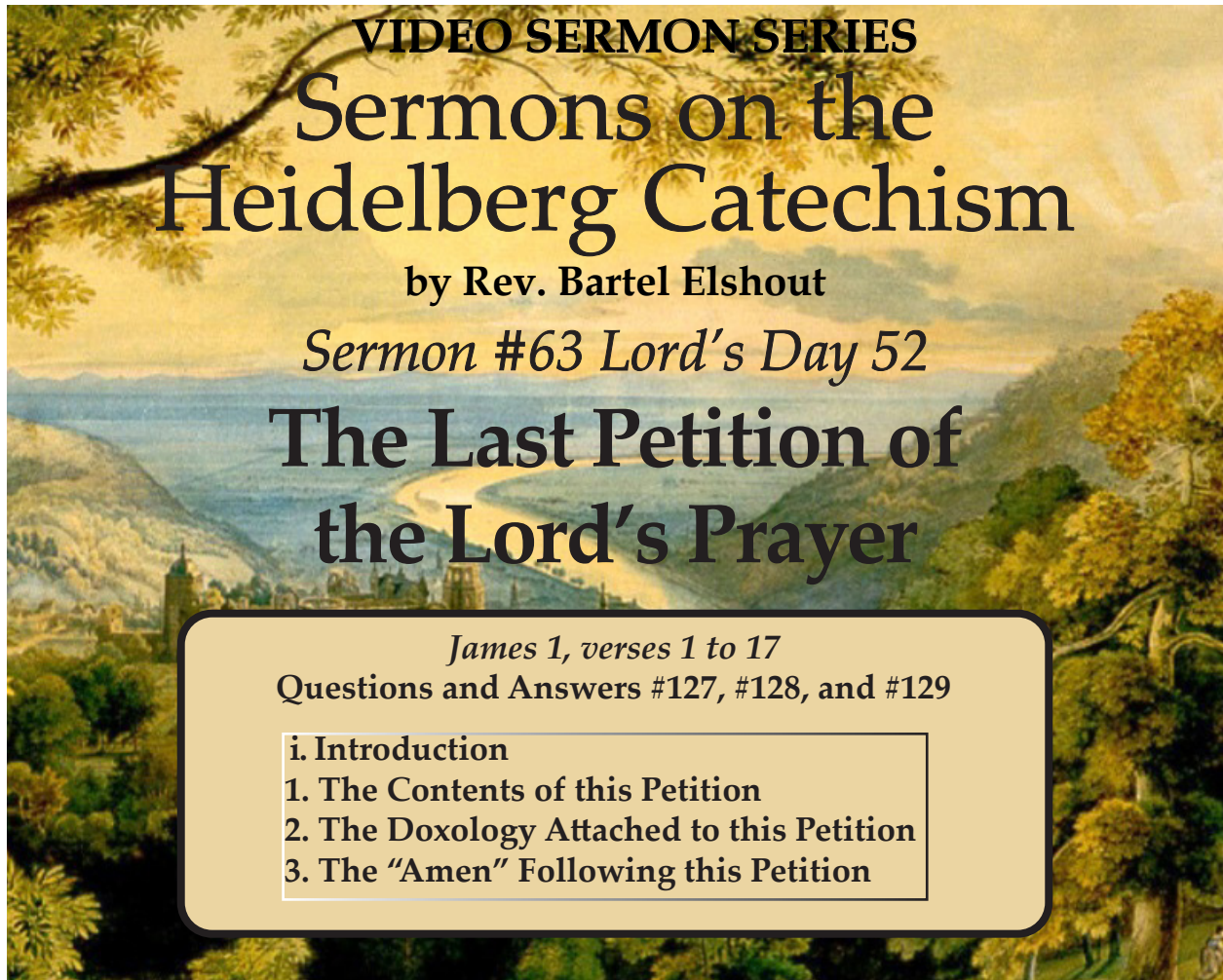
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Sermon #63 Lord's Day 52

**The Last Petition of
the Lord's Prayer**

James 1, verses 1 to 17

Questions and Answers #127, #128, and #129

i. Introduction

- 1. The Contents of this Petition**
- 2. The Doxology Attached to this Petition**
- 3. The "Amen" Following this Petition**

Introduction

Boys and girls, congregation, let me begin with a story you may have heard before, but which will set the stage for our sermon tonight. The story goes like this. Two young children who lived in a rural community went for a walk, and without knowing it, they walked into a pasture where the farmer kept his bull. And when the bull saw those children, he came towards them, his head bowed, snorting, pawing the dirt, ready to take them on—a very dangerous moment. The story, which has come to me in a variety of ways over the years, goes that the children were frightened when they saw this bull approaching them. They realized they were in grave danger. And they stopped, and they folded their hands, and they said, "Lord, bless this food and drink, for Jesus' sake, Amen." And the story goes that the bull stopped, turned around, and walked away. And in one of my congregations, a person came to me, and he said, "Pastor, this is exactly what happened to my brother and I when we were little, except we were about to be attacked by a vicious dog, who came snarling at us." But you might say, "But Pastor, didn't they pray the wrong prayer?" We would say, "Yes," but God knew what they meant. In this hour of need, when great danger was approaching, there was but one thing to do, and that is to cry to heaven. And the only prayer they could think of is the prayer they had been taught by their parents. And so, God heard what they meant. And the reason why he heard them is because they ended their prayer with "For Jesus' sake"—for Jesus' sake. That's the only reason why God hears any prayer—for Jesus' sake.

And congregation, we all live in a very dangerous and treacherous world. God's children, God's church, deal with a very vile and vicious enemy, whose goal is the destruction of the individual believer, and the destruction of God's church. It is a world in which we could not survive, were it not for the preserving grace of God. And that's the whole purpose of that last petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," or, as the Dutch Bible says, "Deliver us from the evil one." And both translations are correct, so we could combine them, "Deliver us from evil and the evil one." And then follows, of course, the wonderful doxology, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

So, let's consider that final petition of the Lord's Prayer, by way of Lord's Day 52, the last Lord's Day of our Heidelberg Catechism. And so, we read in,

Question #127: *Which is the sixth petition?*

And the Answer is: "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*"—and the evil one—that is, *since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do Thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes till at last we obtain a complete victory.*

Question #128: *How dost thou conclude thy prayer?*

The Answer is: "*For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever*"; that is, *all these we ask of Thee, because Thou, being our King and Almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but Thy holy Name, may be glorified for ever.*

Question #129: *What doth the word "Amen" signify?*

The Answer is: "*Amen*" *signifies it shall truly and certainly be, for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him.*

Thus far, our Heidelberg Catechism.

And so, as we consider this final petition of the Lord's Prayer, first of all, we will consider the contents of this petition; secondly, the doxology attached to it, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory;" and then thirdly, the "Amen following this petition, the "Amen" that concludes the Heidelberg Catechism, and the "Amen" which is the very, very last word of Scripture. And so, *The Contents of this Petition; The Doxology Attached to this Petition; and, The "Amen" Following this Petition.*

And so last week, we dealt with the reality that God's children sin, and they will continue to sin until their dying day. That's why Luther¹ famously said that God's children are saints and sinners simultaneously; sinners in themselves, yet saints for Christ's sake. But sin remains a reality until our last breath. And that's why Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts," forgive us our sins that we commit also as Christians, "as we forgive our debtors." For the true believer, that's real. The true believer recognizes that they daily need that divine and Fatherly pardon. As I pointed out last week, it is true that when we come to a saving faith in Christ, God pardons us once and for all. But we also need his Fatherly pardon for the sins that we continue to commit daily.

But not only is it the fact that we continue to sin until our last breath, the reality of the Christian life, but we also need to be kept from it. Not only to have our sins pardoned, but we need to be kept from sin. And you see, that, again, separates the nominal believer from the true believer. Because the true believer not only longs for that daily reassurance through the gospel that God forgives them

¹ 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, and widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Protestant Christian history.

when we confess our sin, that he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9); but the true believer becomes so very wary of sin. They become as wary of sin as a small child that burns itself by touching a hot oven. Because, you see, even though believers continue to sin, the difference between a believer and an unbeliever is that they hate it, they hate sin, they fear sin. And because they have self-knowledge, because they have been taught by God's Spirit, they are aware of the fact that they are always in danger of sinning again. The true believer realizes that he cannot maintain himself for one moment. The true believer realizes that we live in a very treacherous world, and Christ recognizes that powerfully and beautifully.

And so, by means of this petition, he again communicates how God, as the heavenly Father of his children, how he cares for his children. He not only is a God that is ready to forgive us again and again, seventy times seven times, but also a God who, by his grace, is ready to keep us from sin. Because that's what we're praying for, keep us, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," and from the evil one. And so we have a very crushing reality as we consider this second half of the Lord's Prayer. You could simply say, what Christ communicates to us by the second half of the Lord's Prayer, dear believer, is that you have a Father who feeds you, a Father who forgives you, and a Father who protects you. That's what we do as earthly fathers, do we not? As earthly fathers, we want to feed our children; we want to forgive them when they do wrong; and we want to keep them, and we want to protect them.

So let's look at the two components, here, of this petition.

1. The Contents of this Petition

So, what Christ is teaching us to pray is, "Lord keep me from those situations, keep me from those circumstances, in which I would be vulnerable to sin and to fail. Lord, protect me. Protect me as I go on my way. Protect me as I walk through the minefield of this world." That's what it means for a Christian. We are traveling through a minefield. If you know anything about it, and the older ones, the older children will know that. That's what the enemy does in a time of war. They bury mines in the field. That's happening in the Ukraine right now. And why is that so dangerous? Because you don't see them, but woe to the soldier who steps on a mine. He will explode, and he will perish. And traveling in this world is like walking through a minefield. There are dangers everywhere. And all of that has been greatly multiplied in the present environment in which we find ourselves. The world we now live in, a world that is completely dominated and governed by the whole social media, and internet environment—what a minefield life has become. And so, we are saying, "Lord, as I travel through this minefield, protect me. Keep me, keep me from those circumstances that would prompt me to fall into sin. Or, should I find myself confronted with a powerful temptation, should I find myself in a very dangerous situation, give me the grace to resist it. Keep me from yielding to it. Keep me from falling into that sin." So those are the two aspects that Christ addresses here. Let me say it again. "Lord, keep me from those situations that would make me vulnerable to yield to temptation. Or, should I find myself in a situation that is very tempting, give me the grace not to yield to it."

And we need both of these graces. Because, congregation, and boys and girls, it's simply true that when—listen carefully—when the desire to sin and when the opportunity to sin, when those two come together, we are done. We fall. We fall into sin, no matter who we are. And so, we should pray. Years ago, when I was a young man, an elder, he told me, he said, "Always pray,"—I never forgot it—"Always pray, that if the opportunity to sin is there, that God will keep the desire from you. And should the desire to sin be there, that he will keep you from the opportunity," he says. Because when the two meet, because we are sinners, because we are so weak that we cannot stand

one moment, as the Catechism says, when those two meet, the desire and the opportunity, we fall. That's exactly what happened to David, did it not? David, the man after God's own heart; David, the sweet psalmist of Israel; David, who was remiss in his duty. And as he walked on the roof, he saw Bathsheba, and the desire to sin and the opportunity to sin came together, and the man after God's own heart fell so very deeply and so very profoundly.

That's why the Catechism correctly says, *We are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand one moment.* that's profound language. That means we need to be kept moment by moment, moment by moment. Twenty-four/seven, we need the preserving and protecting grace of God. That's why this is such a very important petition. And so, Christ has taught us to pray for this. For he knows our frame—Psalm 103, verse 14—“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” Because even though a believer is a new creature in Christ, we still have an old nature, a sinful nature that is dying a slow death. And we need to understand, congregation, that that old nature, that sin nature that caused the Apostle Paul to groan and grieve in Romans 7, that sin nature is as attracted to sin as the heart of an unbeliever. That's why our sin nature cannot be corrected, cannot be modified. That's why we are called to crucify our flesh. That's why God will lead us in ways where we are compelled to confront our flesh and to put it to death, to crucify it, lest it overtake us—so weak and vulnerable that we cannot stand for one moment. There's not a true believer in the whole world who would not wholeheartedly agree with that language.

Think of a man like Noah, a man, a preacher of righteousness, yet, in a vulnerable moment he becomes drunk, and behaves himself in a shameless way. A man like Moses, who knew God face to face, yet in a moment of weakness, when his temper overtook him, and he angrily smote the rock when God had said he should speak, he sinned, and thereby forfeited the privilege of physically entering into the promised land. And then Peter, who boldly said, “Though they all deny thee, I will not deny thee.” And then came that weak moment, that weak moment when Peter became fearful of man, when he lost sight of Christ, he followed him from afar. And then, when he is exposed, when he is confronted multiple times, that man, who had confessed so boldly, “Thou art the Christ,” of whom Jesus had said, “Flesh and blood did not teach you this, but my Father which is in heaven,” Peter denied his Master three times.

That's why the Catechism tells us that we have mortal enemies—*mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh.* It has been called—it's not original with me—“an unholy and treacherous trinity.” And they work, they work together. They work together continuously and ceaselessly to oppose Christ, to oppose his church, and to oppose his people. That's an enemy that we cannot withstand in our own strength. That's why we read also to you Ephesians 6, where the Apostle Paul urges us to put on the spiritual armor, the spiritual armour to protect us. Because he said, in verse 12, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” And this enemy is so subtle, so devious, so utterly corrupt that we would make a serious mistake if we underestimate that enemy. That's the enemy that never sleeps. It's the enemy that never slumbers. It is Satan, the archenemy of Christ; the world, Satan's domain, a world that is hostile to God, hostile to Christ, hostile to his Anointed. And then, we have the traitor on the inside, our own wretched, sinful flesh. Satan's and the world's internal ally on the inside. And Satan is brilliant. Satan is a student of human history. And Satan and his minions, they know our weakness. They know where we are most vulnerable, and they will try to trip us up. What the Catechism so powerfully says here is we should not have the illusion that we can make it on our own. We cannot make it on our own. We need this divine protection. That's why Jesus is saying, “When you pray, this should be a standard component of your prayer, not only seek the daily pardon of your sins, but seek to be kept

from it.” Seek to be kept from it.

And so, therefore it says, *Do Thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes.* And the encouragement is that by the grace of God, we can. By the grace of God, we can be victorious, “Looking unto Jesus,” who is “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), a Savior who goes before us; a Savior who makes his strength perfect in our weakness; a Savior who has said, “I am the light of the world, and he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness” (John 8:12). And so, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. *Do Thou—our heavenly Father—therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit.*

That’s why Jesus lovingly warned Peter, and said, oh, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31–32). That’s still true. Satan desires to have us. Satan desires to sift us as the wheat. What comfort it is to know that we have a praying Savior, a praying High Priest at the Father’s right hand, who is praying uninterruptedly that our faith fail not. That’s why Peter, in the opening chapter of his first epistle, he uses that precious word, “kept.” Peter knew that had his Savior had not kept him, he would have yet perished after all. He would have gone the same way that Judas did, when he left and he wept bitterly. We face an enemy, just like Jehoshaphat, in 2 Chronicles 20, when the Ammonites and the Moabites put together a huge army and came against Jehoshaphat, and the army was about to overwhelm them. Then Jehoshaphat calls the nation to cry out to God, and he leads them in prayer, and he says these well-known words: “We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (verse 12). And that’s why we need to use that spiritual armor. Years ago, I met an old, godly woman, and she told me, she says, “Every morning, I prayerfully put on that armor. I go to Ephesians 6, and I put on that armor piece by piece.” And I understood what she meant. And that’s what we need to do. “Be sober,” Peter says in 1 Peter 5, verse 8. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

And the comforting truth is, and it’s also expressed here, is that we will not succumb in this warfare, though there may be times of failure. Christ has guaranteed that the outcome shall be victorious, *till at last we obtain a complete victory.* What an encouraging, and what a precious truth that is. Because that’s the truth we confess, is that we have a Christ who will not, who shall not, who cannot forsake the work of his own hands, but that does not absolve us from our responsibility. Pray and work; and so yes, we are to seek his grace every day; we are to call upon him every day; we are to live close to him, live out of him; and yet we must be engaged, we must be engaged. He said it to his disciples in the garden, he says, “Watch and pray”—listen carefully—“Watch and pray,”—Matthew 26:41—“that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” I don’t think there is a genuine Christian who gets up in the morning, and who says, “Today, at such a such a time, I’m going to give in to temptation.” I think every Christian, every genuine Christian, wakes up in the morning with a willing spirit; at least that’s how it ought to be; with a desire to walk in God’s ways that day; to be faithful to the Savior that day. Yet, our flesh is weak; our sin nature is drawn to sin like a magnet is drawn to iron.

That’s why we have to be as determined as David was when he was in a better place than when he walked on the roof and saw Bathsheba. But he says, in Psalm 101, verse 3, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” And of course, that’s the duty that’s implied in this petition. The duty that’s implied is that we must diligently avoid tempting circumstances, if we know that certain things would get us into trouble. And then, of course, I can’t help but think of, again, the media world we are in. That means we

can't just go and recklessly browse the web without any consideration, and at the same time, you can't say, "Lord, lead me not into temptation," and then walk right into it. That means that when we pray this prayer, we are to pray and to watch.

That means we must deal radically with sin. Open your Bibles, please. Let's read what Christ said in Matthew 5, which is so applicable here to this whole subject. Matthew 5, verses 29 and 30: "And if thy right eye offend thee"—now remember, Christ says this right after he has talked about the sin of mental fornication, a man looking upon a woman to lust after her; right after that, he says, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." And of course, you know, boys and girls, Christ is not suggesting that we literally pluck out our eyes, and that we literally cut off our arm. But what he is saying by way of this analogy, is that we need to take radical steps to deal with that temptation—radical steps. That's why the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 27, says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And tragically, tragically, so many Christians, and so many pastors are totally entrapped in this media world, and are looking at stuff they should not be looking at, because they have failed to do this; they have failed to take radical measures. The Bible says, you cannot take fire into your bosom and expect not to be burned (Proverbs 6:27).

And so, praying this petition means that we must look at our lives, we must examine ourselves, we must ask ourselves, What is it in my life that gets me into trouble? What causes me to stumble? And if the media environment is dangerous for you, you need to take steps, whatever it takes to protect yourself, to protect your soul, to protect your family. You can't pray, "Lead me not into temptation," and then walk right into it. Colossians 3, verse 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness...covetousness"...and, "idolatry." That's why we need to abide in Christ. That's why Jesus said to his people, stay as close to me as you possibly can, stay in fellowship with me, abide in my Word, walk with me, commune with me; because only then are we safe; only then are we secure.

As Andrew Murray,² who wrote the well-known book, the very precious book, *Abide in Christ*, he makes a point that, at first, startled me when I read it, but I think I understand it now. He said, abiding in Christ is an act of faith, whereby I consciously look to my Savior, consciously lean upon him, consciously rest in him. And he says you can't simultaneously abide in Christ and sin. You can't do both simultaneously. It will be one or the other. And if you've read his book, by no means does he suggest that a Christian can live sinlessly. But what he is saying is, when we abide in Christ, the best remedy against sin, the best remedy against temptation is to abide in him, to stay near to him, to stay in fellowship with him, and to abide in his Word.

That's what enabled Joseph. You talk about an opportunity to sin, Joseph had an opportunity to sin. The wife of his boss offered herself to him repeatedly. He could have gotten away with it; she would have protected him. But there's a young man, who even in that hostile environment, in the house of Potiphar in Egypt, there's a man who truly feared God (Genesis chapter 39). I said this before, congregation. It's when we are alone, when we are alone, that's when it really counts. Who are you, who am I, when we're all alone, when no human eye is upon me, who are we then? And those that fear God, they live in *coram deo*,³ even when they are alone, are always conscious of the presence of God. And so, what did he say to this woman who tried to seduce him, this

2 Andrew Murray (1828–1917) was a Dutch South African minister, writer, and teacher.

3 *Coram deo* is a Latin phrase that means "in the presence of God."

young healthy man? He said, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). There is a man who loved God more than anything else. There is a man who loved God so much that he risked his life. And if Potiphar had not loved Joseph and really believed that he was innocent, he would have killed him. In that culture he would have killed him on the spot, for having supposedly assaulting his wife which she accused him of. But Joseph would have rather died than offend God.

How about Daniel? Daniel, it says it so simply in Daniel 1, verse 21, “And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.” Daniel, who lived in this powerful political environment. But he was not corrupted by it. You know why, boys and girls, what do we read about Daniel, how often did Daniel pray?—three times a day. Three times a day he sought the face of God. That’s what kept him. That’s what kept him. That’s what preserved him. He lived in communion with God. He lived in fellowship with God. He walked with God like Enoch did, and that kept him from being corrupted by that environment in which God had called him to be. And we serve the same God. And the very fact that Christ gives us this petition means, dear believer, when we pray this earnestly every day, we will not pray that in vain. Your heavenly father, who loves you more than you can imagine; your heavenly Father who has redeemed you, desires to preserve you. And so, when you earnestly, daily, moment by moment, pray this prayer, “Lord, protect me, keep me, lead me not into temptation, should the temptation come, keep me from succumbing to it.” You will not pray that prayer in vain. That’s why Christ teaches us to pray that prayer.

2. The Doxology Attached to this Petition

Well, now we need to come to the conclusion here: *How dost thou conclude thy prayer?—“For”*—and that’s an important “for”—*“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever”*. Ah, you see, there is our encouragement. There’s our encouragement that the power we need, the grace we need is all to be found in our heavenly Father. His is the kingdom, his is the power, his is the glory forever. What a matter of great comfort and encouragement that is! Oh, I think of the words of Jesus when he said to his disciples, in Luke 12, verse 32: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” That’s what we may say, as God’s servants today, to God’s people, fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. The outcome is guaranteed. Satan will not be victorious. Christ will ultimately have dominion. That’s why we are called to comfort God’s people. I often quote this verse, you know that, from Isaiah 40, verses 1 and 2: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished.” And so, even though we deal with a mighty, treacherous and vile enemy, he is a defeated enemy. And he only is allowed to do what Christ, the exalted Christ, allows him to do. He is an enemy on a chain, and Christ determines how many links he gives to that enemy, but let’s not underestimate him. And yet, it should encourage us. That’s why, if we, as Luther said, if we had to rely on our own strength, we would be losing in this battle. But we have a Savior whose is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

And so, we see how the Lord’s Prayer ends where it started. It begins with worship, and it ends with worship. And again, that’s how we should order our prayers. As I’ve pointed out before, prayer is in the first place an act of worship. Prayer is the act whereby we honor God to be who he is; where we confess our total dependency and reliance upon him. Prayer supremely honors God. That’s why we begin by hallowing his name, by worshipping him for who he is. But we also end with praise. We end with a doxology. So those are the bookends, if you will, of this remarkable prayer. You can’t help but notice that, in the Psalms, sometimes the psalmist begins to express

great distress, great discouragement, but so often the Psalms end in doxology, when the psalmist gets ahold again of who God is, and it lifts him above his circumstances.

That is, all these we ask of Thee—all these things, all these petitions—we ask of Thee, because Thou, being our King and Almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but Thy holy Name, may be glorified for ever. A heavenly Father who will give us what's good for us, what's good for us spiritually. God is not interested in making us comfortable in this life, and giving us exactly what we would like. God is determined to make us holy, and he will give us what's good for us spiritually. And sometimes that may be unpleasant for our flesh. That means that we have to deny ourselves, and we have to surrender ourselves to God's sovereign will. But he will give us what is good, just like an earthly father, as we saw this morning would never give something to his child that would harm his child. And yet, as parents, sometimes we do. But not this heavenly Father. This Father is committed to your spiritual wellbeing; he is committed to your spiritual prosperity. And he will give us what is good for us, what is good for us spiritually, even if that means, at times, trial, and affliction, and perplexing providences. That's why Paul writes, in Romans 8, when he wrote to Christians that were being persecuted. Now, remember, he said, all these things that are happening to you, always, must, and shall "work together for good to...them that are the called according to God's purpose" (verse 28), for we are predestined to be conformed after the image of God's Son.

3. The "Amen" Following this Petition

And then that precious word, "Amen." *What doth the word "Amen" signify?—"Amen" signifies it shall truly and certainly be.* The word "amen" is a very rich and powerful word in Scripture. Seventy times the word "amen" occurs in Scripture, and in the New Testament, the word "verily", which is the translation of that word "amen", occurs at least one hundred seven times. It's a very powerful word. It's a very meaningful word, boys and girls. It doesn't just mean that the sermon is over. It doesn't just mean that prayer is ended. But the word "amen" is a confession of faith, when its used correctly. "Amen" is the affirmation that I believe God to be true to his Word and to his promises. "Amen" means that I confess that all of God's promises are in him yea and amen to the glory of God by us. Amen—so shall it be. And therefore, as I said before, it's the very last inspired word of the Scriptures. That's where the Bible ends, with "Amen"—so shall it be. That word "amen" in Revelation 22 is the Holy Spirit's stamp on the entire Scripture—so shall it be, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

But there's a wonderful pastoral application here, an application that has comforted me many, many times. It says, *For my prayer is more assuredly heard of God than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him.* You know why that's so comforting? Because it means that God will hear my prayer no matter how I feel at the moment when I'm praying. And you know, our feelings are all over the place. There are moments that we can pray with fervency. There are moments when the tears are flowing freely. Then there are those moments when we cannot produce a single tear, and it feels as if our heart is cold and unresponsive. I don't know how you are, but when my tears are flowing, and when my heart feels tender, I somehow still think that the probability of my prayer being answered is far greater than when I can't. What a foolish notion that is! God is not moved by your tears, as such. That's why we pray the way we do. When we pray to God, we're not bargaining with him. We're not trying to strike a trade deal with him. No, we're saying, "Amen, amen."

Ultimately, that's why we pray, "for Jesus' sake." That's one of his names, boys and girls. "These things saith the Amen,"—Revelation 3:14—"the faithful and true witness." He is the

Amen. He is God's Amen. And so, no matter how I feel, no matter how I struggle, whether I am fluent in my prayer, or whether I'm stumbling over my own words, and sometimes feel confused, so regardless of the intensity of my desires—that's what God is saying here—he will hear me, and he will hear me for Jesus' sake. He will hear me, he will hear my mumbling, he will hear my groaning, he will hear my backward petitions. Because we have a Savior who ever lives to make intercession for us; a Savior who takes our mumblings, our poor prayers, and he translates them and brings them into the very presence of his Father; a Savior, who, at the Father's right hand, keeps us, his people, in unbroken fellowship with his Father. And his Father hears our petition for his sake, for Christ's sake.

And so, this is true in spite of all of Satan's subtle and insidious insinuations. Satan is always there to whisper in our ears, especially when we struggle with our prayers. "How in the world do you think that God would hear a prayer like that? You don't even know how to pray. Your prayer doesn't amount to anything." And how he tries to misrepresent God's character; how he tries to misrepresent who God is, as if we have to persuade God to be gracious. Wilhelmus à Brakel⁴ wonderfully says, in his book, he says we think that we have to persuade God to be gracious. He said, it's the other way around. God goes out of his way to persuade us that he is gracious, to encourage us to come to him, and to cast our burdens upon him.

So the bottom line is, God will hear our petitions for Christ's sake, for Jesus' sake. Those words are so profoundly important, they are so meaningful. Boys and girls, don't ever say them flippantly. Because when you say that, you say, "Apart from Jesus, God could not possibly hear my prayer, because I'm a sinner. But for Jesus' sake, he can. For Jesus' sake, he can hear my prayer."

So we have come to the conclusion of our exposition of this prayer. Congregation, I encourage you again, and I try to practice it myself—order your prayers according to this paradigm. It doesn't mean that you always have to repeat the Lord's Prayer verbatim. There's nothing wrong with that once in a while. But order your prayers, order your petitions according to this paradigm. And so, your prayer should be focusing on your Father's name, on your Father's cause, on your Father's will, on your Father's care, on your Father's forgiveness, and your Father's protection. That's the pattern that Christ has given us. And his Spirit will help us. Romans 8:26, let's read that together, that precious verse from Romans. Open your Bibles, please, to Romans 8, verse 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought"—Paul is saying that—"but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." What a comforting truth that is. And so, we have an intercessor in heaven, and we have an intercessor that dwells within us, in the heart of the believer, groaning with groanings that cannot be uttered.

And so, we've come to the end of the Heidelberg Catechism again. Excuse me for going a little bit of overtime. I will wrap it up soon. But we began with the Question, *What is thy only comfort in life and death?* And congregation, what's your answer? Boys and girls, what's your answer? Because there is only one real comfort. Everything else is counterfeit. Everything else is imaginary. The only comfort is to know that I do not belong to myself. *I belong to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ*, who has purchased even me with the price of his precious blood. Do you know that today, congregation? Boys and girls, do you know that? Is that comfort yours? Because only with that comfort can you really face an unknown future. And boys and girls, we have been reminded again after what happened in Texas, you don't have to be old to die. There were children your age who were swept away by the flood and who perished suddenly. Who would have ever imagined that?

4 Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1811), aka "Father Brakel", was a Protestant Reformed minister and theologian in the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands, famous for his 4 volumes, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*.

How would their parents ever have imagined that one of their children would die this way? That's the reality of it. So you can't wait until you're older. You need to know today, boys and girls. You need this comfort in life and death. You need to know that Christ has also saved you, that you are purchased with his blood. You need to go to him today. And we, as parents and grandparents, we have to encourage our children, in light of the reality that death can happen at any moment. Oh, how we need to be urgent in teaching them the Word of God, teaching them the gospel. "Suffer the little children to come unto me" and hinder them not (Matthew 19:14), and may God give us the grace to do so.

So, as we conclude this, may we look to the Christ, who is the sum and substance of all that has been communicated in the Heidelberg Catechism. I want to end with the words of Jude, the last two verses: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (verses 24–25).

Let's pray.

Oh, glorious triune God, Hallowed be thy magnificent name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil and from the evil one. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.