

Lord's Day 38 – Of Thankfulness

The Heidelberg Catechism explained to children

Sometimes, it is necessary that people swear an oath. For example, in court, or for a specific job such as a doctor. Such oaths are allowed. However, we are not allowed to swear by saints (such as the apostle Paul) or by other creatures. Someone who swears, calls upon God. Only God knows the heart and knows if you are speaking the truth. No creature is truly able to know that!

This week, the teacher and student discuss the fourth commandment: *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.* The student asks:

103. What doth God require in the fourth commandment?

The fourth commandment is about the Sabbath day. God created everything in six days, and rested the seventh day. The seventh day of the week—Saturday—was the Sabbath day, the day of rest. After Christ's resurrection, Christians started to gather on Sunday, the first day of the week, because Christ rose from the grave on Sunday. That is why we have our day of rest on Sunday. What does God require from us concerning the Sunday?

First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God to hear His Word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian.

It is important that *the gospel* continues to be preached. It is also important that there are Christian *schools*, in which children are taught about God and the Bible. Both of those, the *ministry of the gospel and the schools* have to *be maintained* or kept up. What a blessing it is that we live in a country in which the gospel is allowed to be freely preached! What a blessing it is that we have Christian schools!

How often do you go to church? The teacher explains that is important to *diligently frequent the church of God*. That means: we have to go to church diligently and frequently (often)! We have to do that *especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest*; especially on Sunday. However, also when there are church services during the week, we have to make an effort to be there!

Why do we go to church? The teacher mentions four reasons:

1. *To hear His Word*: We go to church to listen to the sermon, and learn more about God and from His Word.
2. *To use the sacraments*: In church, we have to use the sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Supper).
3. *Publicly to call upon the Lord*: We go to church to pray. The elder or minister prays out loud, and lays all the needs of the congregation before the Lord. We also pray when we sing.
4. *Contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian*: as Christians, we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves. That includes taking care of the poor. That is why the deacons collect money during the service. Some of the collection money goes to the church itself, so that the bills

and maintenance can be paid. Some of the money goes to people in the congregation who do not have enough money to pay for their basic needs, such as a house, clothes, and food. Some of the money goes to other good causes.

Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me; and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.

Are we only supposed to serve God on Sunday? No, *all the days of* our lives we have to *cease from* our *evil works*! How many evil works do we do, every day again? The fourth commandment teaches us to stop doing those evil works.

Instead, we have to *yield ourselves to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in* us. Is the Holy Spirit working in you already? If not, ask the Lord to work in you as well! Then you will start to hate doing evil works. Then you will start to love doing what God requires of you!

What does the teacher mean when he says: *and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath*? The eternal Sabbath is in heaven. That is where God's people will never do evil works anymore. That is where they will forever praise God. There they will forever have rest! When God's Holy Spirit works in us, when we yield ourselves to the Lord, and when we stop doing our evil works, it is a start of that eternal Sabbath. Here on earth God's people will never be perfect, but in heaven they will be absolutely perfect!

What do you do on Sunday? Do you spend time with God and His Word? Do you find God's day of rest a boring day? Or do you love it, longingly looking forward to the eternal Sabbath?

Psalters

- ♪ Psalter 229:1-3
- ♪ Psalter 251
- ♪ Psalter 250
- ♪ Psalter 318:4
- ♪ Psalter 320:4