

Delighting in the Lord and His Law

Exodus 20:2

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 92–93

Studies in the Heidelberg Catechism #44

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“**W**HO is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?” (Ex. 5:2). You might remember this was the great Pharaoh, king of Egypt’s question to Moses. It sounds as if he just wanted to know more about the LORD. Perhaps if he had more facts he’d believe in the LORD and submit to him? But we know the tone of Pharaoh’s question from the surrounding story: he was not being inquisitive but obstinate. “What do I care if the LORD wants Israel to be freed; I’m Pharaoh! Who is the LORD?”

THE HEART THAT DOES NOT DELIGHT IN THE LORD

What Pharaoh illustrates is THE HEART THAT DOES NOT DELIGHT IN THE LORD. Turn to Romans 8 for Paul’s explanation. First he says “those who live according to the flesh (which is the unregenerated sinful nature) set their minds on the things of the flesh.” What’s the mind of our nation on today? The Super Bowl not the Lord’s Day. Then he says this about that unregenerated mind: “to set the mind on the flesh is death.” Why? “The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.” Not that: “does not” is a matter of will; “cannot” is a

matter of ability. His conclusion is to go back to “those who are in the flesh” and say they “cannot please God” (Rom. 8:5–8).

“Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?” That ancient obstinancy is still in our world. There’s a popular band right now named Imagine Dragons. One of their hit songs is “Believer.” It’s a song about a person who’s gone through all the pain of life to make something of oneself. It’s great motivation. But it also has this line reminiscent of Pharaoh and Paul’s person in the flesh:

“Don’t you tell me what you think that I can be
I’m the one at the sail, I’m the master of my sea.”

THE HEART THAT DELIGHTS IN THE LORD

So *what’s your attitude toward obeying God tonight?* I want to describe for you THE HEART THAT DELIGHTS IN THE LORD. If you remember your Catechism you know that “your only comfort in life and in death” is that you “belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to...Jesus Christ.” “Because” you “belong to him...by his Holy Spirit [he] makes [you] wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him” (Q&A 1). That’s the opposite willing and ability of Paul’s unregenerate person in Romans 8.

What's your attitude toward obeying God tonight? Our Catechism teaches that “to live and die in the joy of this comfort” of belonging to Christ you and I need to know “how...to thank God for such deliverance” (Q&A 2).

What's your attitude toward obeying God tonight? Is it “who is the LORD” because I’m going to live my life at the helm steering it towards doing what I want to do? No! You’re “called a Christian” because you belong to Jesus Christ and have his Holy Spirit within you! And because of who he is and what he has done for you and is now doing in you, you can “present [yourself] to him as a living sacrifice of thanks” and “strive with a free conscience against sin and the devil in this life” (Q&A 32).

What's your attitude toward obeying God tonight? You’ve “been delivered from [y]our misery by grace through Christ without any merit of [y]our own” and the “must” of good works is “because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, is also renewing us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits, and that he may be praised through us” (Q&A 86). A part of that renewing work of the Holy Spirit in us is a “wholehearted joy in God through Christ and a love and delight to live according to the will of God by doing every kind of good work” (Q&A 90). “Wholehearted joy!” “Love and delight!”

Why does the Catechism say this? Because the very preface to the Law itself says this: **“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”**

THE HEART THAT DELIGHTS IN THE LAW

“Oh yeah, I heard a song about that once, ‘All you need is love,’ by The Beatles.” In a biblical worldview, love needs law; delight needs duty; freedom needs form. Boundless delight that God has become our Father because of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is bounded. The good works we love and delight in are to “conform to God’s law” (Q&A 91). This moral law is contained in the Ten Commandments (Q&A 92) that are divided into things that “teach[...] us how we should live in relation to God” and things that “teach[...] us what we owe our neighbor” (Q&A 93).

“But *the law* was for Israel and not the Church.” Have you heard that? We have to admit that as we read our Old Testament it can feel legal. Let’s look at a couple of passages. In Galatians 3:15 Paul uses a “human example” that “even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.” Then he applies this to God’s covenants: “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring (v. 16). God made a covenant with promises to Abraham. Now the important thing for us comes

up: “the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void” (v. 17). God’s covenant already existed with Abraham for 430 before he gave the law. The big question is, “Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made” (v. 19). He goes on to say the law “imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (v. 22). Then those wonderful words of verse 24: “So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.” The law feels harsh because it was added to the covenant of grace to show Israel their sins to prepare them for the Messiah.

The law’s not the problem. Look at Romans 8:3-4. “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.” In the beginning the law was the means by which Adam would receive eternal life. On this side of the Fall, when our sins come into contact with the law, we muck it up. So “Go has done what the law...could not do.” How? “By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.” Why? “In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

What does this mean for me and my new heart that delights in the Lord and his law? Let's go to one last passage tonight: Romans 7. Here's another human illustration that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he's alive. When he dies she is released from the law of marriage and free to marry again. Here's the application: "you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong...to him...in order that we may bear fruit for God" (v. 4). Again he says in verse 6 "now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code." Spirit and letter is a typical Pauline contrast. What does it mean? By the time of Jesus and apostles the Pharisees thought that in the Scriptures themselves they had life. Hence they put Bible verses on pieces of paper in little boxes on their foreheads. What they were doing was to separate the law from the Spirit and thus to render the law lifeless in and of itself. But because we've been freed from the bare law we can serve God through it in a new way. In verse 22 he says, "I delight in the law of God in my inner being."

So *what's your attitude toward obeying God tonight?* When you hear, "**I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,**" is it drudgery or delight?