

True Prayer

Lord's Day Sermons

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Bible Text: Luke 11:1-13; Hebrews 10:25
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Let's come before our God in congregational prayer.

O God, our Father in heaven, we draw nigh unto thee as thou hast drawn us unto thee by thy Holy Spirit which dwells in our hearts, thy Spirit which cries out unto thee, Abba, Father. Thou hast drawn us unto thee in thy cords of covenant love to praise and worship thee, to give thee thanks for the gracious salvation of us in Jesus Christ. We come before thee in holy reverence and humble submission to who thou art. Thou art the true and living God and thou hast decreed all things and thou dost carry out thy perfect will infallibly and irresistibly toward the end which thou hast purposed, the end which is the gathering of the church in Jesus Christ when all the elect shall be gathered into the body of Christ, and where thy name is eternally glorified in the face of thy only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Thou dost uphold all things with thy fatherly care, and we know that all the things that dost befall us, they are from thee and for our good and for our salvation. And thou hast willed by thy eternal decree to glorify thyself and may all the glory redound to thee, now and forever. And make man nothing, make us nothing before thy sight, for in and of ourselves we are totally depraved, that we do not the good but we sin against thee, against thy holy law, in all points throughout our entire life. We are rebellious. We hate thee by nature. We hate thy truth. And we would serve the lie if left to ourselves but thou hast determined to save a people in Jesus Christ, for Christ is our head, the church is the body, and his life courses through us. Jesus Christ and all of the blessings of salvation are ours. Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent to the cross, who was born of a woman, born under the law in the fullness of time, who all his life long walked in the shadow of that cross where he would be crucified, and at that cross, he took all our sins upon himself, and accomplished perfect righteousness and all our salvation is finished for he himself said, "It is finished," and there is nothing left more for us to do for that salvation, but it's ours by faith alone. And thou hast poured out thy Spirit in rich measure unto the church, given unto us the reality of the promise of Jesus Christ in all of his fullness and thou hast given unto us the gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified, the good news of salvation in him, the good news that our salvation is complete.

Speak unto us this evening, Jesus Christ and him crucified, for thou dost use the foolish things of the earth to confound the wise for what is wisdom with the world is foolishness with thee, but what is wisdom with thee looks foolish to the world. But the gospel is the

power of thee unto salvation. Give unto us that gospel this evening and all of our life. We delight in that gospel. We love that gospel, that it is all of Christ and it is none of man, none of man's working, none of man's obedience, but Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith this evening. Give unto us a rich knowledge and assurance of what Christ has accomplished for us. And Lord, thy will is good, thy will is perfect. Let thy will be done and not our own will for we often in our own flesh think we know what is best, we know what we ought to do, we know which way this or that thing ought to be and go, but let thy will be done. Our will and our wisdom is earthly, sensual, and devilish, but thy will is perfect, glorious, and almighty. Give unto us contentment with thy will and throughout all our lives, lead us to the end which thou hast purposed for us.

Be with this church, which is the gathering of believers and their seed in this place. Strengthen her by the preaching of the gospel and knit her together in that gospel. Give her love for sound doctrine, that she may confess that sound doctrine over against the lie, even to her own hurt, often to her own hurt. Be with the elders who oversee this congregation. Fill them with thy Spirit. You'll be with our deacons as Christ has been merciful unto them, so they show forth the mercies of Christ unto thy people. Remember our denomination which thou hast given unto us, an expression of the unity of the church over the length and breadth of this earth. What a great gift. What a great gift it is that we have churches and a denomination with whom we are united in the faith, in true doctrine, and in the gospel of our Savior. Be with our denomination in all her various activities and work, gird her up in the Spirit, in her training of ministers, in her outreach, and the finances that are overseen that we are stewards over as thou hast been gracious to us, and all of her labors gird her up and care for her. And be with the denomination that as the truth sounds forth, that thy name may be glorified.

We remember also this evening the upcoming family conference where we may join together as a denomination over the length of this earth in one place to fellowship with one another, to hear various speeches and activities. Lord, we look forward to that. Be with the committee as it plans. And be also with our teachers and our school in the summer break. Wilt thou make the way plain for our little school which thou hast given unto us, that little school which is nothing in the sight of men, which looks pathetic, which is a despised little school, which make men often to scoff, but we see in that little school, thy wisdom, that thou dost not come in the high and mighty things, but thou dost come in the lowly things for our Lord Jesus Christ himself rode into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass, on the lowly beast of burden. And that is how thy kingdom always comes, it comes in what way most men think is foolishness and ridiculousness.

Lord, thou dost fashion us according to thy wisdom. thou dost do all things according to thy wisdom, for thou art the potter, and we are the clay and we are who we are because of thy sovereign grace. Do with us according to thy will. And Lord, teach us to pray. Teach us to pray all throughout our life, prayer which is a great gift and the chief part of thankfulness. And be with the student then, that he speak unto us the truth of the doctrine of prayer and that this evening we carefully handle thy word in the confessions, and with holy reverence the scriptures are expounded and the confessions are opened, that prayer which is the chief part of thanksgiving and of gratitude, of worship for the salvation

graciously received, prayer which can never earn anything, prayer which is not a means to obtain salvation, a prayer which is a wonderful gift of thee worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

We thank thee, Lord, for all the wonderful blessings which thou hast given unto us. Thou hast given to us the gospel. Thou hast cared for our needs both soul and in body. We praise and adore thee and hear our prayer not for our sake but for our mediator who makes continual intercession before thy throne. Hear our prayer for his sake. Amen.

We worship the Lord with our giving of our offerings. The first is for the building fund and the second is for the RPC denomination common fund.

Let's sing Psalter #185. 185. Let's sing 1 through 3 and 6 through 9.

"In full assurance of Thy grace
To Thee my prayers ascend;
In Thy abounding love and truth,
O God, salvation send.

Preserve my sinking soul, I pray,
From tides of hatred save;
Let not the waters overflow,
Redeem me from the grave.

Because Thy mercy, Lord, is good,
O answer me in grace,
And in the riches of Thy love
O turn to me Thy face.

My heart is broken by reproach,
My soul is full of grief;
I looked in vain for comforters,
For pity and relief.

They gave me bitter gall for food,
And taunting words they spake;
They gave me vinegar to drink,
My burning thirst to slake.

Their peace and plenty be their snare,
In blindness let them grope;
Thy indignation on them pour,
And desolate their hope.

Because they proudly persecute
Those whom Thou, Lord, dost smite,

Let them be blotted from Thy book
And banished from Thy sight."

We turn in the word of God this evening to two passages. The first is Luke 11. We'll read the first 13 verses, and the second is Hebrews 10. Luke 11. This is the word of God.

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. 5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

We turn now in the word of God to Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. We'll begin reading at verse 18 and we'll read through verse 25. Hebrews 10:18.

18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. 19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Thus far we read from the word of God this evening. May he bless it to our hearts.

On the basis of that passage and many others, we consider the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism in the Lord's Day 45.

Q. 116. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

A. Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us; and also, because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them.

Q. 117. What are the requisites of that prayer which is acceptable to God and which He will hear?

A. First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only, who hath manifested Himself in His Word, for all things He hath commanded us to ask of Him; secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of His divine majesty; thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that He, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as He has promised us in His Word.

Q. 118. What hath God commanded us to ask of Him?

A. All things necessary for soul and body, which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer He Himself has taught us.

Q. 119. What are the words of that prayer?

And then follows the well-known words of the Lord Jesus Christ's perfect prayer.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come this evening to the Heidelberg Catechism's instruction of prayer. We are given here the introduction to the Lord Jesus Christ's perfect prayer that he offered and taught us to pray and what this Catechism instruction gives us here this evening is going to be a springboard for all the instruction that's going to come after as the contents of the Lord Jesus Christ's perfect prayer are laid out for us as we are taught to pray. And prayer is a holy art. It's a holy art and here the Lord's Day expounds for us the principles of true prayer. There are principles that must always govern that prayer and that's given to us in Question and Answer 117, these principles that must govern our entire life of prayer. It is a holy art, a holy art that only the regenerated Christian, only the regenerated Christian can do.

The Catechism here does not give us a formal definition of prayer but we can still define here what prayer is in the words of what we read in Hebrews 10:22. Prayer, that holy art, that holy art is an activity of the whole soul. It's an activity that brings that sinner consciously before the presence of God, before the presence of God by a true and living

faith. Prayer is an act of worship. It's an act of worship in which the whole soul is laid bare before this divine, majestic God. Prayer is worship. Prayer is thanksgiving to God, the chief part of thankfulness, as the Catechism says. Prayer is the highest expression of what lives in that regenerated heart. Prayer is that activity that proceeds from the regenerated heart, dominated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It's an expression of what lives in that heart, what lives in that perfect heart. The Spirit which has taken up his abode, which dwells in that heart by the sovereign grace of God. Prayer is an expression of a deep need, principally of God, God's grace. It's a deep longing. It's a deep longing for God, to taste of God's goodness, to drink deeply of those living waters. True prayer is assurance. It's assurance that God will hear us by faith alone and full assurance of faith that God will hear us and answer us by that faith, and we have the confidence that what we ask in that true faith, he will certainly hear. And that's rooted in God's deep love for Jesus Christ. True prayer then is that activity of the believer, whereby he acknowledges God as the sole good, as the overflowing fountain of all good, in which the believer approaches that fountain to drink deeply of that fountain of living waters and to taste of the goodness of God, to drink of those blessed waters by faith alone.

So let's consider then, the Heidelberg Catechism's instruction under the theme, "True Prayer." In the first place, prayer's necessity; in the second place, prayer's requisites, or prayer's principles; and then in the last place, prayer's contents. True prayer: prayer's necessity, prayer's principles or requisites, and prayer's contents.

The Catechism begins by asking in Question and Answer 116 why is prayer necessary for Christians, so let's begin by examining the question itself. The Catechism is saying here about prayer that prayer is necessary. It's necessary for the Christian. God commands his people to pray. Prayer is a good work. Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. It's necessary for the Christian to pray to the one true and living God. And the Catechism here, by asking this question, what the Catechism is interested in examining here, what place does prayer have in our life? What place does that prayer have throughout our entire life as Christians? And what the Catechism is doing here, it's convicting us of our lack of prayer. It's necessary that we are convicted of that by this question of our lack of prayer because there's no man that's more unteachable than a man who of himself says, "I don't need to pray. It's not necessary for me." We need to be convicted of its necessity in our life. That necessity needs to be impressed upon us. It's not an optional thing for the Christian.

The Christian, "Why is prayer necessary for Christians?" The disciples asked that question. In Luke 11:2, they said, "Lord, teach us to pray," and if the disciples could ask that question, then certainly, we ought to also ask that question. Prayer is necessary. We need to examine that life of prayer because if we're neglectful in prayer, we've forgotten its necessity. God commands it. It's necessary for our spiritual lives, as necessary as it is to eat, drink, sleep, and breathe air. Prayer is necessary, as necessary for our physical life as breathing air. And then there's a certain inevitability of prayer then too. The Christian will pray. The Spirit lives in that Christian's heart. There's an impossibility that the Christian will not pray. Only the proud man will say in himself, "I don't need to pray. It's

not necessary for me to pray." The Catechism says it is necessary. Prayer is necessary for the life of the regenerated Christian in which the Spirit of God dwells in his heart.

And then the Catechism gives its answer of why is prayer necessary for Christians, and the first part of that answer is because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us. Prayer is the chief part of that thankful life of the believer, of the worship of the one true and living God. And understand that gratitude, gratitude for the salvation received graciously by the redeemed and renewed Christian, gratitude and a life of thankfulness can only be by that regenerated Christian in which he's redeemed by the blood of Christ and he's renewed by the Spirit of Christ that lives in his heart, and then the fruit of that union with Jesus Christ is that the Christian prays. He gives thanks to God. He worships him. He lays his whole life before God.

It's impossible for a Christian not to pray. Certainly a Christian can neglect prayer. That's true. He can neglect prayer in his life. But the Holy Spirit renews him to that prayer again, renews him to pray. The unregenerated man, he cannot pray. He doesn't have the ability to pray. There's nothing for him to be thankful for. He doesn't have that salvation that has been graciously received. Prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit. It's the work of the Holy Spirit alone but by the sovereign grace of God.

Prayer is the goal of salvation. It's why God saved his people, why he gave them all of salvation in the blood of Jesus Christ and poured out his Spirit upon them. Prayer. It's the end result. of that union with Jesus Christ. That makes prayer the chief part of thankfulness. We're saved in order to be thankful and pray. We don't pray to God to become saved, we pray because we are saved, and we have all of the blessings of salvation, that they belong to us.

And the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart of that regenerated Christian is that he actually prays. Astounding. It's unbelievable actually. The Catechism teaches that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness, and by that what the Catechism is saying is that prayer is all of the speech of the child of God. Prayer is not fundamentally what we do, it's the speech of God, rather, our speech in which God is thanked, adored, glorified, and worshiped as the chief part of thankfulness. When we make confession of faith, it's a kind of prayer. When we sing songs to God, that's a kind of prayer. When we gather together in public worship formally, when we pray privately in our homes, when we pray in our homes, formally or informally, as we're washing the dishes, as we're driving in the car, all those prayers is a kind of speech. It all amounts to this: prayer is the joyful acknowledgment that God is good. God is good. He's good to me. He's good to you. the chief part of thankfulness.

And our Catechism continues on as the second part of why is prayer necessary for Christians, and also because God will give his grace and his Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of him and are thankful for them. The Catechism here is quite bold. It's quite a bold statement of the Catechism because on face value you look at that and you think by that statement, is the Catechism here compromising God's sovereignty? It appears that way. It looks that way that the

sovereignty of God is being compromised by this question, by this answer rather, but that's not true. That's not true. The Catechism here, understand, is telling us something about prayer. It's telling us something about its necessity. It's as necessary for your spiritual life to pray as it is for you to take your next breath. It's as necessary for you to eat, drink, and sleep as it is for you to pray. That's what the Catechism is teaching here, that God's way with his grace and his Holy Spirit is he will not give it to someone who does not ask for it.

It's quite a bold statement of the Catechism. How are we to understand that? That doesn't compromise God's sovereignty, and it doesn't compromise God's sovereignty for someone to... that God exerts his power over someone who doesn't eat, sleep, or drink, or breathe air; hold your breath, and then who says to yourself, "God will keep me alive." No one in their right mind would say that. Prayer is as necessary for your spiritual life as eating and drinking is for your physical life. That's what the Catechism is saying here by its necessity.

Prayer is the very breath of the soul. There's a certain inevitability, an impossibility that the Christian won't pray. If an elect child of God doesn't believe that about prayer, don't pray. Tempt God and see what happens. God will beat that elect child with a heavy stick. He'll chastise that child of God until that child is renewed to prayer, until he prays again.

It's necessary. Prayer is necessary for the Christian. There's an impossibility to prayer because of the Spirit that lives in the heart. You will pray. You must pray and you will pray and understand that what the Catechism is not saying here, is that we pray for grace in the Holy Spirit originally. The Holy Spirit is poured out by promise. That's the meaning of Acts 2:39. All of the blessings of salvation, all of that comes into our possession when the Spirit comes into your heart, it all belongs to you. It's not pray, then receive. That would just be Arminianism at that point, that would be conditionalism, "Pray to God and receive this blessing of salvation." That's not what the Catechism is teaching here. The Holy Spirit was given by promise.

True prayer is the chief part of thankfulness, that asking of that child of God as one who's already been redeemed by the cross of Jesus Christ, one who's already been renewed by the Holy Spirit. He's that regenerated Christian with a new heart, with a perfect heart. And when he comes to God in prayer, he depends upon that grace all of his life long. He needs that grace his whole life. Who he is, we are who we are by the grace, the sovereign grace of God and we're drawn by that Spirit of Christ, we're drawn by that Spirit of Christ which dwells in your heart, which brings you before the throne of God. You're brought before God to drink deeply of God's goodness, to taste the goodness of God.

God will have us ask for it. He creates that thirst. He creates that longing, that desire. He creates that longing and desire by the preaching of the gospel, to loathe yourself and see your need for Jesus Christ. And when the redeemed, regenerated child of God asks for that grace, he's saying, "Without that grace," there's a confession there, "Without that grace, I'm nothing. I have nothing. Without the Holy Spirit, I'm totally destitute. I have no

goodness, nothing to offer. I cannot save myself. I'm wretched. I'm miserable. I'm hopelessly lost."

It's a serious thing not for the child of God to ask for the grace in the Holy Spirit, because what is that man saying then? What is that man saying when he refuses to come before God in prayer? What that man is saying is, "I don't need your grace, God. I don't need your Holy Spirit. I am who I am because of myself." He says, "I don't need the grace and the Holy Spirit. I don't need any of those things." And that man, he's a proud man. He's an unthankful man. He doesn't know who he is.

The Catechism says here, to those only who with sincere desires. What are those sincere desires? I've already said it but those sincere desires, it's the regenerated heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Those sincere desires are not your emotions that are stirred up as you pray to God and you feel those waves rolling over you and the tears running down your cheeks. Those are not those sincere desires. It's not your emotions. It's not your feelings. When you come to God in prayer, those sincere desires, it's the Holy Spirit in your heart that by a true faith, a true and living faith, you're drawn before the presence of God where we draw very near unto him. That's Hebrews 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart," a true heart, "in full assurance of faith." It's that Spirit. Those sincere desires, it's the Spirit that lives in the heart of the child of God which cries out to God. That's Galatians 4:6, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." It's the Spirit that lives in your heart, the Spirit that cries out to God.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ works that prayer. He gives you that prayer in and through, in and through you by faith alone. And we read then in Romans 8:26. Romans 8:26 and 27, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." That Spirit that lives in your and my heart, that cries out to God, offers to God a perfect prayer. It offers to God groanings which cannot be uttered. There are prayers in your heart that the Spirit's praying to God that you are not even conscious of. You don't even know those prayers are being prayed. And it's that Spirit, that Spirit is always heard by God. God always answers the prayer of the Spirit and he gives to that child of God exactly what the Spirit prays for.

He draws us near unto God with a true heart and full assurance of faith. He draws us near unto God who is good in himself. He draws us near unto this majestic, divine God. He draws us to himself who is the God of our salvation. He draws us to the God who loves us in Jesus Christ. We're very near God. It doesn't say in Hebrews 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith for this or that thing." It says "draw near unto God with a true heart and full assurance of faith." Prayer.

Prayer is necessary for the Christian as our Catechism states, and gives the reason why as the chief part of thankfulness and very boldly states the second half of that question.

What then are the requisites or principles of true prayer? And there's three principles that our Catechism teaches here in Question and Answer 117. They're very clearly laid out here for us. "First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only who hath manifested himself in his word for all things he hath commanded us to ask of him." The questionnaire is asking how shall we pray to this one true God, and we're given these three governing principles of what must govern true prayer and the first one we're given, they must be directed to God alone. Our prayers are directed to the one true God who has revealed himself in his word, the one true God who has revealed himself in the face of Jesus Christ, the one true God who has given unto his people a knowledge of himself in the word. He's given unto his people right knowledge of himself in his word to know who he is.

We cannot draw near unto God if we don't know who the God that we're drawing near unto is because we can't know God of ourselves. The only God that we can conceive of is a God of our own imagination. That would be an idol god then. We can't know him of ourselves unless God first reveals himself to us. He has to show himself to us first. He has to speak to us. He does that in the preaching of the gospel where God makes known himself, reveals himself to his people. And in that gospel, the knowledge of God grows. In true doctrine, that knowledge of God is deepened. And with that deeper knowledge of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ, there's deeper prayers. Is that not true? A shallow knowledge of God, there's shallow prayers. The Christian isn't satisfied with that. He's not satisfied. He wants to know more about this God, this one true God revealed in his word. He loves God. He attends church to hear that gospel. He's drawn by the Spirit. And that means then a wrong knowledge of God, corrupt doctrine, corrupts prayer. How can we know the one true God if we don't know who God is? How can we know the God of our salvation if we're taught false doctrine? That's how serious false doctrine is. How can we pray to a God who is tolerant and loving, a God who loves all men if only you accept the condition of faith, a God who will answer your prayer if you do good works? It's not God, but it's an idol god.

Corrupt doctrine, a corrupt knowledge of God corrupts prayer. That's the first principle that the Catechism teaches. The second principle of prayer is "that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of his divine majesty." The Catechism here is talking about humility. The child of God humbles himself, he humbles himself before, as the Catechism says, "his divine majesty." When the child of God comes before God in prayer, he knows his sin and his misery. He knows that sin. He humbles himself before God. He knows that of ourselves we don't deserve to be answered. We don't deserve to have salvation. We're unworthy of that. So the Catechism is touching on humility, saying that we come before the presence of God, not of ourselves, but on the basis of Jesus Christ alone, in his shed blood. That is the basis of our approach unto God. We don't come before God proud in ourselves like the Pharisees, who were proud of their prayers and their much speaking. We don't come before God as Cain did. That's why God didn't accept Cain's offering. Cain was full of pride. He rejected that worship of Cain. He first of all rejected Cain, but he rejected that worship of Cain. We come before God deeply humbled, knowing our need, knowing our misery, how all that we have is due only to the sovereign grace of God.

God doesn't hear the man that comes before him who's proud in himself, who refuses to acknowledge his sin and humble himself before the sight of God, that man who comes before God in prayer, who has no mention of sin, says nothing of his sin, nothing of his emptiness. Do you not know who you are? You're a son of Adam. You were born totally depraved. Your flesh is disgusting. You add to your debt only daily. You don't know who God is. God who is divinely majestic of himself, he doesn't need the creature. He's perfect in himself. That man who comes before God, that unregenerate man who comes before God, who tries to pray, maybe he tries to pray, that prayer is offensive to God. It's disgusting to him. That prayer of that man who won't confess his sin, who will say nothing of sin, it's not Christian, and it's not Reformed to come before God with no mention of your sin.

This divinely majestic God, the whole world was condemned with one sin. That's how righteous our God is. He's a consuming fire. The man who comes before God righteous in himself of his own works, of his own doing, it's unbelievable pride. Unbelievable. He doesn't know his sin. He doesn't know his misery. He doesn't know God. We're empty. We're wretched. We're miserable. Entirely apart from Jesus Christ, there's no hope for us, no reason that God would answer our prayers, and understand it's impossible for the regenerated Christian to come any other way than as nothing. He knows himself. He knows that everything he is, is from God. Everything he's been made, everything, every gift, every ability, everything, it's all come from God. He knows that about himself and about God.

When the Christian comes before God in prayer, maybe during the week Satan's tempted that child of God and said, "You don't deserve to come before God. You don't deserve for God to hear you and answer your prayer." Do not come before God unless you are a totally depraved sinner. Come before God as an idolater, as a murderer, as a whoremonger, as nothing. You must come before God that way. Do not come righteous in yourself. You come to God in prayer as nothing. Absolutely nothing.

And the third principle of prayer, the third principle is that we be fully persuaded "that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will for the sake of Christ our Lord certainly hear our prayer." We come before God, we draw near unto God with a true heart in full assurance of faith, knowing that we are nothing, but fully persuaded, in full assurance of faith that God will hear us in true faith, that he will certainly answer us in true faith.

That we come humble doesn't mean we don't come before the throne of God boldly. We come before the throne of God by a true faith. We ask of God enormous things. You come with a true heart and full assurance of faith. Not a half heart. Not half assured. Not wondering and doubting, "Is God going to hear this prayer?" You come before the throne of God fully persuaded, fully persuaded by a true faith and Hebrews 10:22 gives us the reason, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," and here's the reason Hebrews 10 gives, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." That prayer that the child of God offers to God in

thanksgiving to God, he comes by a faith that's sprinkled with pure water. He comes with a conscience that doesn't condemn him; that conscience is cleansed free from all the guilt of that sin that he knows cleaves to him.

He's not conscious of that sin that condemns him and he comes in full assurance of faith. He comes with the boldness and the confidence that, "All my sins have been forgiven in the blood of Jesus Christ." In his heart, he has the declaration that all of his sins are washed away. That's why the child of God prays. He comes with full assurance. He can come boldly before the throne of God asking for all things necessary for body and soul.

Our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience, and this is the second reason Hebrews 10:22 gives, our bodies washed with pure water. What this is referencing here is the sanctifying effect of faith. You're renewed by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Principally, you're holy. You're justified by faith. All your sins are forgiven and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed unto you and you know it in your conscience being sprinkled with pure water. It's the meaning of baptism too. And by that faith, you're sanctified. Your bodies are washed with pure water.

That's why we come in full assurance of faith, all our sins are forgiven. You can't come unto the throne of God any other way. The false doctrine that faith is not assurance then, corrupts prayer. It's a total corruption of prayer. It makes the prayer of the regenerated Christian an impossibility if faith is not full assurance. It has to be full assurance. I can't come before the presence of God unless I'm fully persuaded, unless I have full assurance of faith that God will hear me for the sake of Jesus Christ.

The prayer of that child of God if faith isn't assurance, if the assurance of faith is by the works of the law, then we can never come before God in prayer. It makes the prayer of the child of God an impossibility. That's how horrible that doctrine is. It's a devastating doctrine, horrific doctrine, because it makes your prayer life an impossibility. You can't come before God. You must come, as the Catechism says, fully persuaded that God will hear, that God will hear our prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, that's by faith alone in the blood of the Lamb, in the blood of Jesus Christ.

What then is prayer's contents? Question and Answer 118, "What hath God commanded us to ask of him? All things necessary for soul and body, which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer he himself has taught us." We pray for all those things necessary for soul and body that he has commanded us to pray for. We pray according to the will of God. We have a holy intelligence as regards the contents of our prayer, the contents of that prayer as directed by his word and by his Spirit.

We pray according to as God commands. We're speaking to God. It implies then that when we're praying to God, we're seeking first the things of God. We're seeking God himself. We're seeking his kingdom. We're seeking his cause. We're seeking his purpose. We're seeking that his will be done. We pray to God knowing that God knows all our needs perfectly before we've even ask them of him. And when God says that we pray, "What has God commanded us to ask of him? All things necessary for soul and body,"

we don't pray whatever we want. We don't pray for whatever pops into our head, every earthly thought and desire. We don't pray as a means to obtain something from God.

We don't pray to obtain something from God and that's the corruption of prayer then today. The corruption of prayer is that by our much speaking, then God will hear us. Maybe we've seen that with a loved one outside of the church, where by our many prayers then God will hear us. We're going to storm the gates. We're going to be prayer warriors We're going to pray for all these things and by our much speaking, then God will hear us. It's not what God is saying. God tells us to pray for all things as he has commanded. The contents of our prayer must be as God commands and that's all the things of God, all the necessities for both body and soul. And that's what makes the Lord's Prayer such a beautiful prayer. It's beautiful in its brief, summarized explanation, and in that prayer, it's stunningly deep because all things that the Christian could ever think to pray for, they're all in the Lord's Prayer, in that perfect prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ gave us.

All our needs are expressed in that perfect prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ and so with that introduction then on prayer, prayer as the chief part of thankfulness, with those principles that ought to govern the prayer life of the regenerated Christian, that he pray to the one true God, he deeply humble himself before his majestic God, and he prays by a true faith and full assurance of faith, fully persuaded that God will hear us, and we ask with the disciples, we say, "Lord, teach us to pray." And so all of the instruction that comes after is the Lord teaching us how to pray that God might be glorified, that his name might be extolled, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Amen.

Let us pray.

Our God and our Father in heaven, we draw nigh before thee unto thy throne of grace to drink deeply of thy goodness in the face of Jesus Christ by a true faith, fully persuaded that thou wilt hear us and answer us for Jesus Christ's sake. Forgive us of all our sins, Lord. Wash us in the blood of our Savior. Impute unto us the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and that we know that righteousness and taste it, and know thy goodness towards us in Jesus Christ. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ alone.