

# Striving with Sin

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**Bible Text:** Romans 7:14-25  
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We read the word of God as we find it this morning in Romans 7. I'm going to read the entire chapter and on into chapter 8, verse 4. Catechism and Lord's Day 44 ties the doctrines set forth in the Lord's Day very closely to Romans 7. I'm going to read that chapter this morning.

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. 7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. 14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If

then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Thus far the reading of God's word.

We direct our attention this morning to Lord's Day 44. We read Romans 7 and go on to mine verses 23 and 24. Paul says,

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [He makes that confession] 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

In chapter 8, he has the answer,

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

This and many other passages of the word of God is based our instruction as we find it in Lord's Day 44, Question and Answers 113, 114 and 115.

Q. 113. What doth the tenth commandment which is thou shalt not covet, require of us?

A. That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never arise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness.

Q. 114. Can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments?

A. No: but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that with a sincere resolution they begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commandments of God.

Q. 115. Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?

A. First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ; likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become by that grace of the Holy Spirit more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come.

The Catechism, beloved, is engaged in an exposition of the law and it comes to that tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," comes to it with the reality that the Apostle Paul confesses that he was alive without the law once and that he had not known sin but by the law, and specifically, "For I had not known lust except the law had said thou shalt not covet." It is easy in the deceitfulness of sin to look at the law of God in an external form. You don't have an image in your house that you pray to, you are in church on the Sabbath day in the New Testament, you haven't murdered someone, you haven't robbed a bank, and it might very well be easy like the rich young ruler to come to the conclusion which he had falsely come to, that you have kept all of these things from your youth, until Jesus had to come to that rich young ruler and point out his earthly riches and his love of them, which was covetousness, and tell him indeed to go sell all that he had.

The deceitfulness of sin is, as it were, exploded by that commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," and it is in reflecting on that commandment and the very weight of it as the Catechism explains in many respects, simply that one word "lust" or "desire" or "covetousness" in all of its ramifications is drawing on the meaning of it in both Old and New Testaments as it explains it in Question and Answer 113, that the Catechism understands our spiritual need. Our Reformed fathers who when writing the Catechism were not simply writing in abstraction, they were dealing with the spiritual issues of their own life, the life of the people of God, and so those next two questions come up rather naturally: can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments? That is our burden when we stand before that tenth commandment especially. It is the experienced of the Apostle Paul that the answer to that is, "No, the good I would, I do not, the evil that I would not, that I do. When I would do good, I find that sin is present with me. I have to strive with sin and in that battle I have the body of this death that I can never get rid of." And the Catechism, therefore, intends to answer the discouragement with sin and at the same time it asks a rather additional question: why preach a perfect

law when we are sinners? The answer is because God has a good purpose to work a certain spiritual fruit. We might see our sin and flee to the cross and that we might be more earnest in prayer, for there we find the grace to begin to walk.

Consider with me then this morning, striving with sin. First of all, the burden of an imperfect believer which you and I are. Then that perfect beginning of grace, we must not in light of the presence of indwelling sin ignore that wonder of God. And finally also its fruit.

To begin with, you and I must genuinely ponder and not lightly run over that tenth commandment and the Catechism's exposition. The Apostle Paul puts it very simply in verse 7, he says, "Without that tenth commandment, that one that says thou shalt not covet, I had not really understood the revelation of sin by the law." Covetousness is the desires that arise out of our human nature in heart and mind and will and soul, and it touches on what I think, it touches on what I want and desire and feel and yearn after, it touches on all that goes on on that internal activity of life in what is called the inward man, this is not to be confused with the new man in Christ but where that new man in Christ meets the internal conscious spiritual and moral activity of my life, and what I think about, ponder, reflect on, how I look at things and frame them in my mind, my desires of heart, and so on. God made all that activity in our creation perfect so that nothing reigned there but a perfect love of God, a delight in all righteousness, and man was created indeed to say no to sin and yes to God. It is from that spiritual state within that he fell and manifested it in his act of rebellion in the garden, and the result is that man is now by nature dead in trespasses and sins, that love of things which ought to be consumed with a holy love of God is now self-love, a love that stands at enmity with the will of God in every department of life, so if God says this is good, man says no and turns from it to that which is its opposite. That's why sin is a missing of the mark and an aiming in the opposite direction.

The Catechism is wrestling with this at this point because you and I have come to the cross of Christ and we would walk in true gratitude before God. It is dealing with a child of God who wrestles with the reality of sin in his life, and it points out what that word of God in that tenth commandment shows us, and that is indeed a very graphic and at the same time a very extensive commandment. The Catechism accurately and aptly summarizes it, that even the smallest inclination or thought contrary to any of God's commandments, that doesn't leave any wiggle-room, God demands perfection. He demands perfection in what you think, in that passing thought of the moment when you see something you don't have and you desire to have it and your neighbor's got it and you're jealous, the sin. Not even the smallest inclination, the slightest bending in that direction.

You and I look at it and we say we miss the mark all the time. We have a fountain of thoughts in our mind. We have the root of sinful pride that thinks we're wiser than God, wiser than our neighbors, wiser than God's distribution of earthly gifts. The word of God says to us that these things are to never arise in our hearts. Jesus makes exactly that point indirectly when he says that he that lusts after a woman in his heart has committed

adultery. The same thing is true, of course, for the woman who lusts after a man. You are all adulterers. You are all covetous thieves. Hatred, bitterness, wrath, anger, malice, clamor, evil speaking. We are murderers. We want God to conform to our image after our imagination. We are by nature idolaters. Out of our flesh inherited from Adam which includes our body, it includes what goes on in our heart and in our brain and in our gut, it includes all that internal activity that goes on inside.

It's not just simply the body but all the fruit of its activity and the seeing, the hearing, the thinking, the desiring, the coveting, the lusting after with intention and purpose and willfulness of heart for we are willful in our sin. David didn't just stumble and fall into sin with Bathsheba, he willfully took her into his house. He willfully tried to cover it up by murdering Uriah the Hittite. Abraham and Sarah plotted together to lie about his relationship with Sarah to Pharaoh and to Abimelech the second time; it was besetting sin. Isaac did the same thing. God's word shows us the sins of the saints. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord but he also planted a vineyard and became drunk and passed out naked. Peter for all of his boasting and even given that wonderful testimony of the Spirit, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," denies his Lord and has to go out and weep bitterly. That even the smallest thought, inclination, desire for a moment flickers like a flame that's there, even if it's quickly snuffed out. It should not be there. God didn't make us that way and the demand of the law is not, "Thou shalt not sort of covet sometimes," but "Thou shalt not covet," is an absolute unqualified statement demanding perfection in thought, word and deed, and in all your soul.

That it never arise in our hearts but on the contrary that at all times, even in the job when you're on the internet, we hate all sin. We never laugh at the off-color joke. We never lay hold of the slanderous remark. We never sneer. We're never falsely condescending in sinful pride and look down our nose at the neighbor. All of that is, after all, bound up with the fact that on the inside we are called to love God, love the neighbor for God's sake, and that means that I hate all sin with my whole heart fervently, and the one thing that fills me ultimately with joy, delight, is righteousness, righteousness in buying and selling, righteousness in worship, righteousness in doctrine, and the truth of God's word, I love that truth, righteousness when it comes to marriage and family, we're never a lazy parent but we love righteousness and we seek the welfare of our children and call them likewise to walk in the ways of God's covenant.

The law demands perfection and the burden that you and I have is that when we stand before that mirror of the law, the law does one thing, it shows us our sinful human nature. The Catechism references that, that we may learn more and more to know our sinful human nature. The rule of gratitude is a rule that teaches us the knowledge of sin. It breaks the stubborn rebellion of our flesh, exposes it for what it is, but in that sense, beloved, it works tears, it works sorrow of heart.

That's exactly in wrestling with that that you and I in the discouragement that comes with when I would do good, evil is present with me, and the good I would I do not, and the evil which I don't want to do, I do. We come to that conclusion with the Apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? How can I be

delivered from these things?" It's in light of that, beloved, that the Catechism having set forth what does the tenth commandment require of us, asks another question and that question is not unimportant. It does not ask the question: do you keep these commandments? The answer to that could have been given, it's no, not in thought, word, deed. The reality is when you look inside yourself and take a genuine assessment of what you are doing, your walk, your life, and consciousness that sin is also deceptive so you don't see it even as you ought to, we say all our best works are as filthy rags. You look inside yourself, you will see one thing, see it, you will see the flesh, you will see the old man, you will see the horror of it, you will see the ugliness of it. Everybody else may think you're pious and devout and holy but you know what goes on inside and when you pray and lay that ugliness before the throne of God, there's no place for that proud Pharisee who says, "I thank thee that I'm not like other men. I'm one of the holiest." The only place is for that of the publican who says, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner."

The Reformed fathers, beloved, were of like flesh and blood with us as they wrestled with the word of God in a passage like this in Romans and set it down in writing to teach and instruct the confession of the church, reflected their own spiritual struggles. They didn't ask, "Do you keep these commandments?" They didn't even ask the question, "Can you keep these commandments?" The word "can" is in there and we must note that one because that's important. Do you have the ability, the Catechism is asking, not do you perform it but do you have the ability to keep these commandments perfectly? Is perfection in any sense given to you as a child of God? By no means. No.

So in light of that, beloved, we must rightly understand that expression "the holiest of men." The Catechism is not Roman Catholic. It does not believe that Jesus is so infinitely exalted above us that we need a mediator with a mediator and that there are the holy few like Mary and Joseph and some of the other saints, and I must come to Jesus through Mary's prayers for me, and that there are other saints that have entered heaven but I haven't yet, and then there are those in the religious life, priest, monks and nuns, who are more holy than I am, and so you get this kind of stair step of holier, holiest and holy going up or down. That is, after all, what the Catechism came out of and you and I reading the biblical narrative in a superficial way might conclude that there are children of God who are very holy and pious, the Apostle Paul certainly is that, but the word of God does something, it shows us the virtues of the saints and indeed tells us whose example to follow in their walk and in their conduct. It always also shows us the fact that on the inside they are no different than you and I are, that they struggle with sin in the same way that you and I do, and if you and I come to the false conclusion that since they are so much better as children of God than I am, that I can't be a child of God, the Catechism therefore frames the question very carefully and says not "can you" but "can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments?"

We must understand that we are not given in our salvation at this point perfection. There is no hierarchy of holier persons, indeed, some people walk in a manner that you and I may look at from the outside and say they are pious and holy people, children of God, we have aged believing parents like that oftentimes, and we know the servants of God in the Bible, but the confession of all of them is the same confession you and I make and must

make, that when we look on the inside and when Paul looks on the inside, he says, "O wretched man that I am!" And say of the Centurion that he understood the authority of Jesus in his office as Messiah more clearly than anybody else in Israel at that point, Jesus can say of the Centurion, "I have not found so great faith in Israel." What is the Centurion's attitude? "Lord, I am not worthy to have thee come into my house but speak the word and my servant shall be healed." The attitude of a child of God is not that some people are holier and holier than others. That is the attitude of the Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others, and it is a temptation, foolishness to walk that way.

We stand before the reality that you take all of whatever you want to call the holiest of men and even then the Catechism says it must come down to this one thing, if they have one thing and that you have that too, a small beginning of new obedience and that's it, period, in this life forever until the resurrection from the dead and your death. When you die, you put off the body of this death and go to be with the Lord which is far better, and in the resurrection from the dead, that nature which is now the body of this death and goes to the grave is glorified. Then the instrument of your body, of your mind, of the desires that well up in the glorified heart and human nature, shall be perfect.

There is a perfection proposed to us in the life to come but not now. Spiritual growth, the life of a child of God, involves not becoming a holier person, it involves living out of your faith in a holy walk and the reality of that walk is that it is stained throughout with sin so that you oftentimes feel utterly discouraged with it because you read of all the saints and there's Abraham and his backsliding, and David and his backsliding, and there's Peter and his backsliding, and Peter hardly dares to lift his eyes when Jesus asks him the question, "Simon Peter, lovest thou me?" And David has to confess in Psalm 32, "I was stubborn like a mule and a donkey and I hung onto it, and day and night thy hand was heavy upon me and my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." Then he turns and says, "Let me guide you with my eye. Don't be like I was."

Sin is an ever-present corrupting reality in our life and the burden of our heart is exactly the frustration when I would do good, evil is present with me, and how to perform that which is good, I find not, the good I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do. And that embraces your small children who are struggling with sin as infants and toddlers, learning to obey mom and dad in the old flesh is right there already in their infancy and you tell them don't touch and they do. They know they shouldn't, they go do it anyway. They don't know how to fight that battle yet. Part of parenting is to teach your children how to fight the impulses, the inclinations, the thoughts and desires of the old man of sin that cleaves to them. The ancient saint lying on their deathbed will say, "I still sin." Part of the desire to go home to be with the Lord is that I may finally be equipped through death and the resurrection of the body of this death.

Now it's in light of that that the Catechism explains to us while we cannot keep these things perfectly, while that beginning is small, it is nevertheless a wondrous work of sovereign grace. The dead unbeliever has in him no principle of obedience whatsoever. All the thoughts of the wicked are sin. The wicked and ungodly man cannot say, "I would

do good." Not genuinely. He might say it with his mouth in pride, but Paul when he says, "I would do good," is not talking about that, he's talking about that new life which God gave him in Christ. According to the flesh he is carnal. He stands before the law which is spiritual and he finds in himself in his flesh no good thing. It is the grace of God that takes dead sinners and regenerates them. That work of regeneration is described in Scripture in various forms. It is a heart transplant in Ezekiel where God takes the stony hardened heart of sin, cuts it out and makes it soft, receptive, a heart of flesh that's pliable and receptive to the word of God, so that we begin to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. In John 3, it's described as a new birth wrought by the Spirit of God by which we know and understand spiritual things and are given to enter the kingdom of God. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God or enter it. It's described as a creative work of God. We are renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. It's created that way in the beginning and in regeneration it's created that way. The word of God describes it in terms of God saying, "Let there be light and there was light."

That work of God is wrought in our conscious experience in a certain way. It is wrought below our conscious experience without our aid and it is called by the working of the word of God and the Holy Spirit through all the means of grace, preaching being central. To the conscious spiritual activity of faith, that regeneration and that bond of union with Christ out of which all our spiritual life flows, are intimately connected and when the Catechism here talks about can they then who are converted, it's talking about the fact that that regenerating grace below our consciousness as God calls it to spiritual activity, has an initial beginning in which we turn from sin to God and that turning from sin unto God then continues in daily conversion in a walk of life that involves constantly dying to sin and saying yes unto God in obedience. God works in regeneration and quickens in conversion a beginning of obedience.

We use the term in English "a principle." The trouble with that English term is that it can have the idea of an abstraction. That's not what's meant. You and I have the principle of sin in the flesh. We have the law of sin in our members and we have another principle or law in our mind in that new work of grace and life of grace in conversion, they are at odds with one another. By principle, we have in view something that reigns in the heart and works its spiritual influence from the whole life and the whole nature of the man so that though he is yet fleshly, earthly, carnal sinner, God gives to him a new life which is from above and being born again and born from above will have the same idea, he is translated from darkness into light and is called now to walk as a child of the light. It is a mysterious and wondrous work of God. The Dutch term *beginnselen* as a better way, which means beginning, has a better sense of the idea. It's a foundational spiritual principle out of which flows all the activity of life. In the Greek language you would use a word that has the idea of an arch as a foundation element that holds the whole structure up. It's the way in which Jesus in turning water into wine works the beginning, not just the start but the arch of miracles, and it has the same idea in the first words of the Scriptures in Hebrew, "In the beginning." It's more than simply when he started, it involves something that works its power, influence and activity in the whole of our life so that though it is small, it is profoundly a wonder because it is life from the dead. Looking



backward at our first birth, you and I say with the Apostle Paul, "you who were dead hath he quickened or raised from the dead together with Christ." From the viewpoint of eternal perfection, it's a very small beginning.

The nature of that principle is that you and I therefore have, as it were, a conflict between two distinct spiritual impulses warring with one another at the very meetingplace of all of our thoughts, willing, desires, feelings and activities, and when I would do good, right in there evil is present with me, and when I want to do what God says, my sinful flesh says, "No, I don't." Right there before I ever speak, act or walk, it's there. That's what makes the apostle's wrestling with this in himself, that limitation, that makes him cry out, "O wretched man that I am! I have the body of this death and I can't get rid of it."

Well, that's not nothing because it does work itself out in a certain way, not that I become a holier person but that when sincere resolution, that is that sincere desire, that desire that says, "I would do what God says. I love the Lord my God. I want to walk in his law." So what notwithstanding that old man of sin that gets in the way, that is my desire, with a sincere resolution I begin to live not only according to some, I don't go around and say, "Oh, I'm gonna pick up this commandment now and I'm gonna walk in it." That's some kind of Jewish notion, unbelieving Jewish Pharisees-type notion with the commandments are little jewels and you pick them up and you walk in them and it's to your credit. No, because it's rooted in the very spiritual center of the heart, it's called by the word of God through spiritual activity of faith, and shows itself in turning from sin unto God, it affects everything that goes on from the center inside outward, though it finds at every step of the way that when I would do that good, sin is there. But with a sincere resolution, we begin to live not only according to some but all the commandments of God.

And you look at that dilemma and struggle with this is what a converted child of God is like so I am one, but I've also got this burden that sits there. Why will God, not man but God, have his 10 Commandments so strictly preached, every thought, word, desire, every inclination, why preach God's law so that it comes, as it were, into the very depths of my own private internal life and causes me to see all kinds of the ugliness of sin in there? Why do that? Isn't it pointless? No. Is the purpose to say, "Well, I can't help it so let me sin that grace may abound"? No. Does that small beginning then come as a means to justify unholy living? No. The purpose of it, first of all, beloved, because the way in which you begin to live according to all the commandments of God, the way that small beginning manifests itself is exactly that through that interaction with the law of God you learn something, you learn more and more to know your sinful nature. Your heavenly Father in his sovereign wisdom, because the Catechism is really talking about the purpose of God here, teaches his adopted children what that adoption is all about by showing them where they came from, how they were born, what still clings to them in that flesh that is theirs by nature in Adam because it's in the knowledge of that misery and in sorrow of heart in repentance that you and I begin then, indeed, to walk a very specific pathway aright.

Conversion is a term in Scripture that is sometimes translated repentance because the negative aspect of daily conversion of that crucifying the old man with the lusts of the

flesh, putting off that old man of sin, is to hate and flee from sin and you do that on your knees in prayer for forgiveness because the first answer to that question, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," is that all these sins that arise out of that body of death leave me guilty before the judgment seat of God and until the guilt of my sin is addressed, the fact of it can't be wrestled with. And Jesus is going to teach us in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts." Conversion is a process of daily repentance towards God, of sorrow for sin. Not morbid introspection that sits in the puddle of misery, but does not do the right thing with it, but sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins and more and more to hate and flee from them means that you and I as we learn to know our sinful nature, thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin and righteousness in Christ. What God does is he takes away all the foolishness of any confidence of any work of our own, any achievement of our own, any sense of our own holy virtue, strips it all away so that you and I may rest upon one thing, Jesus Christ and him crucified, clinging to that cross because we have before the judgment seat of God nothing else. He shed his blood to cover all that burden of guilt, to take away all our sin and shame, to establish before the judgment seat of God perfect righteousness so that God then judges ungodly sinners and counts them before his judgment seat righteous in his sight, freeing us from the terrible burden of guilt, of shame, and the horror of that iniquity that clings to us before his judgment seat.

That's what the Apostle Paul comes to. He says, "There is therefore now no condemnation," no damnation before the judge, "to them which are in Christ Jesus." that's first. The Catechism is simply stating what that means, that God intends to show us our sin that we might seek the forgiveness of sins daily in repentance and righteousness in Jesus Christ. The wonder of that forgiving mercy by which the publican goes down from the house of God justified, by which Peter was reconciled to his Savior, and David tasted the blessedness of the man whose sin is forgiven, whose iniquity is pardoned and covered, that is the fountain out of which you and I may genuinely now freely walk in works that are called good and begin to live according to all the commandments of God.

It comes in the way of this, that it is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of you. It's the Holy Spirit who kindles that knowledge of our sin, assures us of our righteousness before God in Christ, and it is he who leads us as hungering and thirsting after righteousness and the desire to live a godly life, a godly life, yes, imperfect, that we pray. The chief part of gratitude is prayer. The first good work out of which all other good works come is prayer that we might be more earnest in prayer for the grace of the Holy Spirit. He takes us as we have been born again after the image of God, regeneration restores that image and knowledge, righteousness and holiness in spiritual ability, and he begins to take our life inside and outside and to conform it, mold it, to that image of God, and so you end up with, what? A perfect regenerated heart in an imperfect believer who has the principle of both the old and the new man in conflict.

Therein, beloved, the Christian life is one of constant sorrow for sin, of fleeing again to the cross of Christ, striving to walk after the will of God in a childlike trust and obedience, and all of it is lived out more and more on our knees in prayer and prayer is, after all, communion with God our heavenly Father who is the fountain of our life in

Jesus Christ and it is communion with our Savior who leads us as a faithful shepherd, and it is a communion in the Spirit with God. Therein, as all our works are sanctified and cleansed in the blood of Christ, God gives us to bear the fruit of a new godly life and he assures us that the day will come when that body of sin, of the flesh, is gone. When we die, the new man goes to be with Christ and the old man of sin and all his deeds and all his activities, thinking and willing, goes to the grave. The resurrection from the dead, we will no more have the body of this death but the body of the glorified risen Christ as the instrument through which we know God, hear his voice, serve and love him, and that work which he has begun in us, he will perfect. But in this life he calls us to walk in childlike trust and meekness in genuine humility before him.

That's why the Catechism is gonna take up the next question: why is prayer necessary for Christians? It's already really answered that question but now it wants to instruct us in the way of prayer. Amen.

*Our Father which art in heaven, we have wrestled with many things in our own life this morning in light of thy word and in our own infirmity. Grant us each according to our need the grace of repentance towards thee, clinging to the cross of Christ, the comfort of thy Holy Spirit, the activity of prayer, and give us to rightly understand our place and calling as children of God as we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*