



## ***“The Wonder of Christ’s Church”*** **Sermon Date: November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

### **Reflections on Sunday’s Sermon**

*Below is a reference to the section of the Heidelberg Catechism that we went over on Sunday:*

#### **The Heidelberg Catechism—Lord’s Day 45**

Q&A 116

##### **Q. Why do Christians need to pray?**

A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.<sup>1</sup> And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking God for them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 50:14-15; 116:12-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; <sup>2</sup> Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13

Q&A 117

##### **Q. What is the kind of prayer that pleases God and that he listens to?**

A. First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, revealed to us in his Word, asking for everything God has commanded us to ask for.<sup>1</sup> Second, we must fully recognize our need and misery, so that we humble ourselves in God’s majestic presence.<sup>2</sup> Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what God promised us in his Word.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Rom. 8:26-27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15; <sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isa. 66:2; Rev. 4; <sup>3</sup> Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 7:8; John 14:13-14; 16:23; Rom. 10:13; James 1:6

Q&A 118

##### **Q. What did God command us to pray for?**

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,<sup>1</sup> as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

<sup>1</sup> James 1:17; Matt. 6:33

Q&A 119

##### **Q. What is this prayer?**

A. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

### **Prayer**

As you begin your study this week, spend some time praising God for all that He has accomplished on your behalf, as revealed in His Word. Praise God, for, in Christ, we are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household; because of the blood of Christ and the gospel according to the apostles, we are grafted into God’s temple. Thank Christ, for by His person and work He has secured salvation and sanctification for His body, the church—she will grow into a holy temple. And give glory to the Spirit, for through Him all these things are applied, and through Him God happily dwells in us.

## **Scripture**

### **Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV)**

*<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

## **Handling the Word**

To better appreciate the benefits, the foundation, the source of growth, and the goal of the church, let's break down Paul's words:

1. In Christ, what is the Gentile's relation to God's kingdom and household (verse 19)?
2. What is the church, or the household of God, built upon (verse 20)?
3. Who is the source of growth for the church (verses 20-21)?
4. What is the goal of the church's growth (verse 21)?
5. How is our inclusion into the church applied to us (verse 22)?

## **Understanding and Applying**

1. For the Gentiles, Paul reiterates the implications of God creating a new humanity in Christ, ‘you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God’ (verse 19). How does this text communicate equality rather than reinforce a distinction among the Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:14-15)? Can you have a “one new man” if there continues to be a distinction or special status among believers? Please explain.
2. Having been grafted into the body of Christ, the Gentile believers were now ‘fellow citizens with the saints’ (verse 19). To help understand Paul’s metaphor, we might describe some of the privileges of being a citizen of the Kingdom of God as having: a good King, provision, protection, guidance, community, and responsibility. As a believer, and thus part of God’s kingdom, have you come to enjoy any of these privileges? Is the world offering you counterfeits to any of these privileges? Please share.
3. Having been grafted into the body of Christ, the Gentile believers were now ‘members of the household of God’ (verse 19). To help understand Paul’s metaphor, we might describe some of the privileges of being in a family as having: a Father, brotherly love, inclusion, and responsibility. As a believer and thus, part of God’s family, have you come to enjoy any of these privileges? Currently, are you overlooking or downplaying any of these privileges? Please share.
4. Paul declares that the church is ‘built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets’ (verse 20). There is a movement that desires to “help the church reinterpret the New Covenant and restore her responsibility to carry out the Old Covenant rules and rituals.” How is this perspective inconsistent with the teaching of the apostles (Galatians 3:10-14, 5:1-6; Ephesians 2:14-16)? Can the church stand if she submits herself to the Old Covenant or rejects/modifies the teaching of the apostles (Galatians 1:6-9)? Please explain.

5. Regarding the household of God, Paul unashamedly states that Jesus is ‘the cornerstone,’ therefore remove the cornerstone and the building falls (verse 20). Based on what we have been learning, why is the person and work of Jesus the ‘cornerstone’ for the church (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 1:7, 2:13, 16)? Given this, can the church truly be unified or grow if she were to reject or modify certain doctrines regarding Jesus’ person and work such as His deity, sinless life, substitutionary death, resurrection, or ascension? Please explain.
  
6. Notice what happens with Gentile believers on account of being found in Christ, they are ‘joined together’ and grow ‘into a holy temple in the Lord’ with the Jewish believers (verse 21). The result of reconciliation is fellowship, and with fellowship comes growth (Romans 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:16; Hebrews 10:24-25). In your own words, how should this text shape our response to those who consider fellowship with the saints optional or insignificant? How has Covid-19, or American culture in general, been a challenge to fellowship and thus, growth?
  
7. In verse 21, we might say that Jesus has secured two types of growth for God’s temple—quantitative (salvation) and qualitative (sanctification). People will be added to the church, and the church will grow in holiness (Matthew 24:14; Ephesians 4:11-13). To reiterate, how is the church going to grow, and how should this shape the church’s priorities (John 17:17; Romans 10:17)? Personally, how have you experienced growth in ‘holiness’ in your own life while at Living Grace?
  
8. Praise the Triune God for ‘*in Him* you also are being built together into a dwelling place *for God by the Spirit*’ (verse 22). What truths contained in these passages lead you praise God and what truths are you asking God to help you apply?

*“Christ builds from living stones, sinners who are resistant material, difficult to shape, reluctant to fit with other living stones. Yet Christ continues to build—for He means to come Himself, by His Spirit, to dwell among us as His house and temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). He wants to be able to point to the church in the world and say: ‘See, that is what I can do. See my wisdom, power, and love’ (Ephesians 3:10)! One day the scaffolding will be taken away and the entire cosmos will see the First Wonder of the New World!”*

*-Sinclair Ferguson*