

God the Father and Our Creation

Lord's Day 9

26. **Q.** *What do you believe when you say:
I believe in God the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth?*

A. *That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who out of nothing created heaven and earth
and all that is in them,¹
and who still upholds and governs them
by His eternal counsel and providence,²
is, for the sake of Christ His Son,
my God and my Father.³
In Him I trust so completely
as to have no doubt
that He will provide me
with all things necessary for body and soul,⁴
and will also turn to my good
whatever adversity He sends me
in this life of sorrow.⁵
He is able to do so as almighty God,⁶
and willing also as a faithful Father.⁷*

¹ *Gen. 1 and 2; Ex. 20:11; Job 38 and 39; Ps. 33:6; Is. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15.*

² *Ps. 104:27-30; Matt. 6:30; 10:29; Eph. 1:11.*

³ *John 1:12, 13; Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5.*

⁴ *Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25, 26; Luke 12:22-31.*

⁵ *Rom. 8:28.*

⁶ *Gen. 18:14; Rom. 8:31-39.*

⁷ *Matt. 6:32, 33; 7:9-11.*

LORD'S DAY 9

THE FATHER AND THE CHILDREN

Text: Lord's Day 9
Reading: Exodus 19 : 1-6
Isaiah 43 : 1-7

Psalm 33 : 2, 3
Hymn 58 : 2
Psalm 139 : 7, 8, 9
Psalm 90 : 1, 8
Psalm 121 : 1, 2, 3, 4

Introduction: Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

In the previous Lord's Day 8, the Heidelberg Catechism has given us an "overview" of the Apostles' Creed. The Church believes in the triune God of heaven and earth, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Now in Lord's Day 9, the Heidelberg proceeds to deal with the first article of the Apostles' Creed, the confession concerning "God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth". We are concerned here especially with the *fatherhood* of God.

Every year we are called to celebrate "Father's Day", and the idea is, I suppose, that on this one day fathers everywhere get some recognition and appreciation for who they are and for what they do. Indeed, being a father is quite a task. But we do not want to speak so much today about our *earthly* fathers and what they do; rather we want to speak about our *heavenly* Father, and what He does. Perhaps this whole idea of "Father's Day" will then come into its proper perspective.

We must be careful not to speak about the heavenly Father in an abstract manner, but in a very concrete and vivid manner. A father is a very special person, especially in the lives of his *children*. Is it not so that when you think of a "father", you think of children? How can someone be a "father" if he has no children? In a technical sense someone might take on a patriarchal position without really having any children of his own, but we usually associate *children* with a

father. That is what we must do also here in Lord's Day 9.

When we speak here about God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, we speak especially about this Father in His relationship with His children.

I summarize it as follows:

The confession concerning the unique bond between God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and His chosen children.

- 1. He made us for Himself**
- 2. He brought us to Himself**
- 3. He keeps us with Himself.**

1. You can notice that this Lord's Day does not in the first place speak about the Father above and the *children on earth*. We come into the picture only much later (in line 7), when the Catechism says of God that "He is for the sake of Christ, His Son my God and my Father". The Catechism actually first deals with two other important aspects, namely that God is the eternal Father of *Jesus Christ* and that He is Father of *all creation*.

It is important that we note these aspects carefully, for it puts us in our proper place! God the Father is first of all the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is so from eternity. This is a special relationship and bond which precedes all others and comes before all others! God did not become a Father *through us*, for He is Father from *eternity*. The Son eternally proceeds from

the Father, and that is a perfect, satisfying relationship!

God did not *need* us in order to be a real Father—as is sometimes suggested by modern theologians. No, for He is the *eternal Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ. This must always be said first.

Secondly, it is also true that in a sense God is Father of *all creation*! The word “Father” is then taken in the sense of *origin* or originator, the one out of Whom all things come forth. As the Creator of heaven and earth, God the Father brought forth all things and retains responsibility over them. For this reason He “still upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence”, as the Catechism says.

We should not see God the Father as being concerned *only* with us, for He has created a *world* with many creatures, and He upholds and governs it *in love*. He seeks to restore it and renew it through Jesus Christ! Do not think that God is only involved with the *Church*, for He is also deeply concerned with the *world*, to bring it to complete perfection. This, too, is a fatherly work of the Lord, our God!

So, there is that primary relationship with Christ. There is also that broader bond with the heavens and the earth which the Father maintains. When we have seen these relationships, and when we stand in awe of them, we may say, “He is also *my God and my Father!*” This eternal Father of Christ, this Father of all that exists, is my God and my Father.

For that is ultimately the scope of this Lord's Day. It wants to show the bond between the heavenly Father and His earthly children, between Him and us! It is this relationship which the Catechism deals with from this point on. The Catechism wants to show us the unique bond between the heavenly Father and His earthly children.

Now, our earthly fathers have only a *limited* part in our origin. They are used as instruments, but they cannot themselves bring forth life! Nor can our earthly fathers guarantee our life. But the heavenly Father has a *total* part in our life. He *made* us completely. He gave us the life that we have and He nurtures that life

from the moment that it is conceived! We sang of that great and wondrous work of God in Psalm 139: Thine eyes did in the womb behold me; Thou didst with love and care enfold me . . . My unformed substance thou didst see (Psalm 139: 8, 9, Book of Praise).

The heavenly Father shows infinite care and deep love in making each of His children. We should always remember that also the unborn children in the womb are “enfolded” by the love and care of the Father! Many natural, earthly fathers entertain visions of what their child shall be and shall do in life. We usually plan great futures for our children (whether they come true or not is a different matter), but of the heavenly Father it can be said that He determines and plans our life with sovereign wisdom and power. “The number of our days” are recorded in His book, as Psalm 139 also says.

The question must be asked: what does the heavenly Father want from us? Why did He make us? You can sometimes hear people say in anger and frustration, “I did not ask to be born!” They wonder what the Lord's purpose is with their lives. “Why are we here?” they ask.

The answer to that important question is found, for example, in the passage we read from Isaiah 43. The prophet Isaiah is speaking there of the return of the exiles, the remnant of Israel. Listen to what he says about the motivation of that return: “Bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by My Name, *whom I created for My glory*, whom I formed and made” (verses 6 and 7).

The heavenly Father is calling His children home, His sons and daughters all who bear His Name, in His covenant. Then we read: “Whom I created for *My glory*”. There you have it. The Father made us for His glory! He made us for *Himself*! He made us so that He could take pleasure in us, rejoice in us, be served and loved by us! He made us so that He indeed would be recognized all the more as a faithful and loving Father!

He made us for Himself. This truth is the key to understanding of our creation and purpose. I exist only for God, to glorify Him, and to do all that He wills!

This is my “raison d’etre”, my reason for being. And in that life for God, the LORD gives His children abundant blessings and great freedom— as long as it really is a life for God. For He made us for Himself, for His glory!

For the heavenly Father this is a matter of great principle and strong pride. The LORD our God is a *jealous God*, and He will not allow His children to serve idols and false gods. Therefore the heavenly Father was so deeply grieved and offended when the children rebelled against Him, strayed away from Him, and became slaves of a master who had not made them and who did not love them, namely, the devil.

The devil is also a “father”. But he does not bring forth children; instead he *destroys* them. The devil is the father of lies and deceit; all he can bring forth is corruption and evil. Thus he is a “father” who is in reality a tyrant, a destroyer of the children God made for Himself.

But God is so deeply and essentially a Father that He would not let His children go, and when they fell away, He brought them to Himself. We come to the second element.

2. For this heavenly Father was, on one sad day faced with the situation that His children had rebelled against Him and had become slaves of sin. From children they had been reduced to slaves, sold under sin. It is a hard thing for a father to witness the terrible demise of his children.

But the heavenly Father did not accept this situation. In His sovereign counsel and wisdom, He purposed to bring us *back* to Himself as His exclusive children! It became the great work of the Father to bring back the children, to gather the sons and daughters from wherever they are enslaved and restore them in the house of the Father!

We see something of this work in the passage which we read from Exodus 19. There, after the miraculous escape from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, the LORD meets Moses and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, in the desert.

The LORD says to Israel: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself” (verse 4).

“I bore you on eagles’ wings.” The LORD refers here to the practice of eagles who take up their young on their wings. When the young eagle falls out of the nest, high on the rocky cliff, the parent eagle swoops down, catches the baby eagle on his wide wings, and lifts it up again to safety! Otherwise the little bird would have been dashed to pieces. It is a beautiful way of speaking, for in this same way the LORD also takes up His fallen and falling people and carries them *home*. Were it not for the loving and powerful intervention of the Father, the children would all have perished!

“I brought you to Myself,” says the LORD. What more intimate words can a father use? He does not just say, “I brought you to my house”, but he says, “I brought you *to Myself*.” The people that He made for Himself, He brought back to Himself, so that they might live with Him in intimate, covenantal communion, a Father with His children, in one house!

Of course, we understand that this is Old testament language. The Catechism puts it in a new light: “[He] is for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father”. For did not the Father bring us to Himself in the Son, Jesus Christ? Did He not deliver us from the bondage of Satan and the slavery of sin—far worse than that of Egypt—by the work, the sacrifice of His only begotten, His beloved Son?

The way to the Father and to the Father’s house lies in the Son! He came to bear in our flesh the penalty for sin. He came to fulfil in our place all the righteousness of the divine law. He took upon Himself our flesh and blood, became our brother, so that we might again be God’s children! These are the things we remember and celebrate in the Lord’s Supper. The unique bond between the heavenly Father and His chosen children is laid by the blood of Christ!

At the table of the Lord, the Father says: “see how I brought you to Myself. I did this through My own Son.” And this means that from our side there must be the confession that we are not worthy of sonship. We

are not children who are worthy of this Father, but we have been *made* worthy in Christ. We did not come to the Father of our accord, but we were brought to the Father by Christ and through Him!

He brought us to Himself, in Christ. For He is God the Father almighty. We did not come unto Him. He brought us! As we have in Him our creation, our origin, so we have in Him also our *redemption*, our salvation. It comes to us in the perfect care of the Father.

He brought us to Himself. It sounds so simple, as if it was so easy, but it was a tremendous and unparalleled work, and it had a price that no man could pay except Jesus Christ. The Father brought us to Himself by the blood of His own Son, Who paid the highest price that ever can be paid. That is why the matter is so serious. It's serious for the Father who keeps us with Himself, and it's serious for us, who must stay with the Father. We come to the last element.

3. We must now complete the picture of Lord's Day 9. We came to the Father who made us for Himself, and who brought us to Himself in Christ, His Son, and now *keeps us with Himself*. Now we may believe that nothing or no one shall ever separate us from the love of this God, in Jesus Christ!

The Father went through all this work to bring us back as His children and heirs through Christ. Will He then let us again become slaves of the devil? Of course not, and therefore we can confess that this Father will "provide me with all things necessary for body and soul".

All the spiritual and material needs which the children may have, are taken care of by this Father! There is no need which He is not able or willing to meet. He who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him? Also at the Lord's Supper table we may jubilate in the knowledge that as God gave us His Son, His most precious gift, He will give us with Him all that we need!

And the Catechism also has an eye for the "adversity" which there can be in life. We even read that this life is qualified as "a life of sorrow". An older English

version has "vale of tears". God the heavenly Father can and does *send* adversity (notice that word "send"). There will be trials and afflictions which come from His Fatherly hand. There is the discipline of love which comes from above! The result is that life, still marred and scarred by sin, is not always easy. But whatever adversity there may be, the heavenly Father will turn it to *my good*. I shall benefit and profit even from the trials and chastisement which the Father considers necessary for Me in His sovereign wisdom!

The fact that we have a heavenly Father, Who cares for us in perfect love does not mean that we will never experience sorrow. I think that it is especially meaningful in this Lord's Day about the loving heavenly Father and His gracious care, that attention is given to adversity! This will keep us from thinking that only prosperity comes from the Father above. For we shall under all circumstances now—in prosperity and adversity—cling to this one God, the Father almighty!

He keeps us with Himself. He never shoves us away. He continues to care for us, in all things, giving in grace, disciplining in love. Now we must more and more live as His children.

The Catechism words this very strongly; "In Him I trust so completely as to have no doubt . . ." This is indeed the point where we must now start. We start with complete trust in this Father, Who says: I will keep you safe with Me! Never doubt His ability or His willingness.

Now we must see Him more and more as an almighty God and a faithful Father. He can do it and He will! There is no doubt about it!

On Father's Day we are supposed to recognize our dad. We say, "Oh Dad, you're okay, you're not so bad after all! Dad, you are faithful." What is required in fathers? Faithfulness—that is faithfulness in providing, in disciplining, in guiding, and in comforting. A father must do all these things in faithfulness, every day again. He certainly does not have an easy task, and he performs it in much weakness and failing.

But every day we must recognize our heavenly Father in His perfect care for His children, for He has

established a unique bond with us in Christ Jesus, a bond which He maintains by the power of the Spirit. He keeps us with Himself, declares Himself personally responsible for us in His covenant, and proves this day by day, year after year.

Let us never underestimate this Father. Let us never go against His Word. Indeed, let us stay with Him, and trust in Him completely. AMEN.