



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 25 MAY 2020 – 1 JUNE 2020

Dear church family,

As I mentioned before, the Heidelberg Catechism is structured around our **guilt**, the **grace** of God, and our response in **gratitude**. This week, we conclude the section where we focus on our guilt before God (Q3–11). If you were wondering why this guilt section is important or should be taken as part of the good news, one answer may be that we have no other God than the whole God. What I mean is that, we cannot choose one or two aspects of God, merciful or loving, for example. We must not think of God in those terms exclusively. If God really is God, sooner or later, we will have to face Him, and when we do, we are not going to meet just one side of God. We must resist the temptation of only wanting God as a loving father but not as a holy Creator, or God as a merciful ruler but not as a just Judge. To only want a god who never punishes wrongdoings is a sign of immaturity, like a spoiled child who knows nothing about justice and fairness for others. Worse, it will soon amount to idolatry, as the god he likes and worships is different from the true God of the bible who does punish wrongs. But the fact that God is just and finds us guilty is actually good news that we can be glad about. Kevin DeYoung explains this way:

God's justice demands that sin and rebellion and idolatry not go unpunished. We often struggle to embrace God's right to execute justice, but when the referee blows a call against our team, we'll stand up and yell at the television. When our insurance company refuses to pay what the policy says they should, we'll get downright indignant. We all have a sense of justice. But somehow we don't think God can be concerned for justice when He is wronged.

We need a God who makes moral judgments. If He loves everyone in exactly the same way, what does His love really mean, and what does it mean to be loved by God? Our universe would make no sense and the pain of injustice would be even greater if we did not have a God who recognises right from wrong and judges the wicked. Be glad, though: Just as we love justice, so does God. [DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p35]

Actually, I would go further and say, God loves justice far more, infinitely more than we love justice. Nevertheless, as I said before, if you feel downtrodden by what we go through in this **guilt** section, hang in there! **Grace** is coming! And how much sweeter God's **grace** will be when we truly know our **guilt** before Him!

Here I include the questions and answers from Lord's Day 4 and two bible passages for you to meditate on during the week.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (0425 270 854 / tim.wonil.lee@gmail.com) if you'd like to pray with me or for any other needs.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee
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THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM¹

Lord's Day 4

Q9) **But doesn't God do man² an injustice by requiring in his law what man is unable to do?**

A) No, God created man with the ability to keep the law.
Man, however, at the instigation of the devil, in wilful disobedience, robbed himself and all his descendants of these gifts.

Q10) **Will God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?**

A) Certainly not. He is terribly angry with the sin we are born with as well as our actual sins. God will punish them by a just judgment both now and in eternity, having declared:
"Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law."

Q11) **But isn't God also merciful?**

A) God is certainly merciful, but he is also just.
His justice demands that sin, committed against his supreme majesty, be punished with the supreme penalty—eternal punishment of body and soul.

GENESIS 1:31

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Alexander Pope wrote "to err is human; to forgive, divine." I am not able to analyse his poem to figure out what he exactly meant by that. But today, it is common to hear, "to err is human" as an admission that none of us human beings are perfect, and we are all prone to make mistakes and even sin. However, to be precise theologically, to err is NOT human. Jesus was (and still is) perfectly man as well as perfectly God, but he never "erred." In fact, Jesus shows us what true humanity is, perfect righteousness. Genesis 1–2 show us that we were originally made perfectly good. On the sixth day, God said "very good." It is only as result of Adam's Fall in Genesis 3 that we now "err" and inescapably so. In other words, to err is fallen. When we sin, we are not just being human, but being sinful human. "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) How amazing it is then, that God forgives not simply human being, but fallen and sinful human beings!

HEBREWS 10:30–31

30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." **31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Some people tell me that God of the Old Testament was angry and judgemental, while Jesus of the New Testament is all about love and forgiveness. Or they say that God was angry before Jesus, but now that Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins, God is no longer angry and we should not fear God's judgment. These sentiments may be popular and attractive to some, but they are not biblical nor Christian. For one thing, Jesus spoke of hell more than anyone else did in the New Testament. In Hebrews (which is in the New Testament) 10:26–31, the writer talks about how God will judge us even more severely than in the time of Moses if we go on sinning deliberately, which is insulting to Christ who died for us and infuriates the Holy Spirit. If we lack this vision of God who judges, we are simply lacking the vision of God that the bible shows to us.

¹ The text of the Catechism is from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>.

² 'Man' is being used here as a collective noun, meaning people, rather than biological male humans only.