



# Not My Own

Discovering  
God's Comfort  
in the Heidelberg  
Catechism



Glenda Mathes



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## Not My Own: Discovering God's Comfort in the Heidelberg Catechism

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*Rev. Ronald Scheuers*  
*January 2011*



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Immersing myself in Scripture, studying Reformed catechisms and confessions, and recalling a lifetime of instruction through sermons and catechism classes have renewed my great appreciation for the biblical expression of Christianity known as the Reformed faith and particularly for the beauty and practicality of the Heidelberg Catechism. Large blocks of my work days were devoted to reverent praise.

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*Glenda Mathes*

*Pella, IA*

*November 21, 2009*



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# OUR COMFORT IN CHRIST

## LESSON 1

### What Must I Know?

#### BELONGINGS

"It's mine!" screams your little sister when you touch her toy. Perhaps you feel like screaming the same way when she comes into your room and messes with your things.

We all guard our personal property. You don't like younger brothers or sisters touching your video game controllers with sticky jelly on their fingers. You don't like careless friends scratching your favorite music CDs. You don't like classmates borrowing your books and folding page corners or writing in margins. Your parents don't like neighborhood kids riding bikes across your lawn or squashing tomatoes in your garden.

"It's mine!" we think. "They have no right to mess with what belongs to me!"

People should respect property that belongs to other people, but sometimes we think too much about our things. The presents your parents give you and the things you buy with allowance or paper route money don't really belong to you. Your homes and yards don't really belong to your parents. Everything we have is a gift from God. He allows us to take care of it for a while, and He wants us to use everything for His glory.



#### BELONGING

The truth is that *you* don't even belong to yourself! You may be a helpful part of a loving family, which gives you a warm feeling of belonging. Belonging to a loving Christian family is one of God's best gifts. But you don't belong to your family as much as you belong to Jesus Christ, our faithful Savior and Lord.

The Bible clearly teaches that we belong to Christ.

The last part of 1 Corinthians 6:19 and the first part of verse 20 say, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price."

You were bought with the precious price of Christ's blood. If you believe Jesus died to pay for your sins, you don't belong to yourself. You belong to Jesus Christ.

Romans 14:8 says, "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

You shouldn't think about belonging to Christ as being a bad thing, like being a slave. Maybe you sometimes get a little tired of older brothers, sisters, parents, or teachers telling you what to do. Perhaps you'd like to be your own boss. "When I grow up," you think, "I'm going to do things my way for a change!"

But belonging to Christ is not like being a slave or even like being bossed by older people. Belonging to Christ is the only way to live in true freedom. Only the believer in Christ is free from the guilt of sin and the penalty of hell.

Some people in ancient and still in modern times have mistreated others by using the idea of “belonging” to justify evil treatment of other people, such as slaves, servants, wives, or even their children. But any wicked use of “belonging” is the exact opposite of what it means to belong to Christ. Belonging to Christ means being safe for all eternity.

Are you strong enough to defend yourself against the class bully? Can you take down a strong man with a gun? What could you do if enemies rolled into your town in armored tanks? We cannot defend ourselves from every threat in life, but God is stronger than every evil thing. If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you belong to Him. And He promises that nothing or no one will ever snatch you from His hands.

When Jesus speaks about His people, He says in John 10:28, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

Christ has given His children eternal life. In this world, filled with sickness and sorrow, you are safe in the arms of Jesus. When you leave this world and God takes you to your eternal home in heaven, you are safe in the arms of Jesus.

You are always safe in the arms of Jesus. What wonderful comfort we have in Christ’s promise that we are not our own, but belong to Him!



## THINKING CAREFULLY

### 1. Where does the Bible tell us that we belong to Jesus Christ?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Why is it a good thing to belong to Christ?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## COMFORT FROM THE CATECHISM

Look at this book’s title. You’ll notice that it has two parts. The first part is *Not My Own*. The second part is *Discovering God’s Comfort in the Heidelberg Catechism*.

We've talked about how our belongings—and even our very selves—are not our own, but belong to Christ. We said that belonging to Christ gives us wonderful comfort. In our class this year, we're going to explore the *Heidelberg Catechism* and discover what it says about God's promises of comfort in the Bible. We're going to learn what we must know to be able to live with joy and die without fear.

Perhaps this is the first time you've gone to a catechism class instead of Sunday school. Maybe you're wondering why you should study something with a strange name like "*Heidelberg Catechism*."

"Heidelberg" is the name of a city in Germany. A "catechism" is a book of questions and answers used for teaching. The *Heidelberg Catechism* was published in the city of Heidelberg in 1563—a very long time ago! But Reformed churches have used it ever since to teach children and young people about the truths of the Christian faith, which are found in God's Word, the Bible.



### THINKING CAREFULLY

3. Where do we find God's promises of comfort? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is a catechism? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why is the catechism we are studying called the Heidelberg? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. For how many years have churches been using the *Heidelberg Catechism* to teach young people about the Christian faith?

\_\_\_\_\_

### COMFORT IN CHRIST

Now look at the page at the front of this book that says "Contents." You'll see that the first part of this book is "Our Comfort in Christ."

This lesson teaches what we need to know about the comfort of belonging to Christ. That comfort is the thread that ties together all the lessons in this book.

The first question and answer of the *Heidelberg Catechism* beautifully summarize what we've learned so far about belonging to Christ as our comfort during all the struggles of this life and even when we face death.

## Heidelberg Catechism

1Q. *What is your only comfort in life and in death?*

A. *That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.*

That first question and answer of the *Heidelberg Catechism* is very important to a lot of people. Little children can say it by heart. Young people being interviewed before the elders of their church for profession of faith recite it as their favorite question and answer. Old people who have forgotten nearly everything—even the names of their own children—still remember it. It is often printed on the small folders handed out at funerals.

That first question and answer is extremely meaningful to many people. It's important for you to memorize it and store it in your heart.



## THINKING CAREFULLY

7. What one word describes the “thread,” or theme, of the *Heidelberg Catechism*?

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8. Why do you think Q. and A. 1 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* means so much to so many people?

---

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## WHAT WE MUST KNOW

“What a jerk!” we think when someone calls us names or cuts in line.

It's easy to see the sin in other people. It's not so easy to see it in ourselves. But if we are to experience real comfort, the first thing we need to know is that we sin against other people and against God.

That's the bad news.

Here's the good news: Christ has saved us from our sin.

Now that's very good news! That's the gospel, which means, “good news.”

But that's not the end of the story. We shouldn't think, “Okay, since Jesus has saved me, I can do whatever I want.”

Imagine your little brother falls into a mud puddle and starts to cry. You help him stand up. You dry the tears from his face. You take him into the house and give him a bath.



You get out clean clothes and help him dress. But he doesn't even bother to say thank you. Instead he immediately runs outside and jumps back into the same puddle!

How much worse it is for you or me, when we've been saved by God's grace, to wallow in the muck of sin! Sinners saved from sin must begin to live for Christ.

**First**, according to the Bible, we must know that we are sinners.

The third verses of Psalms 14 and 53 are echoed in Romans 3:10: "There is no one righteous, not even one." The Bible also tells us that everyone sins. In 1 John 1:10, we read, "If we claim we have not sinned, we make [God] out to be a liar..."

You may think you're pretty good when you obey your parents and are kind to the picked-on kid in your class, but the Bible says that no one—not even your mom or your dad or your pastor—is righteous. We are all sinners, and we all need a savior.

**Second**, according to the Bible, we must know that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12 says about Christ, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." And Acts 10:43 says that "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

**Third**, according to the Bible, we must know that saved sinners are to live for Christ.

Matthew 5:16 urges you to "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." And Ephesians 5:8 says, "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

Look again at the contents page. Perhaps you now understand why there are those three sections in our book: "Sin and Guilt," "Salvation and Grace," and "Service and Gratitude." The first section explains the Bible's teachings about our sin and the guilt we bear. The second section reveals the way God grants us salvation through His grace in Jesus Christ. And the third section shows how we should live in service to God out of our great gratitude.

What we must know from the Bible is summarized in the second question and answer of the *Heidelberg Catechism*:

**2Q.** *What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?*

**A.** *Three things: first, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.*



## THINKING CAREFULLY

9. What does the word "gospel" mean? \_\_\_\_\_

---

10. What three things must we know from the Bible?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

11. What are the three main sections of the *Heidelberg Catechism*?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

### FOR MEMORY



1 Corinthians 6:19b–20a

**You are not your own; you were bought at a price.**

#### *Heidelberg Catechism*

**1Q.** *What is your only comfort in life and in death?*

**A.** *That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.*

#### *Westminster Shorter Catechism*

**21Q.** *Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?*

**A.** *The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.*

### KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

**Belonging** – All that I have and all that I am belong to Christ.

**Comfort** – I have comfort because I belong to Christ, and He will always keep me safe.

**Gospel** – The “good news” is that Christ has saved me from my sin.

**Sin and Guilt** – I am a sinner, burdened with guilt.

**Salvation and Grace** – I have been saved by God's grace through Jesus Christ.

**Service and Gratitude** – I should serve God out of gratitude for His great salvation.

## LESSON 2

# Do I Sin?

### FIRST THE BAD NEWS

"You think you're so good!" hisses your friend when you don't want to throw popcorn at classmates sitting four rows ahead of you in a darkened movie theater. Maybe sometimes you're the one hissing that at your friend!

"Well, I'm not so bad," we think. It's easy to think of a classmate who talks back to teachers, picks on other kids, or does things that are a lot worse!

Even if you don't stack up very well compared to your classmates, you can always think of people who are worse than you. "What about Hitler? What about Stalin? What about Saddam Hussein? Those guys were really bad!"

Brace yourself: You're just as much a sinner.

Please note that I didn't say you sin as much or God views you the same way! But anyone who commits even the tiniest sin is just as much a sinner as the most wicked and cruel criminal in history. There's a difference in types of sin, amounts of sin, results of sin, and especially God's view of your sin; but anyone who commits even one little sin is a sinner. Your football hero, your movie star idol, your favorite Christian musician, your sweet grandma, and your funny uncle are all sinners just as Hitler, Stalin, and Hussein were sinners. Everyone sins. You sin and I sin.

That's the bad news again.

### NOW THE GOOD NEWS

The good news is that if you believe in Christ you're a sinner saved by grace.

Everyone in this world is just as much a sinner as everyone else. *But* there are two kinds of sinners: unsaved sinners and forgiven sinners.

Maybe you still think that you're not so bad. Let's look at what the Bible says about you and your sin.

Romans 3:23 says that "*all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

This means *us*—you and me. We can't escape that word *all*. It's such a little word, but it means so much! It includes everyone who has ever lived, is living now, and will live. The only exception is Jesus Christ.





There's no use trying to fool ourselves into believing that we don't sin. First John 1:8 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

God's Word, the Bible, tells us what we need to know about our sin. In it God tells us what He wants us to do. That is God's law. Romans 3:20b tells us that "through the law we become conscious of sin." You and I know that we are sinners because—like the Sunday school song says—"the Bible tells me so." The *Heidelberg Catechism* summarizes this in Q. and A. 3.

## FOR MEMORY



### *Heidelberg Catechism*

**3Q.** How do you come to know your misery?

**A.** The law of God tells me.



## THINKING CAREFULLY

**1.** How do you know you are a sinner? \_\_\_\_\_

**2.** List two Bible passages that tell you that you are a sinner.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**3.** What two kinds of sinners are there in our world? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4.** Which one are you? \_\_\_\_\_

## LORD'S DAYS IN THE CATECHISM

If you look in the back of a *Psalter Hymnal*, you'll find a copy of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. (It is also printed in other books of Reformed creeds and confessions.) If you don't have a copy at home, perhaps you can look in a songbook at church while you're waiting for worship to begin. You will see that each numbered section is called a Lord's Day. The first is Lord's Day 1, the second is Lord's Day 2, and so on—all the way to Lord's Day 52. Some of our lessons will mirror the questions and answers in one of these Lord's Days, but some lessons will combine material from more than one of the Lord's Days because we have less than half that many lessons—only 25!

Put on your thinking cap. Why are the fifty-two sections called Lord's Days?

If your minister regularly preaches from the *Heidelberg Catechism*, you may have guessed the right answer. There are fifty-two Lord's Days because the catechism was not only written

for teaching youth; it was also written for the congregation's instruction in Sunday worship. There are fifty-two weeks in a year. Each week has one Sunday or Lord's Day. If a minister preaches a sermon based on the questions and answers found in a Lord's Day at one service each Sunday, he will preach through the biblical teaching of the entire *Heidelberg Catechism* in one year.

Look again at the contents page of this book. You'll see that this lesson begins the section called "Sin and Guilt."

Are you sighing already? Do you hate to hear about sin? Does it seem as if we spend too much time talking about the bad news and not enough about the good news?

Please notice that while there are fourteen lessons in the "Salvation and Grace" section, and seven lessons in the "Service and Gratitude" section, there are only three lessons in the "Sin and Guilt" section. That's because the *Heidelberg Catechism* has only three Lord's Days in the section about sin and man's misery. Only three out of fifty-two!

Some people think that Reformed confessions and catechisms talk too much about sin and not enough about grace. Don't ever let anyone tell you that about the *Heidelberg Catechism*! Now you know better. Now you can explain that only three of its fifty-two Lord's Days focus on sin. The rest of the lessons focus on God's grace and salvation through Jesus Christ and how we can live in thankful service to Him.



## THINKING CAREFULLY

5. How many Lord's Days are in the *Heidelberg Catechism*? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Why is there that number? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many Lord's Days focus on sin? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many Lord's Days focus on something other than sin, like salvation and service?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## GOD'S LAW

"Buckle up! It's our law," proclaim the signs along the highway; perhaps there are similar signs in your area. Your parents make you and your brothers and sisters wear those uncomfortable seatbelts the whole time the car is moving. If there is a baby or toddler in your family, that child has to be in a special seat. If your dad doesn't want to get a speeding ticket, he watches the car's speedometer and tries to keep it at the posted limit.

So many laws! Does it sometimes seem as if laws spoil all the fun?

What if no one wore seatbelts? What if no one obeyed the speed limit? There were no seatbelt laws when I was a child. In fact, some cars didn't even *have* seat belts, especially

not shoulder harnesses. Some states didn't have speed limits on major highways. But do you know what? It gradually became obvious that a lot of people—particularly children—died in car accidents. Studies showed that seatbelts saved lives. Speed limits resulted in fewer deaths. Traffic laws have a purpose.

Laws can be good, especially when they are based on the Bible, God's law.

What does God's law tell you? God says, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). That's God's first and greatest law. You are to love God above everything else and with everything that is in you.

God also says that you are to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). This is God's second great law.

Think about this a bit. God didn't have to tell us to love *ourselves* because it is our nature to love ourselves more than any other person. Do you care about anyone as much as you care about yourself? How would you like to feed and bathe your little sister and carry her everywhere she needs to go all the time? Do you love her that much? Even if your little sister is a tiny and sweet baby, you'd get pretty tired of caring for her every minute, especially when she wakes up crying in the middle of the night!

Some people think God's law is just in the Old Testament and we don't have to pay attention to it anymore. "I live by grace," they say, "not under the law."

But what did Jesus say? In Matthew 22:37–40 He quoted from the Old Testament. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The New Testament echoes the Old Testament. God's law is not just an Old Testament command that we can ignore now. God's law is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The *Heidelberg Catechism* summarizes God's law in Q. and A. 4.

### FOR MEMORY



#### *Heidelberg Catechism*

**4Q.** *What does God's law require of us?*

**A.** *You shall love the Lord your God...*

*[and] you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*



### THINKING CAREFULLY

**9.** What is God's first great law? \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. What is God's second great law? \_\_\_\_\_

### MY SINFUL NATURE

"Why did I do that?" you think when you do something you know you're not supposed to do. Maybe you've tried to spend less time watching TV or playing video games. But you come home from a long day at school and—before you know it—your mom is calling you for dinner and you realize that you've just wasted three hours.

Even though believers are forgiven sinners, they still struggle with sin. Why?

We struggle because we still have a sinful nature. We want to love God and our neighbor, but sometimes it's just so hard to do the right thing!

Even the apostle Paul struggled against his sinful nature.

"For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out," he writes. "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:18–19).

That sinful nature keeps us from perfectly obeying God's law. It makes us hate God and people.

Paul writes that "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Romans 8:7). Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" We sin because we have a sinful nature, a sinful heart. God sees what we are inside. Genesis 6:5 tells us, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Everyone's nature is to hate God. No one can obey His law perfectly. Titus 3:3 talks about how the sinful nature makes us hate one another.

Maybe you've heard about great heroes of the faith like Martin Luther and John Calvin, who risked their lives to serve the church in some important ways. But Martin Luther and John Calvin couldn't keep God's law perfectly. Your mom can't keep God's law perfectly. Your catechism teacher can't keep God's law perfectly. No one can.

Our only hope is to be forgiven and saved by Christ, who never sinned but perfectly obeyed God's law.



#### FOR MEMORY

##### Heidelberg Catechism

5Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

**A. No. I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.**



## THINKING CAREFULLY

11. Why do even forgiven sinners struggle with sin? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Can anyone keep God's law perfectly? \_\_\_\_\_



## FOR MEMORY

1 John 1:8

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

**Westminster Shorter Catechism**

**42Q.** What is the sum of the ten commandments [God's law]?

**A.** The sum of the ten commandments is, To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.

## KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

**Sinners** – All people are sinners. The Bible teaches that no one is without sin.

**God's Law** – God wants me to love Him above all and my neighbor as myself.

**Sinful Nature** – My nature is to hate God and my neighbor.

# Life in Christ

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