

Heidelberg Catechism
Lord's Day 52
Part 1

127. What is the sixth petition?

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;” that is, since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment,¹ and besides, our deadly enemies, the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh,⁴ assail us without ceasing, be pleased to preserve and strengthen us by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that we may make firm stand against them and not be overcome in this spiritual warfare,⁵ until finally complete victory is ours.⁶

[1] Jn. 15:5; Ps. 103:14–16. [2] 1 Pet. 5:8–9; Eph. 6:12–13. [3] Jn. 15:19. [4] Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17. [5] Matt. 26:41; Mk. 13:33. [6] 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23–24; *2 Cor. 12:7.

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I. Our enemies are strong

A. The devil

Whoever has God for his friend will find Satan to be his enemy. He receives the name of Satan, first, because he is the adversary of God himself; and next, because he is the adversary of those whom God honors with his friendship, who love God, who stand on the side of God, who bear his image, and reflect, in no inconsiderable degree, the brightness of the Divine glory. That wicked enemy is so inveterately opposed to the Divine majesty that he would gladly, if it were possible, overturn the throne of God. As he utterly despairs of accomplishing that object, he throws out all his venom against the elect, employs every expedient, and exhausts all his devices to enslave those whom the power of God has torn from his grasp ... He assaulted the first Adam in Paradise, and “beguiled him through his subtlety” (2 Cor 11:3). He made an attempt on the second Adam in the wilderness, but his efforts were foiled. Disappointed in that expectation, he bends all his attack on those whom Christ has claimed to be his own. When he sees them extricated from his toils, loosed from his shackles and bolts, restored to liberty, and proceeding straight towards the glory of the heavenly kingdom, he is roused to rage and fury, and, “like a roaring lion,” pursues and besets them from every quarter, “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8).

Herman Witsius, Sacred Dissertations on the Lord's Prayer

Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” ... Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

Revelation 12. 12, 17

Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family. ² But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus they hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not put to death. ³ And he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

2 Kings 11. 1-3

B. The world

¹³ *The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing.*
¹⁴ *She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town,*
¹⁵ *calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way,*
¹⁶ *“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” And to him who lacks sense she says,*
¹⁷ *“Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”*
¹⁸ *But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*

Proverbs 9. 13-18

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

I John 2. 15-17

C. Our own flesh

¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Romans 7. 15-20

... each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

James 1. 14-15

II. We are so weak

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...

Ephesians 6. 10-18

You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers ...
The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Psalms 90. 5-6, 10

All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass.

Isaiah 40. 6-7

III. Only God has the power to overcome our enemies

*Truth is lacking,
and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.
The LORD saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.
¹⁶ He saw that there was no man,
and wondered that there was no one to intercede;
then his own arm brought him salvation,
and his righteousness upheld him.
¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and a helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.
¹⁸ According to their deeds, so will he repay,
wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies;
to the coastlands he will render repayment.
¹⁹ So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west,
and his glory from the rising of the sun;
for he will come like a rushing stream,
which the wind of the LORD drives.
²⁰ "And a Redeemer will come to Zion,
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD.*

Isaiah 59. 15-20

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10. 12-13

*A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood, Of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His name, From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.*

Martin Luther, A Mighty Fortress is Our God