

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 50 THE DUTCH PROTESTANTS

“Protestants were burned at the stake as heretics in Italy, Spain, France, England, and Scotland. But in no country, did so many persons suffer martyrdom for their faith as in the Netherlands” (Kuiper, *Church in History*, 241). We saw earlier that the author of the *Belgic Confession*, Guido de Bres, was martyred in 1567.

In the first years of the reign of Philip II, King of Spain, “more than 18,000 persons in the Netherlands fell victim to the Spanish Inquisition.... Spain was at that time the most powerful country in Europe. Holland was a very small country. But at last in 1568 the people of the Netherlands under the leadership of one of the greatest heroes of the Reformation, William the Silent, Prince of Orange, rose in revolt against Spain” (Kuiper, 242).

“William was greatly helped by the efforts of the Sea Beggars, a group of fierce sailors who freed several important towns and encouraged the Dutch people to fight for their freedom” (Boekestein, *Glory of Grace*). “Other sea-coast towns similarly defied the Spanish armies, the Dutch in some cases opening the dykes, admitting the sea, in self-defense.... At Leyden the breaching of the dykes enabled the Sea Beggars to come to the town’s relief, while the Spaniards retreated in dismay.

“In 1580 Philip promised 25,000 crowns in gold and other rewards to the man who captured William the Silent dead or alive. For four years the reward remained unclaimed, but in 1584 the Dutch leader was assassinated, his foes being assisted by the free access which William gave to his person. He is famed in history as ‘the founder of the Dutch Republic.’” (Houghton, *Sketches*, 141-142).

“Elizabeth, Queen of England, was friendly to the Protestant cause. Without declaring war against Spain, she had been lending aid to the Dutch. The Catholics laid many plots to assassinate her, but all were in vain.

“Now King Philip of Spain formed a grandiose plan. He built an enormous fleet [130 ships], which the Spaniards called the ‘Invincible Armada.’ With this fleet Philip would invade England. And with that country conquered, so he thought, it would be easy to put down the rebellion in the Netherlands. But the English with the help of the Dutch defeated the Spanish Armada” (Kuiper, 243).

“Smaller English ships outmaneuvered the huge Spanish war vessels and launched fire ships which consumed part of the fleet. Because the English ships had longer range guns, they could avoid close fighting. In addition, an immense storm arose which sent the Armada into the North Sea, forcing the ships to sail around the British Isles. Only half of the Spanish fleet limped back home. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was one of the most important naval battles in all of history” (DeMar, *Reformation*, 239).

“Finally, Holland obtained its freedom from the yoke of Spain and the Pope. In 1609 a Twelve Years’ Truce between Spain and the Netherlands was agreed upon, and this virtually meant the recognition by Spain of the republic, although official recognition did not come until the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648” (*Sketches*, 143).

Also in 1609, a reformed professor of theology at the University of Leyden, Jacob Arminius, died. His story leading to the famous Synod of Dordt is next.

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 50: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA 125

Question 125: WHAT IS THE FOURTH PETITION? **“Give us this day our daily bread;”** that is, be pleased to provide for all our bodily need, so that we may thereby acknowledge that You are the only fountain of all good, and that without Your blessing neither our care and labor, nor Your gifts, can profit us; that we may therefore withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in You.

To ask our heavenly Father to give us our “daily bread” is to ask Him to provide for “all our bodily need” (cf. Gen. 3:19; Lev. 26:26). Christ “comprehends under the term bread all temporal blessings, and such as are necessary for the sustenance of life, as food, clothing, health, civil peace,” etc., in order to “restrain our desires, and teach us to pray only for such things as are necessary for the support of life [acquired by lawful labor, 1 Thess. 3:10], and for the service of God and our neighbor” (Ursinus, 643-44). This petition is based on Proverbs 30:8-9: “give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food You prescribe for me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.” “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Tim. 6:8).

There are three main reasons why our Father in heaven wants us to ask Him to provide for all our physical needs.

First, that we might daily know and praise Him to be the only source of all good. “He gives food to all flesh” (Ps. 136:25). “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:15-16; cf. 104:14-15, 27-28; James 1:17). “He gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. 1 Tim. 4:4-5). The wicked enjoy God’s blessings without giving Him thanks (Dan. 5:23).

Second, to confess to Him our daily need for His blessing so we can enjoy our food with thankfulness. “He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna...that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3); “it is He who gives you power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:17). “In His hand is the life of every living thing” (Job 12:10). “Unless the LORD builds the house, *they labor in vain* who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchmen stays awake in vain” (Ps. 127:1). “God desires that we should use His gifts, not as thieves and robbers, but cheerfully and with thanksgiving” (Ursinus,

Third, that we daily learn to place our trust in Him alone. Asking God for our daily bread helps us to fight against our natural sinful tendency to trust in “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). “Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you” (Ps. 55:22). “Trust in Him at all times...if riches increase, *do not set your heart on them*” (Ps. 62:8, 10). Do not “trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). “Therefore, do not worry, ... for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (Matt. 6:32). Our heavenly has many instruments by which He provides for all our bodily need (cf. 2 Chron. 16:12-13). Therefore, let us put our ultimate trust in Him, not in His instruments.

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