

## THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT  
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTIONS # 193 & 104.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #193. *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

A. In the fourth petition, (which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*,<sup>1</sup>) acknowledging, that in Adam, and by our own sin, we have forfeited our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them;<sup>2</sup> and that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us,<sup>3</sup> nor we to merit,<sup>4</sup> or by our own industry to procure them;<sup>5</sup> but prone to desire,<sup>6</sup> get,<sup>7</sup> and use them unlawfully:<sup>8</sup> we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them;<sup>9</sup> and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them,<sup>10</sup> and contentment in them;<sup>11</sup> and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.<sup>12</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #104. *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

A. In the fourth petition, (which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*,<sup>13</sup>) we pray, That of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.<sup>14</sup>

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Question 1—*What is meant by bread in the fourth petition?*

*Answer*—Although some have thought it to refer to spiritual mercies, particularly an interest in Christ, John 6:35, 51; yet, the subsequent petitions having reference to this interest, this petition is best understood as pertaining to the blessings of this life now burdened by the Fall of man, Gen. 3:19. Thus, when God promises outward blessings to

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 6:11.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 2:17; 3:17; Rom. 8:20-22; Jer. 5:25; Deut. 28:15-68 (esp. 15-17).

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 8:3.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 32:10.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 8:17, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Jer. 6:13; Mark 7:21, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Hos. 12:7.

<sup>8</sup> Jas. 4:3.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. 43:12-14; 28:20; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:11, 12; Phil. 4:6.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Tim. 4:3-5.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Tim. 6:6-8.

<sup>12</sup> Prov. 30:8, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 6:11.

<sup>14</sup> Prov. 30:8, 9; Gen. 28:20; 1 Tim. 4:4, 5.

his people, these blessings of the present life are comprehended under this term *bread*, Ps. 132:15.

Question 2—*What is supposed by this fourth petition?*

*Answer*—This fourth petition supposes that man, by his Fall, has forfeited all right and comfort to these outward blessings of life so that they are embittered to the soul lying in sin, Job 7:15.

So, too, that these outward blessings are the free gift of God, and it is only by his hand that any of our endeavors succeed in outward affairs, Deut. 8:18. Whatever circumstances men have in this world, God it is that provides for them whatsoever they have, Prov. 22:2.

Moreover, this supposes the lawfulness of praying for temporal good things, for God does not exclude these from being the subject of our prayerful concern, Luke 11:3.

Finally, subjecting our desires for the good things of this life to the sanctifying of prayer supposes that men are prone to desire them unlawfully, Jer. 6:13; Mark 7:21, 22; that men are prone to get them unlawfully, Hos. 12:7; and that men are prone to use them unlawfully, Jas. 4:3. Praying for them teaches to wait upon the providence and mercy of God for all of these things, Gen. 43:12-14; 28:20; that the Lord bless the diligence of lawful endeavoring after those things, Eph. 4:28; Phil. 4:6.

Question 3—*What is the concern of the fourth petition?*

*Answer*—The fourth petition of the Lord's prayer consists in these words, *give us this day our daily bread*, Matt. 6:11. By *give bread* is imported:

*First*, that we may place all our temporal concerns before the Lord in prayer, as well as all our spiritual concerns, Prov. 3:6. The covenant comprehends the small things in this life, both bread and water, Isa. 33:16; discretion in managing his affairs, Ps. 112:5; and the success of his management, Ps. 1:3; as well as the great things of eternal salvation, 1 Tim. 4:1. We are able to perceive much of God in answers to these kinds of prayers, Gen. 33:10.

*Second*, that men depend upon heaven for the means and comforts of life, and if the communications between heaven and earth were ceased, all would starve, Hos. 2:21, 22.

*Third*, that we stand in need of bread as long as we are in this world and tethered to this present state, Ps. 33:18, 19; for this clay tabernacle stands in continual need of reparation and sustenance, Ps. 104:14, 15.

*Fourth*, that it is God who gives us bread, for all necessary things and conveniences of life flow from his hand, Ps. 145:16. Though men get bread through labor, yet it is from God for he alone crowns labor with success, Ps. 128:2, 5. Though it be derived from others, yet it is God that opens the hearts of some men to bestow upon others, Deut. 8:17, 18.

*Fifth*, that our bread is the free gift of God's mercy, without any meriting on our part, Gen. 32:10. The least of all temporal blessings are not deserved from the hand of God, Luke 17:10.

We must crave bread because in Adam we have forfeited our right to God's creatures, Gen. 2:17. As a result of his fall into sin, the ground, from which we must seek sustenance, was cursed, Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:20-22. By this sin of breaking the first covenant, and many other rebellions against the sovereign God, we have been stripped of all creaturely comforts, Jer. 5:25. Furthermore, these outward blessings have been

cursed to our use due to this disobedience, Deut. 28:15-17; whereby they are not of themselves able to sustain us, Deut. 8:3.

We must pray for the bread which we already possess because: 1.) Without the efficacy of the divine appointment, it cannot be bread to us, it cannot nourish us, Matt. 4:4. Without that, our bread will not strengthen us, if God should break the stay and staff of it, Isa. 3:1. 2.) Without the good will and favor of God, there is only a curse to be found in it, Mal. 2:2.

Again, we pray that bread be given to *us* because: 1.) Masters of families ought to pray for bread not only for themselves but for the provision of the various members of their families, 1 Pet. 5:7. 2.) We should be concerned for the bread of others as well as ourselves for good men are merciful men and will give to others that need, Jas. 2:15, 16.

Additionally, we are to pray that it be *our* bread because,

*First*, we need to be clear that we possess the good things of this life by way of right: 1.) A covenant right to them, through Jesus Christ, by whom the lost right to the creature is restored to believers, 1 Cor. 3:22. In him, all right of enjoyment of these good things is made new, Isa. 33:16. 2.) A civil right to them, that it is bread which we have come to possess lawfully, 2 Thess. 3:11, 12.

*Second*, that God would bless our lawful endeavors to obtain bread, for this is a promise of the covenant, Ps. 128:2. A man must not think to come by this bread with folded hands but through active and lawful endeavoring, Prov. 10:4. Nor must it be sought without any prayer to God, Hag. 1:6, 9.

*Third*, that the bread brought to our hands would be blessed of God to us for our holy and comfortable use, 1 Tim. 4:3-5. It is through this blessing that men are enabled to find contentment in these good things, 1 Tim. 6:6-8.

Likewise, we are to pray for *daily* bread so that,

*First*, we learn to confine our desires for the good things of this life to a competency, and not seek to extend them to wealth and greater riches, Prov. 30:8, 9. Thus, we are to pray for daily and not weekly or yearly bread, because riches are a snare to the heart of men, Matt. 19:23; those who court them do so too their own harm, 1 Tim. 6:9.

*Second*, that we learn to live hand to mouth, having daily bread, without being pressed with anxiety for the time to come, Matt. 6:34. After all, we are not even sure of tomorrow, every day might be our last, Jas. 4:14.

Question 4—*Wherein is this petition especially to be observed?*

*Answer*—It is true that all good things are to be received and sanctified by prayer to God, 1 Tim. 4:4. However, the Christian custom of seeking the blessing of grace at meals together with thanks for such provision, which follows the example of Christ, is a prominent way of observing and enacting this petition, Matt. 14:19; 15:36. This practice, by which the natural enjoyments of this life are elevated into the moral realm, also prevailed amongst the early church, Acts 27:35.

Likewise, the practice of returning thanks for blessings given and mercies renewed is a proper taking up of this petition, Deut. 8:10. Indeed, God warns his people that they not forget the return of thanks after they have eaten and are become full, lest they come to forget the God of grace, Deut. 6:11, 12.