

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 # 192 & 103.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #192. *What do we pray for in the third petition?*

A. In the third petition, (which is, *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*,¹) acknowledging, that by nature we and all men are not only utterly unable and unwilling to know and do the will of God,² but prone to rebel against his word,³ to repine and murmur against his providence,⁴ and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh, and of the devil:⁵ we pray, that God would by his Spirit take away from ourselves and others all blindness,⁶ weakness,⁷ indisposedness,⁸ and perverseness of heart;⁹ and by his grace make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to his will in all things,¹⁰ with the like humility,¹¹ cheerfulness,¹² faithfulness,¹³ diligence,¹⁴ zeal,¹⁵ sincerity,¹⁶ and constancy,¹⁷ as the angels do in heaven.¹⁸

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #103. *What do we pray for in the third petition?*

A. In the third petition, (which is, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*,¹⁹) we pray, That God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things,²⁰ as the angels do in heaven.²¹

¹ Matt. 6:10.

² Rom. 7:18; Job 21:14; 1 Cor. 2:14.

³ Rom. 8:7.

⁴ Ex. 17:7; Num. 14:2.

⁵ Eph. 2:2.

⁶ Eph. 1:17, 18.

⁷ Eph. 3:16.

⁸ Matt. 26:40, 41.

⁹ Jer. 31:18, 19.

¹⁰ Ps. 119:1, 8, 35, 36; Acts 21:14.

¹¹ Micah 6:8.

¹² Ps. 100:2; Job 1:21; 2 Sam. 15:25, 26.

¹³ Isa. 38:3.

¹⁴ Ps. 119:4, 5.

¹⁵ Rom. 12:11.

¹⁶ Ps. 119:80.

¹⁷ Ps. 119:112.

¹⁸ Isa. 6:2, 3; Ps. 103:20, 21; Matt. 18:10.

¹⁹ Matt. 6:10.

²⁰ Ps. 67; Ps. 119:36; Matt. 26:39; 2 Sam. 15:25; Job 1:21.

²¹ Ps. 103:20, 21.

Question 1—*What is the concern of the third petition?*

Answer—The third petition of the Lord's prayer consists in these words, *thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*, Matt. 6:10. Wherein is imported:

First, a *confession* that the perfection with which the will of God ought to be pursued is not observed, Matt. 5:48. Because: 1.) Most men make their own will, and not God's, their law, and the rule of their actions, Rom. 8:7. All unregenerate men have shaken off the yoke of subjection to God, serving their own perverse desires, Tit. 3:3. Even when they appear to keep what is materially the will of God, it is not because it is God's will, but because it is their own and serves their own ends, Matt. 6:1. 2.) The best of men only carry the yoke of subjection to the will of God very unevenly, Gal. 5:17. Apart from the regenerating of the Spirit of God, there dwells in the will of man no good thing, Rom. 7:18.

Furthermore, although there was originally a harmony between the will of God and the powers of man at the first, Eccl. 7:29; that harmony is now gone, Rom. 3:23. Men are now indisposed: 1.) To knowing the will of God, Job 21:14. The natural man perceives only foolishness in the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 2:14. 2.) To doing the will of God, Ps. 14:3.

This inability springs from a threefold indisposition: 1.) An inability to know or do the will of God, 1 Cor. 2:14; because the law in its keeping is not known without the Spirit of regeneration, Rom. 7:9. The gospel is a doctrine which requires saving illumination to understand it, Eph. 1:17. 2.) An unwillingness to know or do the will of God, until brought under the power of Christ, Ps. 110:3. Until which time, all of the truths of God are held in unrighteousness, Rom. 1:18. 3.) A bias in the will to that which pleases our own desires, and the lusts thereof, Ps. 14:1; or, much worse, to fulfill the will of the devil, Eph. 2:2.

Second, a *profession* that: 1.) It is a grief of heart that God's will is not done by themselves and others, as it is done in heaven, Matt. 21:29; Ps. 119:136. A gracious person has the law written in the heart and esteems it to be righteous in all things, Ps. 119:128. 2.) That God, by the power of his grace, is able to reform and frame the souls of men on earth to the doing of his will, Prov. 21:1. God can bend the will of corrupt man into a conformity with his own holy will, Ezek. 36:26.

Third, a *desire*, which is twofold: 1.) That God would, by his grace, remove from themselves and others all spiritual blindness and cause them to know his will, Eph. 1:17, 18. There can be no doing of the will of God without first knowing what it is, Rom. 14:23. This desire to know the will of God is a mark of sincerity if it is universal, desiring to know the whole will of God, Rom. 7:22; and if it is practical, desiring to know in order to do, Ps. 103:18. 2.) That God, by his grace, would remove from themselves and others, all weakness, indisposition, and perverseness, and cause them to obey and do his will, as in heaven, Ps. 119:35. This desire extends to removal of weakness, obstructing their obedience, Eph. 3:16; removing the indisposition, hindering their obedience, Matt. 26:40, 41; and removal of perverseness of spirit, whereby one is inclined to resist and go contrary to the will of God, Jer. 31:18, 19.

Question 2—*What is to be understood by the will of God?*

Answer—The will of God must encompass both his will of commands and the will of his providence:

First, the will of his commands, whereby he gives laws to all of his creatures, Heb. 13:21. This is that law of uprightness whereby the creature is made perfect in obedience, Matt. 7:21. The will of God's commands is comprehensive, Ps. 119:96. This will is expressed in two heads: 1.) Faith, 1 John 3:23. This is the great thing which he wills men

to do, John 6:29. Faith is the first thing, if you would do any part of the will of God, you must first believe, Heb. 11:6; John 15:5. It is also the last will of God without which there is no hope of salvation, Mark 16:16. 2.) Holiness, 1 Thess. 4:3. It is the will of the flesh and the devil that contradicts the will of God's commands, Rom. 8:7. Holiness is the will of God's nature, reaching to all, 1 Pet. 1:16. It is the will of his whole law, Ps. 19:8.

Second, the will of God's providence, Ps. 135:6. God sits in heaven as universal monarch disposing of all his creatures, and all of their concerns, without having to give account to any, Dan. 4:35. They are all his own, as being created by him, and for him, Matt. 20:15. This will of God's providence may be considered in two ways: 1.) As directing to duty, Ps. 32:8. God speaks by his works as well as by his word, the whole world holding forth this sort of speech, Ps. 19:1-3. Providence points men to particular pieces of service, Gal. 6:10. Thus, we ought not to be idle spectators of his providence, Ps. 107:43. 2.) As ordering and disposing of all events about ourselves and others, Matt. 10:29, 30. These providences may be smiling providences of a favorable disposition, Rom. 2:4; or, frowning providences of a cross disposition, Mic. 6:9. Yet, the natural will of man is inclined to repine and murmur against his providence, Ex. 17:7; Num. 14:2.

Question 3—*By whom is God's will done in heaven?*

Answer—The will of God is done in heaven by two sorts of creatures:

First, by the heavenly bodies, sun, moon and stars, which God has created, appointing their ends, motions and courses, which they have observed steadily from the creation, Ps. 119:89, 91. Indeed, their obedience to the will of God is made the subject of scorers and mockers, 2 Pet. 3:4. Though the inventions of men are only kept in motion with continued labor, these heavenly bodies do the will of God steadily, evenly and unweariedly, displaying their perfection of creation, Ps. 19:5, 6.

Second, by the angels of heaven which, being glorious spirits and attendants of the great King, are obedient to every direction of their Maker, and fall in with the least intimation of his will, Ps. 103:20, 21. The saints in heaven also do his will after the same manner, Rev. 14:4, 5.

Question 4—*By whom is God's will done in earth?*

Answer—God's will is to done in earth by all men, even as the angels in heaven, Isa. 6:2, 3; Matt. 18:10. Therefore, we must pray that God, by his grace, makes us able and willing to know, to do, and to submit to his will in all things, Ps. 119:1, 8, 35, 36; Acts 21:14. Then, as the angels, men shall obey and do his will with humility, Mic. 6:8. Additionally, they will yield this obedience with cheerfulness, Ps. 100:2; regardless of the providential crosses, Job 1:21; in humble submission to the disposition of the divine will in all of our affairs, 2 Sam. 15:25, 26. Men must obey with faithfulness, Isa. 38:3; diligence, Ps. 119:4, 5; zeal, Rom. 12:11; sincerity, Ps. 119:80; and constancy to the end, Ps. 119:112. In all things recognizing that it is the Lord and his judgments are sure, 1 Sam. 3:18.