

## 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 # 186&99.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #186. *What rule hath God given for our direction in the duty of prayer?*

A. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in the duty of prayer;<sup>1</sup> but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which our Savior Christ taught his disciples, commonly called *The Lord's prayer*.<sup>2</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #99. *What rule hath God given for our direction in prayer?*

A. The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer;<sup>3</sup> but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called *The Lord's prayer*.<sup>4</sup>

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Question 1—*Wherein does it appear that we stand in need of direction in prayer?*

*Answer*—Our need of direction in prayer arises from several considerations: 1.) There is the fact that our prayer is directed to the great God of heaven, Eccl. 5:2. It is unbecoming the approach of the majesty of the divinity to speak rash and fearless things which do not comport with right thoughts of God, Ps. 50:21. Who would not approach an earthly potentate without seeking direction as to the right and acceptable way of so doing? Est. 4:11 2.) There is the matter of our own guiltiness, Luke 18:13. None would be rash or careless in approaching the presence of a prince, if he knew himself to be a wanted rebel or traitor, 2 Sam. 13:37. Therefore, the prodigal son thinks beforehand of what he will say to his offended father, Luke 15:18, 19. 3.) There is the weightiness of the matter, or errand, before the throne of grace, which is to worship the true God, Lev. 10:3. The awfulness and solemnness of this work should make the petitioner question his approach, Mic. 6:6. 4.) There is the weakness and aptness to mistake and miscarry in the approach, Job 37:19. We have no skill to manage this case and we are ready to go wrong in the matter of prayer, Rom. 8:26. We are too often blinded by our own passion and prejudice and, as a result, ask things of God not agreeable to his revealed will, Luke 9:54. We are also apt to go about prayer in a wrong manner through insincerity, formality and carnality, Jas. 4:3; Isa. 64:7. 5.) There is the danger of mistaking and miscarrying in prayer, either; *first*, in provoking the Lord against ourselves and bringing down a curse instead of a blessing, Mal. 1:14. In any invocation care needs to be taken that the name of the Lord be sanctified, Ex. 20:7. *Second*, in frustrating our prayers so that they are rejected or not heard, Jas. 4:3. Or, *third*, in receiving that thing not agreeable to God's revealed will in a way of vengeance, Ps. 106:15.

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<sup>1</sup> John 5:14.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4.

<sup>3</sup> John 5:14.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4.

Man is naturally a stranger to God and himself, neither knowing the glories of the divine perfection, nor sensible of the guilt he has contracted, nor of the mercies he has received, Ps. 10:17. Even the disciples, who were intimately conversant with Christ, and who, it must be supposed, often joined with him in prayer, were, notwithstanding, at a loss to this duty, as appears, Luke 11:1.

Question 2—*What is the rule which God has given us for direction in prayer?*

*Answer*—Generally, the whole word of God gives a rule to us for that end, even the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, in which God's will is revealed. As to all things to be believed and done by us, 1 John 5:14. In Scripture, we learn to pray being furnished with all sorts of helps and directions for this duty:

*First*, it gives us an abundance of matter for prayer, Ps. 51:4, 5; Phil. 4:6. So that whosoever has the word of God dwelling richly in him, will not lack matter of prayer for himself or others, Col. 3:15, 16.

In the historical parts of Scripture, there is an accounting of the providences of God in the world and toward his church: 1.) There is the universal apostasy of the world which brought a flood, Gen. 6:13; the unnatural lusts of the inhabitants of Sodom, for which they were consumed by fire from heaven, Gen. 18:20; the vile abominations committed by the Israelites, which brought spiritual judgments, Ps. 78:59-61; the declining of churches which led to the removal of their candlestick, Rev. 2:5. 2.) These portions also give account of the church's increase and preservation, notwithstanding dark dispensations of providence; for example, in the hard bondage of Egypt, the church was kept by the power of God, Ex. 1:12.

Additionally, the word of God, as it is a rule of faith, contains those great doctrines, without the knowledge of which we cannot pray aright: 1.) There is an account of the personal glory of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. 13:14. Of the mediation and application of Christ's atonement together with the purpose and grace of God in eternal election, 2 Tim. 1:9. In the light of these truths, giving distinct glory to the divine persons, the apostle assumes a familiarity in our prayers, Eph. 2:18. 2.) There is an account of that special providence of God toward believers, Eph. 1:18, 19. 3.) There is a clear account given of the offices of Christ, as suited to the needs of his people, Luke 24:19; Heb. 3:1; Ps. 2:6.

*Second*, it fully directs the manner of our prayer, so that: 1.) We pray with sincerity, Heb. 10:22. 2.) We pray with humility, Ps. 10:17. 3.) We pray with faith, Jas. 1:6. 4.) We pray with fervency, Jas. 5:16.

*Third*, it furnishes us with the most fit words to be used in all our praying, Hos. 14:2.

*Specially*, there is that form of words which Christ taught to his disciples, commonly called *the Lord's prayer*, Matt. 6:9-13, which, for our direction, every Christian is obliged to receive with the utmost reverence, Luke 11:2-4. But, it should be kept in mind that our Lord has nowhere tied us to this very form of words and none else, because: 1.) The prayers afterwards recorded in the Scriptures, were neither this form of words, nor concluded it, as Jesus at Lazarus' grave, John 11:41; or at his last prayer, John 17; nor his apostles or church, Acts 1:24. 2.) The prayer itself is diversely recorded in Matthew and in Luke, Matt. 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4.