

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

QUESTION # 188.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #188. *Of how many parts doth the Lord's prayer consist?*

A. The Lord's prayer consists of three parts; a preface, petitions, and a conclusion.

Question 1—*Of how many parts is the Lord's prayer?*

Answer—The *Lord's prayer* consists in three parts; a *preface*, *petitions*, and a *conclusion*, Matt. 6:9-13. The *Lord's prayer*, being a most perfect pattern, or model, of prayer, as requested by the disciples of Christ, Luke 11:1; it contains both the *circumstances* appertaining to prayer as well as the very *substance* of prayer itself, Matt. 6:9 compared with Luke 11:2. *Circumstances* consist in those *formal* facts or conditions relevant to the action of prayer, *cf.* Eccl. 5:2. *Substance* is the *matter* of which a thing consists, *cf.* Heb. 11:1.

Furthermore, in the worship of God, *circumstances* are those things which may be ordered by the "light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word," (*cf. Confession of Faith*, I.6), 1 Cor. 11:13, 14; 14:26, 40. So, it is a *circumstance* of the action of prayer that there is an acknowledging of a God having "lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might," (*cf. Confession of Faith*, XXI.1), Rom. 1:20; Jer. 10:7. Yet, the *substance*, or *matter*, of the action of prayer, being part of worshipping of the true God, the acceptable way of so doing must be instituted by himself, Deut. 12:32; Ex. 20:4-7. The *circumstances* in this prayer pertain to the disposition of the heart before God, Rom. 8:15; 2 Cor. 5:17.

The *circumstances* of this prayer appear in two places; one *precedes*, whereby our preparation is indicated ("our Father which art in heaven"), Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2; the other is *subsequent* to the *matter*, whereby we attach our ratification of the prayer ("Amen"), Matt. 6:13. The *circumstances* are necessary for the prayer to be effectual to us, *cf.* Jas. 5:16. Effectual prayer is prayer offered up in the faith that we are included in the promises of God, *cf.* Gal. 2:20; and in the faith that we will be heard, *cf.* Heb. 11:6. Apart from these *circumstances*, wherein we acknowledge our true estate and acquiesce to the mercies of God, the action of prayer bears no relation to us, and shall be found ineffectual, Luke 18:10-14. Just as *circumstances* bind us to nature, *cf.* 1 Sam. 9:1; so, they provide the fetters to bind us to grace, Phil. 4:3.

The *substance* of the prayer is to be found in the six *petitions* and the first part of the *conclusion*, Matt. 6:9-13. The *substance* of the prayer consists in two parts, *petitions*, whereby we ask for those things wanting in this world, Matt. 6:8; and, *thanksgiving*, which is joined to the petitions, whereby we praise God for himself and all mercies to us in Christ, Phil. 4:6. It is in the *substance* that the grace of God is to be found, 1 Cor. 15:10.

The *petitions* are six in number, Luke 11:2-4; all of which may be considered under two heads: 1.) God's glory, as indicated by the particle *thy*, having relation to God, Matt. 6:9,

10. 2.) Man's good, which is indicated by the particles, *our* and *us*, having relation to man, Matt. 6:11-13.

The three first *petitions*, aiming at the glory of God, are arranged in this manner: 1.) The *first* petition, *hallowed be thy name*, desires the *thing* itself, which is most to be desired and sought, Neh. 9:5; Ps. 111:9. 2.) The *second* petition, *thy kingdom come*, desires the *means* of effecting that end, Isa. 2:2; Dan. 2:44. 3.) The *third* petition, *thy will be done*, desires the *manifestation* of the glory of God, Ps. 40:8; John 4:34. Added to the *third petition* are the words, *in earth, as in heaven*, wherein we see that the end of this prayer is the transforming of that which is earthly by that which is heavenly, Rom. 12:2.

The three last *petitions*, aiming at the good of man, are to be arranged in this manner: 1.) The *fourth* petition, *give us this day our daily bread*, desires our temporal good, in this world, Ps. 34:10; Isa. 33:16. 2.) The *fifth* petition, *forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*, desires our spiritual good, *first* in our justification, whereby we seek acquittal before God, Ps. 32:1; Isa. 1:18. 3.) The *sixth* petition, *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, desires our spiritual good, *second* in our sanctification, 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 1:4.

In the portion of the prayer concerned with thanksgiving, *thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever*, there are three things acknowledged: 1.) The sovereignty of God, *thine is the kingdom*, wherein thanksgiving is offered that God may rule by right, Ps. 47:2, 7. 2.) The omnipotency of God, *and power*, wherein thanksgiving is offered that God has the power to effect that right, Dan. 4:25. 3.) The excellency of God, *and glory*, wherein thanksgiving is offered that God's rule excels all of the conceptions of man's wisdom, 1 Tim. 1:17.

To this thanksgiving is added the amplification of God's right, power and wisdom to rule, *for ever*, wherein the perpetuity of this glorious reign is noted by a reference to God's eternity, Rev. 5:13.

Question 2—*Whence arises the order of these three parts in the Lord's prayer?*

Answer—The order reminds us that *first*, we stand in need of preparation for effectual prayer to God because he is in heaven and we upon the earth, Eccl. 5:2. Men do not rashly enter the presence of a king upon earth, *cf.* Gen. 41:14; neither should they be hasty to speak in the presence of the King of kings, Gen. 18:27; 1 Tim. 6:15.

Second, in the petitions following, we are reminded that the duty of prayer may be engaged once the heart is prepared, Jude 20. In the petitions themselves, we find that proper ordering that takes in the glory of God and, then, moves on to the good of man, so that these are acceptable petitions, Ps. 19:14.

Third, in the thanksgiving, we are reminded that the conclusion of the matter is the glorious reign of God in heaven *and* earth, Ps. 72:19; Rev. 19:1; because, in the return, or answer, of prayer, his right to rule in power and glory is manifested, Rev. 8:4, 5.

Finally, in the ratification of the petitions and thanksgiving, by the saying of "amen," we are reminded that the blessing comes when we are brought into a reasonable conformity with the will of God, 1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:20.