

## 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 # 194 & 105.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #194. *What do we pray for in the fifth petition?*

A. In the fifth petition, (which is, *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*,<sup>1</sup>) acknowledging, that we and all others are guilty both of original and actual sin, and thereby become debtors to the justice of God; and that neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt:<sup>2</sup> we pray for ourselves and others, that God of his free grace would, through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin,<sup>3</sup> accept us in his Beloved;<sup>4</sup> continue his favour and grace to us,<sup>5</sup> pardon our daily failings,<sup>6</sup> and fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness;<sup>7</sup> which we are the rather emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect, when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we from the heart forgive others their offenses.<sup>8</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #105. *What do we pray for in the fifth petition?*

A. In the fifth petition, (which is, *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*,<sup>9</sup>) we pray, That God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins;<sup>10</sup> which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.<sup>11</sup>

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Question 1—*What is meant by debts in the fifth petition?*

*Answer*—By *debts*, we are taught to seek forgiveness of sin, Luke 11:4. This follows the petition for daily bread because, though bread is far less to be preferred than pardon of sin, yet, without bread, the season in which pardon may be had vanishes away because this life alone is the time in which we may seek pardon, Heb. 9:27. Forgiveness of sins is the first of the spiritual benefits sought in this prayer because, whilst it remains unpardoned, all communication between God and the sinner is ceased, Amos 3:3. Unconfessed and unpardoned sin closes off the sinner from the blessings of God, Ps.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 6:12.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 3:9-12, 19 (9-22); Matt. 18:24, 25; Ps. 130:3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 3:24-26; Heb. 9:22.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. 1:6, 7.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Pet. 1:2.

<sup>6</sup> Hos. 14:2; Jer. 14:7.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 15:13; Ps. 51:7-10, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 11:4; Matt. 6:14, 15; Matt. 18:35.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 6:12.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. 51:1, 2, 7, 9; Dan. 9:17-19.

<sup>11</sup> Luke 11:4; Matt. 18:35.

66:18. This petition is knit to the fourth petition whereby we are made to understand that forgiveness of sins is much needed, if we would find satisfaction in our daily bread, Eccl. 9:7.

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

*Answer*—By sin, we have become debtors to the justice of God, incurring a debt neither we nor our fellow creatures are able to pay, Rom. 3:9-22. This fifth petition supposes that man is a sinner incurring a debt of sin so great that: 1.) It is able to be paid by no mortal but rather threatens to sink all that is his, Ezra 9:6; Matt. 18:25. 2.) That none will come into the sight of God until he is brought, Matt. 18:24. 3.) That the sinner is ready to diminish it by false reckoning, Luke 16:6. 4.) That it will be reckoned aright, fairly and exactly stated, and not the least part of it to be forgotten or miscounted by the creditor, Amos 8:7. 5.) It must be paid by the debtor himself; he must find a cautioner; or, he must go to prison, Matt. 5:25. 6.) It is growing with each passing moment upon earth, gaining interest and increasing the total sum to be exacted, Rom. 2:5.

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

*Answer*—The fifth petition of the Lord's prayer consists in these words, *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*, Matt. 6:12. Apart from this forgiveness, we stand in danger of the punishment which inheres in sin, Heb. 9:22. By *forgive* is imported:

*First*, pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, which every soul receives upon its first closing with Jesus Christ in the gospel, Rom. 5:1. The condemning power of the law, binding men over to vindictive justice, which will consign them to the prison of hell, and lie there until the entirety of the debt is paid, is removed, Rom. 8:1.

*Second*, pardon of the guilt of temporary strokes and fatherly anger, 2 Kings 24:4. Although the children of God are beyond the reach of eternal wrath, nonetheless, it may often times be that they are liable to temporary fatherly wrath, from which they need to seek pardon, Ps. 89:30-33.

*Third*, declarative pardon, whereby a sense of pardon is manifested to the soul of the one seeking pardon, Luke 7:47, 48. This provides a deliverance from the doubts and fears of eternal wrath under which the children of God may find themselves burdened in this life due to their daily failures, Ps. 4:6.

This threefold pardon is herein intended, and each of them for Christ's sake, that we might obtain them by faith apprehending his obedience and death, Eph. 1:6, 7.

Moreover, we pray for the forgiveness of *our* debts, or sins, because sin belongs to us in four ways: 1.) By *imputation*, whereby Adam's sin became our sin, Rom. 5:19; and, therefore, it must be pardoned to us otherwise we shall be ruined by it, even as the heir is ruined by the father's debt, Isa. 53:10-12. 2.) By *inhesion* in it, so that the sin of our nature conveys us from Adam, consisting in a bent to do evil, and a backwardness to do good, which is all part of our sin, Ps. 51:5. 3.) By *personal omission or commission*, wherein we display ourselves to be sinners in deed, Jer. 16:10. 4.) By *accession* any manner of way, to the sins of others, whereby we become accessory to their sins by commanding, counselling, approving, and the like, thereby becoming complicit in their sins, 1 Tim. 5:22.

Again, we pray that forgiveness, or pardon be given to *us* because: 1.) Every man ought to be concerned for his own pardon, Ps. 51:2. 2.) We should be concerned for the forgiveness of others as well as ourselves, for those who are already of God's family, but also for all sorts of men living, 1 Tim. 2:1; only excepting those who have sinned the sin unto death, 1 John 5:16.

Additionally, we note that the import of this petition is taken up in three things: 1.) A confessing of the debt, whereby the saints own themselves and all others to be God's debtors, Dan. 9:5. 2.) A pleading of poverty, together with an utter inability to pay the debt, Ps. 130:3, 4. 3.) A desire of free forgiveness, for Christ's sake, Dan. 9:17. In addition, it is a forgiving of the debt to us, though Christ merited it, for we can do nothing to procure it to ourselves, Rom. 3:24-26.

Question 4—*What is the argument for the enforcing of this petition?*

*Answer*—The enforcement for this petition lies in the second clause, *as we forgive our debtors*, Matt. 6:12. Wherein we must consider:

*First*, that by *our debtors*, is to be understood all those who have sinned against, or wronged us in any manner or way, 1 Sam. 2:25.

*Second*, by *forgiving* them is meant that we heartily forgive them the injury done to us (we are not in God's stead to forgive injuries against the LORD), by entertaining no hatred or malice against them, but loving them with a love of good will, wishing them their good, and being ready to do them good, Matt. 5:44, 45. However, this forgiveness does not extend to a love of complacency or delight in them, either as men or Christians, for the sinfulness of the injury offered, Ps. 26:4.

*Third*, by *forgiving as we forgive* is denoted that our forgiveness is to go before the forgiveness we are asking of God, Luke 11:4. This is a demonstration that the forgiveness that saints ask for themselves is only the pardon of fatherly anger, and the manifestation of that pardon, and not the pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, which concerns their state of being and without which none can sincerely forgive others, Matt. 18:32, 33. However, although this does not denote a perfection of equality or likeness between God's forgiveness and ours, the reality of our sincerity, though imperfect, does allow our appeal to God, Matt. 18:35.

Question 5—*What encouragement may the saints of God find in this petition?*

*Answer*—In this petition, the saints of God look: 1.) That God would continue his favor and grace to them, even through Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 1:2. 2.) That they might find pardon for their daily faults so that they might praise God aright, Hos. 14:2; and this they seek not for any righteousness in themselves, but that God might magnify his name through his mercy to them in Christ, Jer. 14:7. 3.) That God would fill them with peace and joy, Rom. 15:13; and that each day they might find more assurance of the divine forgiveness, Ps. 51:7-10, 12.

Finally, this petition we are emboldened to ask, and even encouraged to expect, when we possess this testimony in ourselves, that we from the heart forgive others their offenses which they have committed against us, Matt. 6:14, 15.