



## *Westminster Larger Catechism*

***Q. 171. How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?***

A. They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves (1) of their being in Christ, (2) of their sins and wants; (3) of the truth and measure of their knowledge, (4) faith, (5) repentance; (6) love to God and the brethren, (7) charity to all men, (8) forgiving those that have done them wrong; (9) of their desires after Christ, (10) and of their new obedience; (11) and by renewing the exercise of these graces, (12) by serious meditation, (13) and fervent prayer. (14)

(1) 1 Corinthians 10:16 (2) 2 Corinthians 13:5 (3) 1 Corinthians 5:7; Exodus 12:15 (4) 1 Corinthians 11:29 (5) 1 Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 26:28 (6) Zechariah 12:10; 1 Corinthians 11:31 (7) 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; Acts 2:46-47 (8) 1 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Corinthians 11:18,20 (9) Matthew 5:23-24 (10) Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37 (11) 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 (12) 1 Corinthians 11:25-26,28; Hebrews 10:21-22; Hebrews 10:24; Psalm 26:6 (13) 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 (14) 2 Chronicles 30:18-19

***Q. 172. May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's supper?***

A. One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; (1) and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, (2) and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, (3) and to depart from iniquity: (4) in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed, for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians) (5) he is to bewail his unbelief, (6) and labor to have his doubts resolved; (7) and, so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's supper, that he may be further strengthened. (8)

(1) Isaiah 50:10; 1 John 5:13; Psalm 88; Psalm 77:1-4,7-10; Jonah 2:4 (2) Isaiah 54:7-10; Matthew 5:3-4; Psalm 31:22; Psalm 73:13, 22-23 (3) Philippians 3:8-9; Psalm 10:17; Psalm 42:1-2,5,11 (4) 2 Timothy 2:19; Isaiah 50:10; Psalm 66:18-20 (5) Isaiah 40:11,29,31; Matthew 11:28; Matthew 12:20; Matthew 26:28 (6) Mark 9:24 (7) Acts 2:37; Acts 16:30 (8) Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 11:28 (9) 1 Corinthians 11:27-34; Matthew 7:6; 1 Corinthians 5; Jude 23; 1 Timothy 5:22

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"And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel." 2 Chron. 30:1

"However earnest soever we are in pressing people to join themselves to the Lord in this ordinance, we would not have them to be "rash with their mouth nor hasty to utter anything before God." Eccl. 5:2 ~ Matthew Henry

"As bounds must be set about the mount on which God will descend, we must address ourselves to solemn services with a solemn pause. It is not enough that we seek God in a due ordinance, but we must "seek him in a due order (1 Chron. 15:13)."

"For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order." 1 Chron. 15:13

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Amos 4:12

### **Duty of Self-Examination~ 1 Cor. 11:28 "But let a man examine himself..."**

As a man desirous to enter the office of a bishop "desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1) but first must be proved (v. 10); so to in like fashion, the communicant member desirous of the Lord, desires a good thing to be seated at His table, but first must examine himself (2 Cor. 13:5)

This self-examination consists of not only proving or approving ourselves to God but appealing to Him to make thorough that examination. "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." Psalm 26:2 It is a discourse, a speaking with one's own heart. To discuss with the Lord, for who can know the heart truly but the Lord. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Psalm 19:12 "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jeremiah 17:10 "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18

In self-examination, the Christian as God's husbandry (1 Corinthians 3:9), has the divine plow (His Word and Spirit) put to ground and it goes to work on the ground of his own soul. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." Hosea 10:12

"Let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as weeds and thorns, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit in the sense of them; let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the divine precepts, as the ground that is ploughed is to receive the seed, that it may take root. The husbandman sows in seed-time, and, if that time be far spent, he applies to the work with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God when it is, in a particular manner, time to seek him." ~ Matthew Henry



Let us then, consider by way of similitude, further examples of what it is to examine, and in so examining may we see Christ and our continual need of Him.

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**A Coin ❖ A Criminal ❖ A Copy ❖ A Candidate ❖ A Covenant ❖ A Catechumen**

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- 1) **A Coin-** As metal is examined by the touchstone, whether it be right or counterfeit. The Word of God is the touchstone by which we must try ourselves. It is true, the best coin has an alloy which will be allowed for in this state of imperfection; but the question is, is it sterling? – is it standard? Though I am conscious to myself, there are remainders of a baser metal; yet, is love to God the predominate principle? Are the interests of Christ the prevailing interest of my soul above those of the world and the flesh?
- 2) **A Criminal-** We are all criminals, Romans 3:23 “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” We are prisoners to the divine justice, from the arrests of which we cannot escape... being thus in custody, that we may not be judged by the Lord, we are commanded to judge ourselves (1 Cor. 11:31). Enquire what crimes are we guilty of? Dig into the wall, as Ezekiel did (Chapter 8:8). What abominations are discovered in our own hearts? Look further, as he did, (vv.13-15) and you will see more and greater. The heart is deceitful and has many devices to evade conviction. See Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 15, paragraph 5, “Man ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly.”
- 3) **A Copy-** As a copy is examined by the original to find the errors to be corrected, so to we as Christians, are the epistles of Christ (2 Cor. 3:3) have his law and love transcribed to our hearts and lives; but are we concerned to enquire, whether it be a true copy, by comparing ourselves with the gospel of Christ. In this examination faith must read the original, and then let conscience read the copy, and be sure that it read true, because shortly there will be a review. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen. 18:25)
- 4) **A Candidate-** We must examine ourselves as a candidate is examined that stands for preferment. How fix is this candidate? We are candidates for heaven- the highest preferment to be our God kings and priests. Have we on the wedding garment? Are we made meet for the inheritance? Can we show the seal of the Spirit of promise? Have we a ticket? If not we shall not be welcome.



- 5) **A Covenant-** A covenant is to be ratified between God and our souls in the Lord's Supper. Do we freely and cheerfully consent to that covenant? Not merely through constraint of natural conscience, but because it is a covenant highly reasonable in itself and unspeakably advantageous to us. Am I willing to make this surrender of myself to the Lord? We must examine ourselves as Joshua examined the people, whether they would choose to serve the Lord or no (Josh. 24:15).
- 6) **A Catechumen-** We are coming to a great ordinance and are concerned to enquire what is our end in coming? What brings us thither? Is it only custom or company that draws us to this duty: or is it a spiritual appetite to the dainties of heaven? Our hearts must be catechized as Elijah was (1 Kings 19:9) "What dost thou here, Elijah?"

Examination further questions: What am I? What have I done? What am I doing? What ground do I get? What do I want? What shall I resolve to do?

Consider ...

- **What am I?-** Am I in the favor of God or under his wrath and curse? Am I a servant of God or a slave to the world and the flesh? Whither am I going? To Heaven or Hell? Am I in the narrow way that leads to life or the broad way to destruction? I am called a Christian but am I a Christian indeed?
- **What have I done?-** How have I employed my thoughts? Hath God been in all my thoughts? How have I governed my passions? How have I preserved my purity? How have I used my tongue? How have I spent my time? How have I managed my worldly calling? How have I received my daily food? How have I done in my duties to my particular relations? How have I performed my secret worship? Public worship? Have I called the Sabbath a delight? How have I borne my afflictions?
- **What am I doing?-** Am I doing anything for God? Am I idle? I know what is to be done in preparing for the Lord's Supper but am I really doing it? Am I by repentance, undoing what has been amiss? Am I doing the work of that day in its day? Am I purging out the old leaven? Hath the Lord opened my eyes to see a particular grievance? Am I especially forsaking that and engaging in covenant renewal?
- **What ground do I get?-** Am I growing in grace? Moving forward in faith? Do I see more and more reason for my religion? Do I find my corrupt appetites and passions more manageable or are they still as strong and violent as ever? Doth the house of Saul grow weaker and weaker and the house of David stronger and stronger? Do I patiently endure afflictions from God and provocations from men with patience? Are the duties of religion more pleasant to me? Is my heart more weaned from this present life and willing more to exchange it for a better or am I loath to leave it? Is death a terror to me or has it lost its sting and is my desire to depart and be with Christ?
- **What do I want?-** What grace do I want most? Wherein am I most defective and what need do I have to remedy this defect? What temptations am I most frequently assaulted with? What comfort do I most want? What is the burden that lies most heavy?



- **What shall I resolve to do?**- Wherein may I have the best opportunity to glorify God? In my place for service of God's honor and interest of his Kingdom, what can I be doing? What is the talent I am instructed with the improvement of? What is it that is expected of one in my capacity? <sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all references and adaptations in this work are taken from Matthew Henry's, "The Communicant's Companion: Instruction for the Right Receiving the Lord's Supper", 1704.