

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 # 181.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #181. *Why are we to pray in the name of Christ?*

A. The sinfulness of man, and his distance from God by reason thereof, being so great, as that we can have no access into his presence without a mediator;¹ and there being none in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for, that glorious work but Christ alone,² we are to pray in no other name but his only.³

Question 1—*What is the first reason given that we must pray in the name of Christ?*

Answer—Man, by reason of his sinfulness, has placed a great distance between God and himself, even a gulf of separating iniquity, Isa. 59:2. Sin has set us at a distance from God, and has bolted the door of our access to him, that is far beyond our power, or that of any other creature, to open it for us, Job 9:32, 33. Such is the depth of our depravity that, without a Mediator, there can be no access of approach to the presence of God, Ps. 130:3. God cannot look upon him with any delight or complacency inasmuch as his guilt renders him the object of divine abhorrence, Job 9:2, 3; and he cannot do any thing which has a tendency to reconcile God to him, and therefore is speechless, and can ask for no blessing at his hand, Ps. 143:2.

This state of sinfulness means that the Lord is far from the prayers of the wicked, Prov. 15:29. Even the iniquities of his own people place this separation, between them and the Lord, particularly in this matter of the hearing of prayers, Mic. 3:4. The sinfulness of man is the great cause why many good things are turned away and other good things are withheld by God, Jer. 5:25. This hiding of the face of God in prayer answers to the lack of faith that characterizes all sin, Deut. 32:20. Because the justice of God staves off the criminal, sinful men now stand in need of reconciliation, some acceptable person to go between God and us, Col. 1:21.

This Mediator is none other than the Son of his love, the only begotten of the Father, by whom we have access by one Spirit, Eph. 2:18. He alone is the way to the Father, John 14:6. In him, we have boldness of access into the presence of the Father in prayer, Eph. 3:12.

Question 2—*What is the second reason given that we must pray in the name of Christ?*

Answer—There is none appointed to, nor fit for, this work, in heaven or earth, but Christ alone, 1 Tim. 2:5. It is he alone that is sealed by the Father for this great purpose of satisfying divine justice for ours sins and bringing every blessing nigh from the Father's hand, John 6:27. Moreover, as he is the only Mediator of our redemption, so he is the only Mediator of intercession, 1 John 2:1. This office of intercession he occupies by virtue of his offering up of himself for the sins of his people, Heb. 7:25-27.

¹ John 14:6; Isa. 59:2; Eph. 3:12.

² John 6:27; Heb. 7:25-27; 1 Tim. 2:5.

³ Col. 3:17; Heb. 13:15.

This Mediator is the God-man, God and man in one person, Col. 2:9. So that those who see and enjoy him, see and enjoy the Father, John 10:38; 14:9, 10. He is in the Father, and the Father is in him, John 17:21. Thus, he is, in his own person, the place wherein poor sinners may meet with God, Eph. 2:15, 16. God is to be found and to be spoken with in him, Eph. 1:17. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, 2 Cor. 5:18, 19. The Mediator, to the end that the enmity between God and man might be taken away, and access granted unto rebellious man, has satisfied justice through the shedding of his own blood, Heb. 10:19, 20. In Christ, the great ante-type of the true mercy seat above the ark of the covenant is held forth, wherein God was pleased to make his mind known, and between the cherubim where God was to be spoken unto, 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

As Mediator, Christ has taken upon himself suitable offices to open and perfect this access, and with all to encourage us to make use of him, even for this end, Heb. 10:21, 22. He is become our great High Priest, that is passed into heaven, Heb. 4:14, 16. He has become the constant agent of his people, their solicitor in heaven's court, to do their business, to plead their cause, to keep that door of access open, and to encourage them to come, Heb. 9:24; Rom. 8:34. It is the sweet savor of his merit alone which is capable to procure acceptance to our prayers, which are in themselves unsavory, Rev. 8:3, 4.

This Mediator, though the Son of God, is also true man, being found in fashion as such, Phil. 2:6-8. He took upon himself, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, Heb. 2:16; being made like unto his brethren in order to make reconciliation for sin as well as provide succor for them who are tempted, Heb. 2:17, 18. Hence, this High Priest of our profession, and Mediator, being man still, has real, human, perfect and sinless sympathy with his people in their necessities and distresses, Heb. 4:15.

For all this work, the Lord Jesus is employed and sent of the Father, and he comes with his authority and commission, John 6:38. Thus, he is called the servant of the Father, Isa. 42:1; 53:11. In this respect, he is inferior to his Father, John 10:29; 14:28. He was appointed, or made for this, Heb. 5:5. He was given of the Father, John 3:16. He was foreordained from the foundation of the world for this very work, 1 Pet. 1:20. Not only was he sent upon this errand by the Father, John 3:17, 18; he himself understands that the Father has sent him on this errand, John 6:29. For this end, he has received the Spirit above measure, Ps. 45:7; John 3:34. Indeed, in him are hid all the good things of God, Col. 2:3; John 1:14. God has put everything under his feet (the Father himself excepted, *cf.* 1 Cor. 15:27) on behalf of the church, Eph. 1:21, 22.

Question 3—*What is the third reason given that we must pray in the name of Christ?*

Answer—Because in this Mediator, who is God and man, in one person, the God-head (which springs forth from the Father), which is infinite in itself and inconceivable by us, condescends to be somewhat accessible to us, when we approach unto him in Christ, in whom this God-head dwells bodily, Col. 1:19; 2:9. In other words, we come to the Father only through the Son, John 14:6. This second person of the Trinity, the divine Son, is now made known to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, who in his person unites both the divine and human natures forever, Eph. 1:10. It is through him that we must approach unto God, and in whose name we must make both prayer and offer praise, Col. 3:17; Heb. 13:15. He is the only one in whom we may find acceptance, Eph. 1:6. Thus, Daniel, when he prayed, asked for the Lord's sake, Dan. 9:17. So of old, when praying in faith, Old Testament saints prayed with an eye toward the temple, Jon. 2:4; 1 Kings 8:29, 30, 35, 38; Jesus Christ himself being the true tabernacle, Heb. 8:2.