

## 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 # 184.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #184. *For what things are we to pray?*

A. We are to pray for all things tending to the glory of God,<sup>1</sup> the welfare of the church,<sup>2</sup> our own<sup>3</sup> or others, good;<sup>4</sup> but not for any thing that is unlawful.<sup>5</sup>

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Question 1—*For what ought we to pray?*

*Answer—First*, we are to pray for those things which concern the glory of God, Matt. 6:9. In order that we might know what those things are, we ought to inquire whether, if God should give us what we ask for, it would have a tendency to set forth any of his divine perfections, rendering him amiable and adorable in the eyes of his creatures, so that, in answering our prayers, his act would be perceived as becoming himself, 1 Pet. 2:12. We are to take care that we gain a proper estimate of the adaptation of anything to the promotion of the glory of God, which is to be done according to the intimation given in his word, Phil. 4:6-8. Therein we may observe, not only whether he has given leave, but whether he has given commands, and encourages us, to ask for it, Luke 11:9, 10; more especially, whether he has promised to give it to us, and whether our receiving the blessing we ask for, has a tendency to fit us for his service, Luke 11:13.

*Second*, we are to pray for the welfare of the church, Ps. 51:18. Particularly for believers, their spiritual prosperity is intimately connected to the welfare of the church, Ps. 122:6. Though prayer for all Christians is a peculiar branch of the communion of saints, there are several specific things for which we ought to pray particularly: 1.) That we all may be united together in love to God and to one another, and that this union be attended with graces and comforts evidencing an interest in Christ, John 17:21. 2.) That we all may have the special presence of God in all his ordinances, as a visible testimony of his regard to his people, and an honor upon put on his own institutions, so that they are rendered effectual according to his promise, Matt. 28:20. 3.) That we all be supported under the burdens, difficulties, and persecutions which they meet with, whether from powers of darkness or wicked men, Matt. 16:18. 4.) That many, even such as shall be saved, be added to particular churches out of the world, evidencing the success of the gospel, Acts 2:47. 5.) Most particularly that there be an accomplishment of those promises respecting the conversion of the Jews, Rom. 10:1. 6.) That this be accomplished together with the greater spread of the gospel throughout the most remote and dark places of the earth, among whom Christ is not presently known, Rom. 11:25. 7.) That the life of faith and holiness may be daily promoted in all the faithful members of the church of Christ, Tit.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 6:9.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 51:18; 122:6.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 7:11.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 125:4.

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

2:10. 8.) That God would accept the sacrifices of prayer and praise which are offered by faith, in every worshipping assembly, to the advantage of all the servants of Christ, Rev. 8:4. 9.) That the children of believers, who are devoted to God, may be under his special care and protection, that they may follow the footsteps of the flock, and fill up the places of those called off the stage of the world, so there may be a constant supply of those bearing testimony to Christ and his gospel in the rising generation, Ps. 145:4. 10.) That the members of every particular church may so acquit themselves that they may honor Christ in the eyes of the world, being carried through this life safely until they are joined to the church triumphant, Col. 1:4; Eph. 6:18. For the greater good and establishment of the welfare of the church, prayer ought to be made for the ministry, Phile. 22. Especially, we ought to pray: 1.) That God would send forth a supply or succession of them, to answer the church's necessities, Matt. 9:37, 38. 2.) That they may answer the character which the apostle gives of a faithful minister, 2 Tim. 2:15. 3.) That they may be directed and enabled to impart those truths which are substantial, edifying and suitable to the hearers, and that a concern for souls incline them to their utmost, Jude 23. 4.) That these endeavors be attended with success, which, in some measure, may give a comfortable hope that they are called, accepted and approved of God, Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19, 20.

*Third*, we ought to pray for things tending to our own good, Matt. 7:11; as well as the good of others, Ps. 125:4. We are to pray for temporal blessings, which are the effects of divine bounty, and which we have been assured to receive from God, Ps. 103:13; even as the Saviour himself acknowledges, Luke 12:30. Under this concern, we ought to pray for those in authority: 1.) That they may approve themselves rulers after God's own heart, Acts 13:22. 2.) That they are a terror, not to good works, but to those working evil, Rom. 13:3, 4. 3.) That they are a public blessing to all their subjects, particularly in the public promotion of the true religion, Isa. 49:23. 4.) That they are especially forward in the building and establishing of the church in the nation, Isa. 60:10-12. 5.) That they may use their lawful authority to overthrow the religion of antichrist, Rev. 17:16.

Moreover, we are to pray for spiritual blessings, such as forgiveness of sins, strength against sin, the sanctifying influences of the Spirit to produce holiness in us, and deliverance from and victory over our spiritual enemies, 1 Chron. 4:10. Also, to pray for the consolations of the Holy Ghost, arising from assurance of the love of God, whereby we may have peace and joy in believing, Phil. 2:1; with all heavenly blessings, Eph. 1:3.

*Question 2—For what ought we not to pray?*

*Answer*—Since we are to pray only for those things agreeable to God's revealed will, 1 John 5:14; we ought to present no petitions in favor of our own lusts, nor ought we to approach God with unlawful desires, Jas. 4:3. Praying for things unlawful is prohibited because: 1.) We must pray for such as is possible for us to receive, Matt. 26:39. 2.) We are to pray for those things which God is particularly determined to bestow, John 11:42. 3.) We are to pray for those things which God gives us ground to expect in this world, Ps. 2:8. Therefore, we ought not to pray for: 1.) Blessings to be applied here that are reserved for the heavenly state, such as perfect freedom from sin, from tribulations or temptation, or immediate views of the glory of God, Ex. 33:20. 2.) Evils being inflicted on others, in order to satisfy our private revenge for injuries done, Rom. 12:19, 20. 3.) Outward blessings as though they were our chief end and happiness, or of equal importance with things which are immediately conducive to spiritual advantage, Matt. 6:31-33.