

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 # 187.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #187. *How is the Lord's prayer to be used?*

A. The Lord's prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers; but may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty of prayer.¹

Question 1—*Is the Lord's prayer for direction, as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers?*

Answer—That the *Lord's prayer* is designed, primarily, as a directory for our prayers, Matt. 6:9; especially our petitions, appears in the fact that it does not contain all the parts of prayer, such as particular confession of sin, Num. 5:6, 7; Jas. 5:16; or, thankful acknowledgement of particular mercies received, Ps. 136:10-21.

Next, that this prayer is not designed for a form of prayer, for Christ's disciples and followers in all after ages, nor tying us to the precise words which Christ used, appears in the words of Matthew 6:9 (Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς) *as compared with* Luke 11:2 (ὅταν προσεύχησθε λέγετε).

Furthermore, the manner in which the evangelists, Matthew and Luke, relate this prayer underscores that this prayer is primarily directive rather than prescriptive, Matt. 6:9. So, in their relation of the fourth petition, different words express different emphases, Matt. 6:11 (τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον) *compared with* Luke 11:3 (τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν). Matthew calls our attention to our present want, Matt. 6:34; 1 Tim. 6:8; Luke expresses the daily recurrence of these wants and the need for their supply, Ex. 16:17, 18; Prov. 30:8. Again, in the fifth petition, Matthew differs from Luke, Matt. 6:12 (καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν) *compared with* Luke 11:4 (καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν). Wherein we see that the same intention may be encompassed through a diversity of words, as expressed elsewhere by the evangelist Mark, Mark 11:25, 26. Once more, they differ as to the conclusion, which is contained in Matthew's Gospel, Matt. 6:13, but not in Luke's, Luke 11:4. By all which, it appears, that the matter and not just the words ought to be studied, Luke 24:45.

So, too, we nowhere find the apostles tying themselves to the use of this prayer as a set form; moreover, the several prayers of theirs recorded in the New Testament do not use the words of the Lord's prayer, Eph. 1:17-19; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12; Rom. 15:13; Acts 4:24; Heb. 13:20.

Finally, The LORD gives direction for prayer in other texts, prescribing words as expressly as does Christ, Joel 2:17; Hos. 14:2. In fact, Jesus did not at that time direct

¹Matt. 6:9 *compared with* Luke 11:2.

them to pray in his name, but did so afterwards, when he expressly teaches them to pray in his name, John 16:23, 24.

Question 2—*Is it permissible to use the Lord's prayer as a prayer?*

Answer—Though confining ourselves to set forms of prayer is a check to the teaching of the Spirit of God, Rom. 8:26; yet, that the *Lord's prayer* is itself a fit prayer to be used according to its very words appears when considering Luke 11:2 *compared with* Matt. 6:9.

Its excellency for use stands in these considerations: *First*, the Lord who is the author of this prayer is he by whom are all things, 1 Cor. 8:6; his eminence is such that he has a name far beyond comparison with the name of any other, in heaven or earth, Phil. 2:9. As to his gifts, whereby he is fitted to author, he is endowed with the Spirit without measure, John 3:34. In him all the fullness of the divinity, or the Deity, dwells, Col. 1:19. He is the eternally begotten of the Father declaring from the bosom of the Father what is that good and acceptable will of God, John 1:18.

Second, as to the work itself, prayer, there is no work so heavenly and so disposed to engage the attention of those who are spiritual, Matt. 18:19; 2 Chron. 7:1. In the *Lord's prayer*, the *manner* of its expression is answerable to its *matter*, Matt. 6:9. Its *matter* consists in these: 1.) Request for good things, Ps. 84:11. 2.) Deprecation against all that is evil, Ps. 97:10. 3.) Intercession for others, 1 Tim. 2:1. 4.) Thanksgiving, Ps. 92:1.

Question 3—*What caveats ought to be observed in using the Lord's prayer as a prayer?*

Answer—The right use of the *Lord's prayer*, like all prayer, must be done with understanding, 1 Cor. 14:15; faith, Heb. 11:6; reverence, Jer. 29:13; and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty of prayer, Prov. 15:8.

This praying aright can only be done by the help of the Spirit of God both indwelling and influencing the prayers offered, Gal. 4:6. That all our praying aright is done by the Spirit's indwelling and influencing appears: *First*, From the Scripture testimony, wherein the Spirit, the author of our whole sanctification, whereof praying aright is a part, is credited, 2 Thess. 2:13. So, all of our acceptable worship is offered up in him, Phil. 3:3. It is by him that we have access to God in worship, Eph. 2:18. Prayer by name, if of the right sort, is owing to the help of the Spirit, Eph. 6:18. The Spirit indwelling is a Spirit of adoption, Rom. 8:15; and an influencing Spirit, 1 Thess. 5:17-19.

Second, We are spiritually dead without this indwelling of the Spirit, and spiritually asleep without the Spirit influencing, Eph. 2:1; Song 5:2. Since neither a dead nor a sleeping man can supplicate, neither can such pray aright, Ps. 115:17. Therefore, it is the Spirit that quickens, or enlivens, the dead soul, John 6:63; likewise, it is he who awakens the sleeping saint, Song 5:4.

Third, There is no praying aright without sanctifying grace, and without that grace in exercise, John 9:31; Song 3:1. Where there is no sanctifying grace, there the filth and pollution of sin remains, and defiles all, Tit. 1:15. Such a man's praying is like opening an unripe grave, Rom. 3:13. For this reason, Jesus refers to the praying Pharisees as whited sepulchers, Matt. 23:27. The indwelling Spirit that works sanctification, 2 Thess. 2:13; puts the grace in exercise, Song 4:16; and so fits men to pray, Zech. 12:10.

Fourth, Light of mind and warmth of affections are required for praying aright the counterfeit of which makes natural men sometimes think they do so, Isa. 58:2. Yet, all genuine light and warmth comes from the Spirit, Eph. 1:17, 18; 2 Tim. 1:7. The Spirit indwelling and influencing presents the mind matter of prayer and works up the affections suitable thereto, Eph. 5:18, 19; Song 7:9.