

Chapter 11

The Third Part:

Of Man's Thankfulness

(Prayer)

Q. 134. Why is prayer necessary for Christians? A. Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us, and also because God gives His grace and Holy Spirit to those who with sincere groanings ask them continually of Him, and give Him thanks for them (a). (a) Psa. 50:15; Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13.

Q. 135. What is required for our prayers to please God and be heard by Him? A. That we ask of the only true God, who has manifested Himself in His word (a), all things which He has commanded to be asked of Him (b). This is to be done with a true affection and desire of our heart (c). As well, we are, through an inward feeling of our need and misery, to cast ourselves prostrate in the presence of His divine majesty (d) and build ourselves on the sure foundation that we, though unworthy, yet for Christ's sake, are certainly heard by God (e), even as He has promised us in His word (f). (a) John 4:22-24. (b) Rom. 8:26; 1 John 5:14. (c) Psa. 145:18. (d) Psa. 2:11; 34:19; Isa. 66:2. (e) Psa. 143:1; Rom. 8:15-16; 10:13-17; James 1:6ff. (f) Dan. 9:17-19; John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23.

Q. 136. What are those things which God commands us to ask of Him? A. All things necessary both for soul and body, which our Lord Jesus Christ has comprised in the prayer He taught us (a). (a) Matt. 6:9-13; James 1:17.

Q. 137. What prayer is that? A. Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Q. 138. Are Christians tied to this very form of prayer? A. We are not. Our Lord here delivers to His Church a brief summary of those things which we are to ask of God. Christ will have us also to ask for special things or particular benefits. The form prescribed is nothing else but a set of headings or general categories, wherein all benefits both bodily and spiritual are implied. But all particulars of prayer must agree and correspond with this general form. We are not tied to this form, as appears from James 1:5, where the Apostle exhorts the saints, if anyone lacks wisdom they should ask of God who gives to all liberally. Though these words are not in the form of prayer

particularly expressed in the Lord's prayer, they are implied. Besides, we have examples of prayer both in the Old and New Testament, which are not in the form here expressed, though all they asked was comprehended in this prayer. Therefore, the form of prayer delivered to us by Christ is a thing indifferent.

Q. 139. Why does Christ teach us to call God our Father at the beginning of this prayer? A. That He might stir up in us such a reverence and confidence in God as is proper for the sons of God. This must be the ground and foundation of our prayer; that is, that God through Christ is made our Father and will much less deny us these things which we ask of Him with a true faith than our earthly parents deny us earthly things (a). (a) Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13.

Q. 140. Why are the words "who is in heaven" added? A. That we conceive not basely nor mundanely of God's heavenly majesty, and also that we look for and expect from His omnipotence whatever things are necessary for our soul and body (a). (a) Jer. 23:24; Acts 17:24-27; Rom. 10:12.

Q. 141. What is the first petition? A. Hallowed be Your name. In this we are asking that You would grant us, first to know You rightly (a) and worship, praise, and magnify Your almighty goodness, justice, mercy, and truth, which shine in all Your works (b). Also, we are asking You to direct our whole life, thoughts, words, and works to the end that Your most holy name be not reproached by us, but rather renowned with honor and praises (c). (a) Psa. 119:105; Jer. 9:23-24; 31:33-34; Matt. 16:17; John 17:3; James 1:5. b) Exod. 34:5-7; Psa. 119:137-138; 143:1-2, 5, 10-12; 145:8-9, 17; Jer. 31:3; 32:18-19, 40-41; 33:11, 20-21; Matt. 19:17; Luke 1:45-55, 68-79; Rom. 3:3-4; 11:22-23; 2 Tim. 2:19. (c) Psa. 115:1; 71:8.

Q. 142. What is the second petition? A. Your kingdom come. In this we are asking that You would rule us by Your word and Spirit, that we may humble and submit ourselves more and more to You (a). Also, we ask that You would preserve and increase Your Church (b), destroy the works of the Devil (c), and all power that lifts up itself against Your majesty. Make all those councils frustrated and void which are taken against Your word, until finally You reign fully and perfectly (d), when You shall be all in all (e). (a) Psa. 119:5; 143:10; Matt. 6:33. (b) Psa. 51:18; 122:6-7. (c) Rom. 16:20; 1 John 3:8. (d) Rom. 8:22-23; Rev. 22:17, 20. (e) 1 Cor. 15:28.

Q. 143. What is the third petition? A. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. We are asking that You grant that we, and all men, renouncing and forsaking our own will (a), may readily and without any grudging (b), obey Your most holy will. This we pray that every one of us may faithfully perform that duty and charge which You have

committed to us (c), even as the blessed angels do in heaven (d). (a). Matt. 16:24; Tit. 2:12. (b) Luke 22:42. (c) 1 Cor. 7:24. (d) Psa. 103:20-21.

Q. 144. What is the fourth petition? A. Give us this day our daily bread. We ask that You give to us everything which is needful for this life, that by these things we may acknowledge and confess You to be the only fountain from where all good things flow (a). We also confess that all our care and industry, and even Your own gifts, are unfavorable and harmful to us unless You bless them (b). Grant that, turning our trust away from all creatures, we place and rest it in You alone (c). (a) Psa. 10:4; 145:15-16; Matt. 6:25-34. (b) Acts 14:16-17. (c) Deut. 8:3; Psa. 27:13; 62:11. **Q. 145. Which is the fifth petition?** A. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. On the basis of the blood of Christ, do not impute unto us, most miserable and wretched sinners, any of our offences or the corruption which still cleaves to us (a). By Your grace in our hearts, we sincerely purpose to pardon and forgive all those who have offended us (b). (a) Psa. 32:1-2; 143:2. (b) Matt. 6:14.

Q. 146. What is the sixth petition? A. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. We are feeble and weak by nature (a) and cannot stand one moment without our most deadly enemies, Satan (b), the world (c), and our own flesh (d), incessantly attacking and assaulting us. Therefore, uphold, establish, and strengthen us by the might of Your Spirit that we may not in this spiritual combat yield as conquered, but withstand our enemies both stoutly and consistently (e), until we get the full and perfect victory (f). (a) Psa. 103:14; John 15:5. (b) Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8. (c) John 15:19. (d) Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17. (e) Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33. (f) 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23.

Q. 147. How should you conclude this prayer? A. For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. We ask and crave all these things of You because You are our King and almighty and are, therefore, both willing and able to give them to us (a). We ask these things that Your holy name alone may receive glory (b). (a) Rom. 8:32; 10:11-12; 2 Pet. 2:9. (b) Psa. 115:1; Jer. 33:8-9.

Q. 148. What does the final word, "Amen," mean?

A. That the thing is sure and not to be doubted. This is so because my prayer is much more certainly heard by God than I feel in my heart that I desire things from Him. (a) 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:13.

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