

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 # 172.

(Larger Catechism)

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 Christians⁵ 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

Question 1—*May someone who doubts of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, actually have a true interest in Christ, though he lacks assurance?*

Answer—Though a man's being in Christ, or due preparation for the Lord's supper, is a matter of doubt to him, Isa. 50:10; yet, he may be mistaken in the judgment which he passes concerning himself, Jonah 2:4. Assurance is not of the essence of saving faith, Eph. 1:13; for a person may rely upon Christ, or give himself up to him, by a direct act of faith, who cannot, at the same time, take comfort that would otherwise arise from thence, Ps. 77:1-4, 7-10. Many have reason to complain of the weakness of their faith, and the great resistance and disturbance of assurance which they meet with from their own corrupt nature, Ps. 51:8, 12. Others, who at present may have a sensible assurance of their interest in Christ, may afterwards, through divine desertion, lose the comfortable sense of it, Ps. 88.

Such as are in this case are to be dealt with tenderly and not discouraged from attending on the Lord's supper, whom others who converse with them, cannot but think to have a right to it, and to be habitually prepared for it, Acts 15:40; Heb. 13:7; though they themselves very much question whether they are actually fitted for it, being apprehensive that they cannot exercise those graces which are necessary to their partaking of this ordinance in a right and worthy manner, Luke 18:13, 14.

¹ Isa. 50:10; 1 John 5:13; Ps. 88; 77:1-4, 7-10, Jonah 2:4.

² Isa. 54:7-10; Matt. 5:3, 4; Ps. 31:22; 73:13, 22, 23.

³ Phil. 3:8, 9; Ps. 10:17; 42:1, 2, 5.

⁴ 2 Tim. 2:19; Isa. 50:10; Ps. 66:18-20.

⁵ Isa. 40:11, 29, 31; Matt. 11:28; 12:20; 26:28.

⁶ Mark 9:24.

⁷ Acts 2:37; 16:30.

⁸ Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 11:28.

Question 2—*What is to be accounted of more authority than the doubting conscience of those weak in faith or under spiritual desertion who lack this assurance?*

Answer—It stands in greater authority and estimate that the person in question is in fact one who in God's account has a true interest in Christ, Isa. 54:7-10. There are, indeed, some things, which, if duly considered by a weak, doubting Christian, would afford him ground of hope, such as:

First, if he is truly affected with his lack of assurance, and, in consequence, is filled with uneasiness in his own mind, laments his condition, and can take no comfort in any outward enjoyments, while destitute of this, Matt. 5:3, 4. Such ought to be importunate with God in prayer that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon him and grant him the exercise as well as the joy of faith, Ps. 31:22. He has some grounds to conclude that he is better than he apprehends himself to be, provided he is truly humbled for the weakness of faith or sins which have procured his doubts and fears, clinging to God until he shall be pleased to discover to him an interest in forgiving grace, Ps. 73:13, 22, 23.

Second, if can say that he unfeignedly desires Christ and grace above all things, and can find satisfaction in nothing short of him, Phil. 3:8, 9. In this case, it may be said that Christ is precious to him, as he is those who believe, 1 Pet. 2:7. Those who unfeignedly desire to be found in Christ should let their desires have the victory over their doubts, Ps. 42:1, 2, 5. Those who are possessed of such desires give evidence that the Lord has wrought this work in their hearts, Ps. 10:17.

Finally, if he desires to forsake all sin, as being offensive and contrary to him, so that when he commits it, he can commiserate with the words of the apostle, Rom. 7:15, 24. This desire to forsake all sin is the confidence of the believer in prayer, Ps. 66:18-20. It is a foundational principle of all who have a true interest in Christ that they are in opposition to all sin, 2 Tim. 2:19. Therefore, those who demonstrate this characteristic of the fear of the Lord, that they seek unfeignedly to depart from iniquity, evidence their true interest in Christ, Isa. 50:10.

Question 3—*For whom is this sacrament of the Lord's supper appointed?*

Answer—This sacrament, like the covenant promises upon which it is raised, is appointed for the relief of weak and doubting Christians, Isa. 40:11, 29, 31. There are numerous promises upon which a weak and doubting Christian may lay hold for encouragement against occasions of causing doubt: 1.) Forgiveness from the guilt of sin, which may lie as a heavy burden, Mic. 7:18, 19. 2.) Complaints of the power of sin having prevalency over him, Rom. 6:14. 3.) Difficulty resisting the temptations of Satan, which are very grievous, 1 Cor. 10:13. 4.) Discouragements from lack of enlargement and raised affection in prayer, Zech. 12:10. 5.) Doubts arising from frequent backslidings, and relapses into sin, Hos. 14:4.

Christ has promised rest for such as are weary and burdened by these concerns, Matt. 11:28. Christ has appointed relief and comfort for the weak and doubting as well as those having greater assurance, Matt. 12:20. This sacrament signifies and seals these promises which accompany remission of sin, Matt. 26:28.

Question 4—*What should be the response of the doubting Christian?*

Answer—Those who are weak or doubting should approach this sacrament: 1.) Bewailing whatever degree of unbelief remains, Mark 9:24. 2.) Laboring to have these doubts resolved by appropriate inquiry, Acts 2:37; 16:30. 3.) Seeking the promises signed and sealed in order to be further strengthened, Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 11:28.