

## 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 # 185.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #185. *How are we to pray?*

A. We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God,<sup>1</sup> and deep sense of our own unworthiness,<sup>2</sup> necessities,<sup>3</sup> and sins;<sup>4</sup> with penitent,<sup>5</sup> thankful,<sup>6</sup> and enlarged hearts;<sup>7</sup> with understanding,<sup>8</sup> faith,<sup>9</sup> sincerity,<sup>10</sup> fervency,<sup>11</sup> love,<sup>12</sup> and perseverance,<sup>13</sup> waiting upon him,<sup>14</sup> with humble submission to his will.<sup>15</sup>

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Question 1—*How ought our praying to stand before God?*

*Answer*—We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God, Eccl. 5:1. Without this, there is the standing danger that we will find ourselves highly resented by Him, even as those who think of the Divine nature as altogether like unto ourselves, Ps. 50:21. We must consider that God is omnipresent and omniscient, knowing our secret thoughts and the true principles from whence proceed our actions, with a perfect clarity which is beyond any self-knowledge, Rom. 8:27; Jer. 17:9, 10. We must conceive of the infinite holiness of God, knowing that he is highly displeased with any worship contrary to holiness, Hab. 1:13; or that proceeds from a defiled conscience, or that is performed in an unholy manner, Ps. 66:18. In so doing, we cultivate a due sense of the spirituality of the Divine nature, in order that we might worship God in a spiritual manner, John 4:24. We are not to entertain carnal conceptions of God, nor should we frame ideas like those we have of finite or corporeal beings, Ps. 94:7-11; nor should we think it sufficient that our outward deportment has a show of reverence when our heart is not, Isa. 29:13. Thus, we must conceive of God as a God of infinite goodness, mercy and faithfulness, with whom is plenteous redemption, Eph. 3:20. Fear and trembling are the reverence due to a holy God from the creature, and much more from a guilty creature, Ps. 89:7; Heb. 12:28.

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<sup>1</sup> Eccl. 5:1.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 18:27; 32:10.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 15:17-19.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 18:13, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 51:17.

<sup>6</sup> Phil. 4:6.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. 1:15; 2:1.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. 14:15.

<sup>9</sup> Mark 11:24; Jas. 1:6.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. 145:18; 17:1.

<sup>11</sup> Jas. 5:16.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Tim. 2:8.

<sup>13</sup> Eph. 6:18.

<sup>14</sup> Mic. 7:7.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 26:39.

Question 2—*How ought are praying to stand in our own estimation?*

*Answer—First*, if we would pray rightly and acceptably, we must pray with a deep humility being sensible of our own unworthiness and sinfulness, Ps. 10:17. In prayer, the result of entertaining high conceptions of the divine excellency and greatness is that we are led to consider ourselves as infinitely below him, for the best of creatures are moved by this conception to worship with greatest humility, Isa. 6:1-4. As dependent creatures, we have nothing but what we derive from him, for we are frail, dying creatures, withering away to nothing, Job 13:25. In prayer we come to beg, we have nothing with which to buy or demand our right, and this should make us ever sensible of our unworthiness, Gen. 32:10. The more grace, the more we are unworthy in our eyes, Gen. 18:27.

*Second*, if we would pray aright we ought to be deeply affected with a sense of our great necessities, Luke 15:17-19. It is of no avail to approach his door filled with a sense of our own riches according to our own conceit, Luke 1:53. The greatest glory we could possibly bring to God can make no additions to his infinite perfections, Job 22:2, 3. It is impossible for us, by anything we can do or suffer for his sake, to make him more glorious, Job 35:7.

*Third*, we must pray with an eye to our own sins, Luke 18:13, 14. So far are we from meriting anything from the hand of God, that by our repeated transgressions, notwithstanding daily mercies received, we give farther proof of our unworthiness, Ps. 22:6. We must consider how we are enslaved to sin, and how prone we are at all times to serve diverse lusts, Tit. 3:3. Too often, we walk according to the course of the world, which is wicked, Eph. 2:2.

Because of these natural impediments, it behooves us to exercise several graces in the course of our praying: 1.) Penitence, or repentance, because we are sinners, we ought to come into the presence of God with a confession of sin and a penitential frame, Ps. 51:17. 2.) Thankfulness, because prayer and praise ought to be joined, Ps. 65:1, 2. It is a great matter of thankfulness that we have not been forever banished from his throne, Isa. 45:19. Thus, we have reason to wrap all our petitions in this grace, Phil. 4:6. 3.) Enlarged hearts, having removed everything with a tendency to contract our affections, or dampen our fervency, 1 Sam. 1:15; 2:1.

To these ought to be added: 1.) Understanding, as ignorance is inconsistent with the exercise of grace in drawing nigh to God in prayer, 1 Cor. 14:15. 2.) Faith, or a particular confidence in prayer, as to the things prayed for, Mark 11:24. Without this, our prayer cannot be accepted, Jas. 1:6. 3.) Sincerity, as the opposite of detestable hypocrisy and dissimulation, Ps. 145:18. When the heart is not joined with the lips, the prayers are marred, Ps. 17:1. 4.) Fervently, avoiding all that is cold, lifeless or merely formal in our praying, Jas. 5:16. In a matter as weighty as prayer, we should be boiling hot, Rom. 12:11. 5.) Love to God, wherein there is an earnest desire of his presence, delight in him or taking pleasure in him, 1 Tim. 2:8. 6.) Perseverance, resolving not to desist from waiting on God in it, whatever seeming discouragements may, at present, lie in our way, Eph. 6:18. 7.) Waiting upon him, in assurance that he will hear, Mic. 7:7. Often prayers are delayed because we have failed to give him glory for former mercies, or because he designs to try our patience, Ps. 123:2. We must wait realizing that all depends upon God and his word of promise, Ps. 130:5, 6. 8.) With humble submission to his will, leaving ourselves and our petitions in God's hand, sensible that he knows what is best for us, Matt. 26:39.