

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 4 - (Q1LES4) INTRODUCTION TO SHORTER CATECHISM AN OUTLINE

&

QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 6 OVERVIEW

1. Prayer
2. Bible reading: Psalm 90: 1 - 17
3. Rules of Study – LC question 99, Understanding what God requires of us.
 - a. As we begin our study of the basic doctrines of the Reformed faith, we will first look at some rules for understanding what God requires of us. These rule are contained in the Larger Catechism, question 99, and are presented as rules for understanding the ten commandments. The Pasture did a track on them, and calls them the Eight Steps to Understanding, and they are just as applicable to understanding all of God’s Word. (**hand out track**). Note the first point, 1.A. It says, “God requires obedience to His revealed will. This is directly from SC catechism question 39, which asks, “What is the duty which God requireth of man?” The answer is, “The duty which God requires of man is obedience to His revealed will.” So let’s look at the eight steps to understanding God’s Word.

RULE:

1. ***That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience for ever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of sin.***
 - Does this really mean that God’s Word is, like, absolutely, 100% perfect? Yes. (**Psalm 19:7 “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”**)
 - How much tolerance does God allow in obedience to his law, how many sins are we allowed before we are in violation? The rule says, “**unto entire obedience for ever**” It can’t get any clearer than that. (**James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all**)

The law is perfect.

2. *That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works and gestures.*

This is an interesting one. What do you think is meant by this rule.

That God's Word is more than a set of guidelines for behavior, but affects us spiritually, in our hearts. Anyone who has studied God's work can't disagree with this. **(Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin).** Other scripture proofs see LC, pp182, para p. God's Word is spiritual, and with the help of His Spirit, works within us.

3. *That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.*

This is an interesting one. What do you think it means? Each commandment touches on all the others. **(Col 3: 5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence (strong or abnormal desire or appetite), and covetousness, which is idolatry** It also follows, that, by breaking one, you consequently break others. There are numerous scripture proofs provided for this one, I like **1 Tim 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."**

4. *That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.*

How about this one, what are we talking about here? Each prohibition or command contains a corresponding obligation. **(Isaiah 58:16 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:)"**

5. *That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.*

The first part is easy, don't do what God says not to do, do what God says to do.

The second part is more difficult. **(read again)**. The Pastors tract says, "God's commands come in context." I'm not sure I understand this last part. The scripture proof given for this rule in the LC q99 is, **(Matt 12: 6 - 7** ⁽⁶⁾***But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple,*** ⁽⁷⁾***But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.***")

(There are times when some things are not appropriate.)

6. *That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.*

Anyone want to take a shot at this one? Pastors tract says, "Each of God's rules represents a wider pattern of behavior and it. **(Matt 15:4 For God commandeth, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.)** Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not abort thy child.

7. *That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavour that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.*

This one's pretty easy. What does it say? What is forbidden of us by God, we should attempt to help others keep from doing. This is right from the 4th Commandment. **(Ex 20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates)**

8. *That in what is commanded to others, we are bound according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them.*

This is a little more complex. Anyone? We are to help others in their lawful endeavors. **(2 Cor 1:24 "Not for that we have dominion over your faith but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand")**

And, also, to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them. **(1 Tim 5:22 "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partakers of other men's sins: keep thyself pure")**

4. Outline of Shorter Catechism - use flow chart provided.

5. Introduction to Questions 1 through 6

- a. Questions 1 through 6 are a basic introduction to God, what He is, what are His rules, and His composition. They include:

Question 1 - What is the chief end of man?

Question 2 - What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

Question 3 - What do the scriptures principally teach?

Question 4 - What is God?

Question 5 - Are there more Gods than one?

Question 6 - How many persons are there in the Godhead?

5. Discussion:

- a. Question 1 has to do with hierarchy. **MANS CHIEF END IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND TO ENJOY HIM FOREVER.** God is the boss, you aren't. Man is to serve God, and when done properly, God will reward man.
- b. Question 2 has to do with the rules of engagement (military term). **THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH IS CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTEMENTS IS THE ONLY RULE TO DIRECT US HOW WE MAY GLORIFY AND ENJOY HIM.** God has given us direction. It is the Word of God. It is the **ONLY** set of rules. It is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
- c. Question 3 has to do with what God requires of man, as presented in the Word. **THE SCRIPTURES PRINIPALLY TEACH WHAT MAN IS TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD, AND WHAT DUTY GOD REQUIRES OF MAN.** God requires that we believe what he tells us to believe, and specific duties. This question forms the basis for two of the major divisions of the Shorter catechism. Questions 1 through 38 tell us what man is to believe concerning God. Questions 39 through 81 tell us what duty God requires of man.
- d. Question 4 tells us what God wants us to know concerning what he is. **GOD IS A SPIRIT, INFINITE, ETERNAL AND UNCHANGABLE IN HIS BEING, WISDOM, POWER, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, GOODNESS AND TRUTH.** He is a Spirit with defined characteristics.
- e. Question 5 has to do with sovereignty. **THERE IS BUT ONE ONLY, THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD.** It very clearly states God's position on the number of gods we are to pay attention to.
- f. Question 6 tells us how God describes Himself in the Word. **THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD, THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST, AND THESE THREE ARE ONE GOD, THE SAME IN SUBSTANCE, EQUAL IN POWER AND GLORY.** Does "three in one" sound familiar?