

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM, LESSON # 49 (Q4LES10)

THE LORD'S PRAYER, PREFACE & FIRST PETITION

1. Prayer

2. Bible reading: Isaiah 63: 7 - 16

3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we began our discussion of prayer. Prayer is the third and final of Christ's New Testament ordinances. Through prayer, we offer up to God only, our desires for things lawful according to His Word, and which are agreeable to his will. As the distance between perfect God and totally sinful man is infinity, we offer our prayers in the name of Christ, who, being the only mediator between God and us, makes continual intercession for us. God's Spirit helps us to know how to pray, and what to pray for. Confession to God of all our sins is a required part of prayer, as is a thankful, sincere acknowledgement of God's mercies. For direction in prayer, we are to make use of the whole Word of God, but God's special rule of direction in prayer is the form of prayer that he taught his disciples, the Lord's prayer.

4. **Introduction:** The Lord's prayer is God's special rule of direction for prayer. The Lord's prayer is covered in SC questions 100 and 107. Today we will begin our study of the Lord's prayer, discussing SC q100 and 101.

5. Questions & Answers:

Question 100: What does the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us?

Answer: The preface to the Lord's prayer (which is *Our Father which art in heaven*), teacheth us to draw near to God, with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others.

Question 101: What do we pray for in the first petition?

Answer: In the first petition (which is, *hallowed be thy name*), we pray That God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself known; and that he would dispose all things to his own glory.

6. The SC, LC, and WCF

The SC covers the preface to the Lord's prayer, and the first petition, in two questions, q100 covering the preface, and 101 covering the first petition. The LC covers this material in two questions, q189 covering the preface, and q190 covering the first petition. The LC adds considerably more detail. The WCF does not specifically discuss, or even mention the Lord's prayer. However, every part of God's special rule of direction is covered in detail somewhere in the 33 chapters.

In looking at the material covered in the discussion of the Lord's prayer, it seems a perfect way to conclude the catechisms'. The SC, LC, and even the Heidelberg catechisms all conclude with a breakdown and discussion of the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer is a summary of the rest of the catechism, reinforcing the doctrine previously provided.

7. Preface: "Our Father which art in heaven" (SC q100)

- a. The SC q100 says that the preface to the Lord's prayer teaches us *"to draw near to God, with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us,..."*
- b. The LC q189 expands on this, saying: *"when we pray, , to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein; with reverence, and all other child-like dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty and gracious condescension: ..."*
- c. What message does the opening of the preface "Our Father" have for us when we pray?
 - To draw near to God. This phrase is used in both the LC and SC. Remember, prayer is "an offering up of our desires unto God." Pray is between God and man. **(Matt 6: 5 ⁽⁵⁾And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ⁽⁶⁾But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.**
 - With all holy reverence. The LC adds: *"and all other child-like dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty"* What is meant by these references to holy reverence?
 1. All other child-like dispositions. The Heidelberg catechism, q120, expresses the essence of "Or Father". It states *"That at the very beginning of our prayer he may awaken in us the childlike reverence and trust*

toward God which should be the motivation of our prayer, which is that God has become our Father through Christ and will much less deny us what we ask him in faith than our human fathers will refuse us earthly things.” (Matt 7: 9 – 11 “⁽⁹⁾**Of what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? ⁽¹⁰⁾Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? ⁽¹¹⁾If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”)**)

We are to approach God from the position of inferiority, as a child approaches his father. As such, with our faith in Him, our communication should be such as the relationship of a child to his father.

2. Heavenly affections. God’s love for us, and our love for Him. When we approach God in prayer, it should be with love and affection. (Lam 3:41 **“Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens.”**)

Are there those who approach God with a “what can you do for me” or a “I can handle this” attitude?

3. Due apprehension (read “understanding”) of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension A reminder that God is God, and we are not.

Sovereign power and majesty are easily understandable. What is meant by gracious condescension? My New Webster’s 20th Century Dictionary says “condescend” is “to descend voluntarily to the level, regarded as lower, of the person or persons one is dealing with; to be gracious or affable to inferiors; to deign.” This would be God’s willingness to listen to us, though we are so much less than He. (Isaiah 63: 15 – 16 “⁽¹⁵⁾**Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? ⁽¹⁶⁾Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.”)**)

- Confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein. We should, in our faith, have confidence in God, and what he tells us. What is meant by:
 1. His fatherly goodness Faith that we, as His elect, will receive the benefits promised in his covenant. (Luke 11:13 **“If ye then, being evil, know**

how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall you heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”)

2. our interest therein Our interests are receiving the things which are promised too us. **(Rom 8:15 “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.**
- d. What message do the words in the preface “which art in heaven” have for us?

This is a reminder that He is God, and we aren't. TV says of this: “*These words, “which art in heaven” teach us to draw near unto God with all holy reverence, because of our great distance, God being not our earthly Father, but our Father which is in heaven.*” **(Eccles 5:2 “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”)**

The HC supports the distance between God and us, and supports the confidence in his fatherly goodness discussed above. It asks in q121: “Why is there added: “who art in heaven”? It's answer: “*That we may have no earthly conception of the heavenly majesty of God, but that we may expect from his almighty power all things that are needed for body and soul.*” **(Rom 8:32 “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.”)**

8. First Petition “Hallowed be thy name” (SC q101)

- a. The first petition of the Lord's prayer is “Hallowed be thy name”.
- a. First definitions: Who would like to take a crack at petition? My New Webster's 20th Century Dictionary says: “an entreaty, supplication, or prayer; a solemn, earnest supplication or request, as one addressed to the Supreme Being, to a superior, or to a person or group in authority; also, a particular request or article among several in a prayer.” All appears to apply here.
- b. How about a definition for “hallowed”? 1) to make holy; to consecrate; to sanctify. 2) to reverence; to honor as sacred; to venerate.
- c. Are we back to the SC question 1? What is the chief end of man? “Mans chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.? Let's see.
- d. The SC says, in the first petition, we pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself know, and that he would dispose all things to his own glory.”

- e. The LC asks the same question, but greatly expands the answer, saying: *“In the first petition, (which is, Hallowed be thy name,) acknowledging the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves and all men to honor God aright, we pray that God would by his grace enable and incline us and others to know, to acknowledge, and highly to esteem him, his titles, attributes, ordinances, word, works and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by; and to glorify him in thought, word, and deed: that he would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonorable to him; and , by his over-ruling providence, direct and dispose of all things to his own glory.*
- f. From the LC answer: *“acknowledging the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves and all men to honor God aright”* By professing God’s glory, we admit to the insufficiency of ourselves and our ability to glorify Him. **(2 Cor 3:5 “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;”)**
- g. “to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself known”. The LC identifies “all that whereby he maketh himself known” as *“to acknowledge, and highly to esteem him, his titles, attributes, ordinances, word, works and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by; and to glorify him in thought, word, and deed”*

Remember SC q54 which asks: What is required in the third commandment? (thou shalt not take the **name** of the Lord thy God in vain) The holy and reverent use of Gods names, titles, attributes ordinances, word and works. These are things whereby God maketh himself known

Also, “thought, word, and deed”, or synonyms, (heart, speech and behavior) are frequently used throughout the catechism to identify all the ways we should honor and glorify God.

- h. “and that he would dispose all things to His own glory.” How does God dispose all things to his own glory? TV says (Q101q6)
 - By allowing us to hallow and glorify his name by:
 1. confessing and forsaking our sins, which rob him of glory
 2. admiring and adoring him in his glorious titles and attributes, in his infinite excellences and perfection’s
 3. believing, loving and obeying his word
 4. observing and attending upon his worship and ordinances
 5. magnifying him in his works, and making use of his creatures for his glory.
 6. Sincere, diligent, zealous and constant endeavors to promote his honor and interest in our places and relations

7. That the chief design of our thought, words and actions, may be the glory of God,

(Psalm 67: 1- 3 “⁽¹⁾God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; ⁽²⁾That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. ; ⁽³⁾Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.”)

- The LC adds a list of things that detract from God’s glory, with a prayer that he would eliminate them. “*that he would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonorable to him*”. By eliminating things which are evil, and detract from God’s glory, we are adding to His glory. Scripture proofs are included for all of the items listed.

9. Summary

- a. God’s special rule of direction in prayer is the prayer He taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord’s Prayer. The Lord’s prayer is divided into 8 parts, a preface, six petitions, and a conclusion. The preface teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, expecting Him, as our father, to help us. In the first petition, which is “Hallowed be thy name”, we ask God to allow us to honor and glorify him in all ways, and that He would dispose all things to His own glory.