

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 100. What doth the preface of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

- A. The preface of 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.

Scripture References: Isa. 64:9. Luke 11:13. Rom. 8:15. Eph. 6:18. Acts 12:5. Zech. 8:21.

Questions:

1. When we say "Our Father" in the prayer are we speaking of only God the Father?
No, we are speaking of the Triune God. The Father is mentioned but the Son and the Holy Spirit are included because they are the same in essence.
2. Is it possible for everyone to pray this prayer?
No, it is a prayer that only those who are believers are able to pray. It is only those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them because of their relationship to Jesus Christ that can call out "Our Father" and sincerely mean it.
3. What can we be taught from the words "Our Father" in the prayer?
We can be taught that we can address our Lord with an attitude that is likened (though deeper) to the attitude of a child toward his earthly father. It is an attitude of love, adoration and delight.
4. Why is it important for us to know God is in heaven?
It is important for us as by this we can direct our prayers to Him away from the cares of this world and to expect our blessings from above. It should also teach us to be careful of our attitude toward God that it is a holy attitude and an attitude of carefulness of our words directed toward Him (Eccles. 5:2).
5. Should we not remember that the preface contains the word "Our" as we pray?
Yes, we should remember this constantly. This should teach us to pray with and for others. It should remind us that we are "one in Christ Jesus" and that we are not alone no matter what our trouble or difficulty might be here on earth.

ACCESS TO GOD!

The Word of God tells us, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us." (I John 5:14). A wonderful secret of our confidence is our ability to be heard by our Heavenly Father. We have access to the Father. This is a promise from Holy Writ. All prayer that we make in the will of God, prayer dictated by the Holy Spirit — in that it is consistent with the the Word of God — reaches the ear of God.

Our Mediator, Jesus Christ, sits on the right hand of God, making intercession for us. And this is an important source of our confidence as we live the Christian life, day by day. We need never worry about whether or not He hears us. We need never think we are alone. We need never be concerned that because of our inability to put things into words He will not get the message. We can put our finger of faith on this verse and KNOW that He hears us. What a wonderful privilege!

However, we should remember that our access to God, this wonderful ability to get through to Him, carries a responsibility on our part. This responsibility is to behave ourselves as the children of God! So many times we seem to rely upon our theological position rather than on our attitude, our relationship, to our Father through Jesus Christ. If we are indeed saved by the blood of the Lamb we must remember that this causes us to have further responsibilities.

The next time we pray the words, "Our Father" it would be good for us to ask ourselves, With what kind of spirit are we praying? Are we praying with a chastened spirit, with a recognition that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing? Are we coming to Him in prayer with abedience to Him our watchword? Are we willing to be submissive to whatever way He takes us in answer to our prayer? These are difficult and hard words for all of us. We are much more prone to be proud, feel we are safe in our theological bandwagons and say glibly, "Our Father" and then wonder why we do not have the access we take so much for granted.

May God help us to pray the words next time with a full recognition of what they mean and of our true condition before Him!

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