

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 103. What do we pray for in the third petition?

A. In the third petition which is, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," we pray, That God, by His grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to His will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

Scripture References: Matt. 6:10; Ps. 67; Matt. 26:39; Ps. 119:36; 2 Sam. 15:25; Job 1:21; Ps. 103:20, 21.

Questions:

1. What do we mean by the will of God?
When we pray, "Thy will be done," we mean by His will two things: (1) His will of Providence in which He determines what He will do for us and to us. This is His secret will, the will of His decree (Isa. 46:10); (2) His will that is revealed to us in the Scripture and one for which we should be constantly praying (Acts 21:12-14).
2. When we are praying for His providential will to be done, what is involved in our prayer?
We are praying that we might be made willing to comply with His will in our lives. A good example of this is found in I Sam. 3:18 where it states, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." We are willing to see God in the ways He takes us though sometimes our "seeing" Him is by faith.
3. What is involved in our prayer when we pray for His revealed will to be done?
We are praying that we might understand, through His Word and the help of the Holy Spirit, the ways He would have us to go. We are praying, "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good." (Ps. 143:10).
4. How can we be made willing to do His will?
We should recognize He is our Sovereign God and be willing to let the Holy Spirit lead us within that framework. We should recognize that His will is freer to work in us as our hearts are free from the love of the world. We should recognize that His way is the best for us and that someday we will understand.
5. What sort of obedience do the angels in heaven have toward God's will?
Our Larger Catechism tells us it is one of "humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy" (Larger Catechism Q. 192).

THE DESIRE TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD

"Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." (Eph. 6:6). "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart." (Ps. 40:8). Two verses from the Word of God and both of them speaking to us regarding the will of God. The first one tells us we have a duty, a privilege, to do the will of God as servants of Christ. The second one informs us we should delight to do that will. Do we have a desire to do the will of God? Is this something that is real to us, day by day?

Whenever I think of finding the will of God for my life, I turn immediately in my mind to my life verses: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." (Prov.3:5, 6). Many years ago I began to see that knowing the will of God had more to do with indentification than with education. The closer I walk to Him the easier it is for me to understand His will.

This is all saying that a knowledge of the will of God is always paralleled with a desire to do the will of God. And a desire to do the will of God comes with an attitude of commitment to our Lord. The desire to know the will of God and the denial of self is beautifully tied together in the hymn:

"Thy will, O Lord, not mine,
Teach me to say;
Not my will, Lord, but Thine,
I would obey;
Then shall I know the joy,
And Thy name glorify,
When I, on earth, shall try
To follow Thee."

If we expect to know His will for our lives, if we expect to be called by Him to do His work and **know**—It is His work, we must accept commitment to Him as a prerequisite. The heart that is willing to surrender to Him in self-denial is the heart that will be led by the Spirit of God. Too many times we expect to know His will without being willing to pay the price involved of saying "No!" to self. OUR ways, our understanding, our desires must be submitted to Him and then we can pray the words: "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God. . ." (Ps. 143:10). And then He will answer our prayer by leading us with His gentle hand.

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