

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 97. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper?

A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience, lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgement to themselves.

Scripture References: I Cor. 11:28, 29. John 6:53-56. Zech. 12:10. I John 4:19. Rom. 6:4. I Cor. 11:27.

Questions:

1. How can we best prepare to receive the Lord's supper?
First, we can best prepare to receive it by recognizing we are not worthy in ourselves. We do not come to the Lord's table by any merit of our own. Second, we can best prepare ourselves by coming to it with a right relationship with our Lord. This would entail the putting off of things that are sinful according to the Word of God.
2. How can we examine ourselves as we come to partake?
We can examine ourselves by means of self-judgement of the following: our true sense of repentance; our true Godly sorrow for our sins; our love for Christ and for one another; our sincere desire to walk in obedience to the Word of God.
3. How can we best prepare regarding our attitude toward God?
We can prepare by being certain we have had adequate prayer and meditation. There should be, on our part, much prayer to Him that He might draw from us all possible adoration for Him.
4. How can we eat and drink judgement to ourselves?
We can participate unworthily by neglecting to prepare ourselves and by coming to the Lord's table with known and unconfessed sin in our hearts.
5. How would God possibly punish us by our unworthy partaking?
He could punish us by sending upon us physical, mental and spiritual afflictions. When we come unprepared we are insulting God for it is His Table to which we are invited guests.
6. Should all be allowed to partake?
Only those should be allowed to partake who are believers and who are not living in any scandalous way before God. (Note Larger Catechism No. 172, 173.)

COMING IN A WORTHY WAY

This is always a problem for all of us. It was helped greatly by many of our Presbyterian forefathers by the use of the "Preparatory Service" in the churches. In many of our churches there would be two or three services held before Communion in which God's people could find help to adequately prepare themselves. Maybe our churches of today should take note of such a custom.

How can we best come in a worthy way? We can come recognizing we must be quiet within our souls. There should be nothing of the trivial in our hearts. We should come looking at the Cross of Christ, knowing it was there He died for us. We should come with a sincere desire to confess all known sin in our hearts.

Our hearts should be lifted up to Him for the healing He has given us. As we come we should dwell on the terrible sins of our hearts that have been cancelled out because of His death. We should come singing our praises to Him for what He has done for us! Do you remember the words of Pilgrim when he saw the Cross?

"Thus far did I come laden with my sin;
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in.
Till I came hither;
What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to be crack,
Blest cross!
Blest sepulchre!
Blest rather be the Man that there was put to shame for me."

We should come remembering what He did for us and come with a sense of dedication to Him in our lives in the days to come. Bruce once said, "Look and behold in what estate your heart is in with God and in what estate your conscience is with your neighbor." We should come with the attitude of Hosea when he said, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." (Hosea 6:1). May God help us to always come to the Table in a worthy way, all to His glory.

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