

Daily Bible Study

“Catechism & Communion”

Westminster Larger #171

Selected Scripture

February 28 – March 6, 2010

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY – After several months away from it, we return this week to our study of the Lord’s Table entitled “*Catechism & Communion*”. We are using The Westminster Larger Catechism for an outline in our study. Much of the material what we will cover is review of things we have gone over again and again in times past. So repetition is valuable for learning because it is very important to understand what and why we do the things we do as The People of God, The Body of Christ, or if you prefer, The Church or Ekklesia (a called out and gathered people, assembly). The Larger Catechism is NOT on par with Holy Scripture as God’s eternal truth stands alone on its own authority. We do recognize that such things as The Larger Catechism are helpful as they summarize, bring together and illustrate to us the truths taught in Scripture. #168 of the Larger Catechism: **Question:** How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord’s supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it? **Answer:** *They that receive the sacrament of the Lord’s supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.* It is within the first sentence of the catechism answer that we are reminded of the necessity of self-examination first and foremost in answering the question of “How” one should receive the Sacrament of The Lord’s Supper. We see from Scripture that throughout history self-examination is a necessary and beneficial act to be preformed by God’s people (**Psalm 4:4, Psalm 26:2, Psalm 77:6, Psalm 119:59, Psalm 139:23-24, Lamentations 3:40, 2 Corinthians 13:5**). Not only is it necessary and beneficial but it is also quit clearly commanded in Scripture of God’s people **before** they receive Holy Communion (**1 Corinthians 11:28, 31**). We are **commanded** to *examine* (Dokimazo) ourselves. The word means “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals”. We are to examine to be sure we are genuine in our profession of faith and prepared to commune with proper recognition and confession of sin. We are also to *examine* for a reason and the reason is seen in the second portion of the Greek definition of Dokimazo: “to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy”. Dokimazo comes from the word Dokimos which means “accepted, particularly of coins and money”. The following quote from **Donald Barnhouse** illustrates this matter of *examination* for a purpose: “In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some money changers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called ‘dokimos’ or ‘approved’.”

The Word Applied: Take the time this week to examine yourself in preparation before coming to The Lord’s Table. Confess sin you discover through the convicting work of The Holy Spirit.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, search my heart and reveal to me the sin against you that is there that I need to confess & cleanse me. Praise You Jesus for paying the penalty for that sin.

TUESDAY – We continue in the catechism by reading: “...by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance...” We have seen the command of self-examination before coming to The Table and now we are given some guidance in the specifics of what we need to look at in this examination process. First and foremost we need to test whether or not our profession of faith is genuine and whether or not we are indeed *in Christ* (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). Secondly we are told to examine ourselves pertaining to our *sins and wants*. Even as true believers *in Christ* we find their remains *sin* (*leaven-Exodus 12:15, 1 Corinthians 5:7*) which must be confessed. A thorough examination of our *wants* will often reveal the *sin* that is within. We also need to ask ourselves in this examination do we understand what we are saying here and proclaiming here at the Table? Although not audible we are testifying to our union with Jesus by faith. We must test the *truth and measure of our knowledge* as to what we are actually saying here lest we

find ourselves harboring sin and disobedience; hypocritically eating damnation to ourselves rather than proclaiming the blessing of true forgiveness in Jesus (**1 Corinthians 11:29**). We examine our *faith* and *repentance* as well. Is there really a genuine “approved” *repentance and faith* found in us rather than a mere lip service of obedience to God while we are living in a state of sinful disobedience. The good news is that we are told to examine and confess and when we do we will find forgiveness and cleansing and not be judged ultimately with those who do not know Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:31**). God graciously by His Holy Spirit brings the “eyes to see” to His people as we commune with Christ by faith and look at the visible picture of His sacrifice for us. The spirit of repentance found in **Zechariah 12:10** is given to God’s people as He empowers genuine repentance in their hearts by His Holy Spirit. We are commanded to *examine* and it is God who then does the work of revealing and cleansing the broken.

The Word Applied: Are you content with the “truth & measure” of your knowledge, faith and repentance? How does a true understanding and appreciation of God & the Gospel deepen?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, by Your Spirit and Word work in my heart, soul, and mind convicting me of sin and assuring me of forgiveness in Christ. Grow my love and faith in You.

WEDNESDAY – Our examination starts with looking at our relationship to God by faith in Christ and then moves outward from there. We see our soul, mind, and actions are tested by an evaluation given concerning our *sins and wants*, what it is we desire as well as our sincerity concerning our lives growth in *knowledge, faith and repentance*. The next portion of the Catechism touches again on our relationship with God first and then moves outward to our relationship with others as we are told to examine ourselves concerning our: “...*love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong...*” We are reminded here again the primacy of *love for God*. No one is a believer who does not love God and we understand through Sacred Scripture that we love Him because He first loved us (**1 John 4:19**). We are to contemplate our *love to God* as we prepare to partake of The Supper. Notice that the writers chose to speak of *love to God* rather than *love for God*. A lot of people speak of their love for God but as we have mentioned in weeks past in the Lord’s Day bulletin articles, love is a verb and we are to examine our *love to God* or what we have done and are doing that demonstrates our love to Him. Are we giving love to Him by obeying Him and His commands (**John 14:15, John 14:23**)? Then it is an easy and logical progression to the next step, *love for the brethren*. We demonstrate our love to the invisible God by loving (giving, serving, sacrificing) our *brethren* in Jesus (**John 13:35**). We need to examine our love to brethren as we come to The Table. Do we humbly love our brothers and sisters in Jesus? We then broaden out our examination to see if we have *charity to all men* and this is described in the Catechism by *forgiving those that have done us wrong*. Jesus warned about only loving those who love us in return; He said that even the Pharisees do that. “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?” (**Matthew 5:46-47**) Any hypocrite can love and serve when being loved and served but God calls us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who use us and persecute us (**Matthew 5:43-45**). These are some serious demands Beloved possible only through the power of The Holy Spirit. May we follow the perfect example of our Lord Jesus.

The Word Applied: Is there visible evidence of love to God, Brethren and all men found in your life? What are some areas & ways you need to change? Prepare for The Table by confession.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me love You by obedient action and then love my Brethren and also those outside the body of Christ as I should. Forgive me for my often selfish & unloving ways.

THURSDAY – We spoke of love to God and others yesterday and before we move on let us briefly see one more thing from the phrase *forgiving those that have done them wrong...* (**Ephesians 4:32**) We closed yesterday speaking of Jesus perfect example of love to all men and I want us to put the eyes of our hearts as it were on the cross where this found its ultimate demonstration. Jesus even from the cross amidst the horrific, unjust, and dare I say “unfair” treatment demonstrated to us this forgiving spirit when He said, “*Father, forgive them...*” He did not sweep away accountability to righteousness but He did reveal the heart of compassionate forgiveness that He calls us to emulate. Peter tells us that He committed Himself to His Father for He is the Righteous judge (**1 Peter 2:23**). We are then told by Peter that Jesus bore *our sins* in His own body. As we take The bread of the Sacrament in our hands may we be reminded of these truths. Next we read in the Catechism we are to examine ourselves: *of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience...* Do we really long for Jesus Christ, to be like

Him, to follow His example, etc...? It is good to come to The Table and reflect and see if we have been sterilized into this “Christian Life” that is devoid of real, genuine longings for Jesus and Christ likeness. The Catechism reminds us we need to examine our *new obedience* as it is called. Do we obey with proper motive or because we are supposed to as “Christians”? It doesn’t take me to long in this examination process to see some “ouch” spots Beloved. O wretched man that I am who can save me from this body of death? Thanks be to God who gives us the victory in Jesus Christ! Read **1 Peter 2:19-25**, **1 Peter 4:19**.

The Word Applied: *Are you satisfied with your obedience to Christ and spiritual condition? Are there motives or hypocrisy in you that need to be repented of in order to better glorify God?*

Suggestion for Prayer: *O God, forgive me of superficial Christian jargon & forced piety. Help me to love, forgive and obey You from a pure motive and glorify You in my attitudes & actions.*

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – The final portion of this Catechism answer gives us direction on the last steps of preparation before receiving *The Lord’s Supper*. After we have repented and confessed the sin we have found within us during this examination we then move forward with these following directives: “...and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.” We can summarize the previous points of self examination in preparation for The Table as follows: In regards to *being in Christ*, then having an honest look at our *desires and wants*, followed by *measuring* our growth in *knowledge, faith, repentance*, and seeing this evidenced by our *love to God and the brethren, charity to all men*, and *forgiving those that have done them wrong* and our *new obedience*. After we have examined ourselves and had our feet washed (**John 13:10**) in reference to the sin discovered and confessed we are implored to pursue Christ likeness in several areas. The first thing we see is that we should commit ourselves anew renew our *by renewing the exercise of these graces* which we have just seen. The old saying goes “use it or lose it” and we need to exercise ourselves toward Godliness (**1 Timothy 4:7-8**). The catechism then informs us on “how” we exercise toward Godliness and Christ likeness and it does not use methodology that is unique or “cutting edge” rather it goes back to the God given means of grace we find in Sacred Scripture. We are called to *serious meditation* and *fervent prayer*. Two old fashioned, bread and butter, meat and potatoes kind of exercises. These two means of grace can be found in many Scripture texts such as **Joshua 1:8-9**, **Psalms 1:2**, **Psalms 34:17**, **James 5:16-18**.

The Word Applied: *Are you exercising in these areas? Take time to daily practice and prepare.*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, forgive me my sins as I forgive those who sin against me.*