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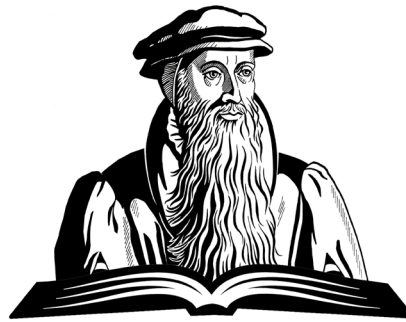
Shorter
CATECHISM

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

Lecture #57

**The Lord's Prayer:
The Fourth Petition**
Catechism Question 104



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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29. Blessings of Salvation at the Resurrection—*Question 38*
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32. The Ten Commandments: Love for God—*Questions 45–8*
33. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Worship—*Question 49–52*
34. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Name—*Questions 53–56*
35. The Ten Commandments: A Day for Holy Love—*Questions 57–59*
36. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Day—*Questions 60–62*
37. The Ten Commandments: Love within Our Relationships—*Questions 63–66*
38. The Ten Commandments: Love for Life—*Questions 67–69*
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44. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Saving Faith—*Questions 85 and 86*
45. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Repentance unto Life—*Question 87*
46. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Means of Grace—*Question 88*
47. Means of Grace: The Word of God—*Questions 89 and 90*
48. Means of Grace: The Sacraments—*Questions 91 thru 93*
49. Means of Grace: Christian Baptism—*Questions 94 and 95*
50. Means of Grace: The Lord’s Supper—*Question 96*
51. Means of Grace: Receiving the Lord’s Supper—*Question 97*
52. Means of Grace: Prayer—*Questions 98 and 99*
53. The Lord’s Prayer: The Preface—*Question 100*
54. The Lord’s Prayer: The First Petition—*Question 101*
55. The Lord’s Prayer: The Second Petition—*Question 102*
56. The Lord’s Prayer: The Third Petition—*Question 103*
- 57. The Lord’s Prayer: The Fourth Petition—*Question 104***
58. The Lord’s Prayer: The Fifth Petition—*Question 105*
59. The Lord’s Prayer: The Sixth Petition—*Question 106*
60. The Lord’s Prayer: The Conclusion—*Question 107*

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Lecture #57

The Lord's Prayer: The Fourth Petition

Question 104: *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

Answer: *In the fourth petition (which is, "Give us this day our daily bread") we pray, That of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.*

As Christ teaches us to pray, we remember he teaches us to come near by his grace, when we address God as our Father which art in heaven. From this as our great encouragement, we then seek his glory. Notice, as we follow the petitions, we want his name to be hallowed, we want his kingdom to come, and we want his will to be done in earth as it is in heaven. But the Lord's Prayer doesn't end there. This is not the end of what we're to approach God with. Christ teaches us then to come near to God with our personal needs. And so we now transition to those petitions that deal with these personal needs. The fourth, the fifth, and the sixth petitions express these needs to God.

And in today's lesson, we look at the fourth petition, which begins this second part of the Lord's Prayer. Question #104 of the *Shorter Catechism* asks, "What do we pray for in the fourth petition?"—"In the fourth petition (which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*) we pray, That of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them."

This petition comes from Matthew 6, verse 11, and is also found in Luke 11, verse 3. By using the word "bread," Christ refers to a most basic provision for our needs. Every culture uses a form of bread for food. It's what we call a staple part of our diet, a basic part of a well-balanced diet. Good and healthy bread provides necessary nutrition—protein, and minerals, and vitamins, and fiber. It's also common. It's not a delicacy reserved for the ultra-rich. It's something that the most poor in the world enjoy and eat. It's not a desert, it's a regular part of our meal. And so, by using bread, Christ is training us to look to God for all that we need in this earth. All physical needs then are to be sought from God.

You'll notice the *Catechism* uses the words "competent portion." And so, this idea is that as bread is basic, and common, and needful for us, so we're not asking for some portion that is extravagant. Certainly God may give that to some of his own. But we're asking that God would give us what's needed.

So in this petition, we consider three things: firstly, *Our Daily Portion*; secondly, *Our Merciful Gift*; and third, *Our Needed Blessing*.

So first, *Our Daily Portion*. When we use the word "portion," we're speaking of something

that is measured out to us. When we see the word “daily,” this is speaking of a portion needed for the day. You can think of it this way, you would not need a thousand loaves of bread for one day. That would be far too much for you to eat. It would be more than your daily portion, your daily measurement. Perhaps you would need a loaf, or a few slices of bread for the day. You don’t need a hundred gallons of water for one day. Perhaps you need about a gallon, or even less than that each day. It is portioned out to you as to what you need.

You have a picture of a daily portion given to us in the book of Exodus. In Exodus 16, we read of God’s miraculous provision of a portion each day of manna for the children of Israel. Every morning, there would be this small round thing, as verse 14 tells us. Moses told the Israelites, “This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat” (verse 15). And we read of the instruction given to them for each day, Exodus 16, verses 16 to 18: “This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.” Well, God was giving his people a daily portion. You could think, a family of five would have had this five-measure portion—five omers for them. A family of two would have had two, a family of ten—ten. And so, though every household had a different measurement, everyone got a proper portion—a competent portion. Each day, God was providing them with the amount of food they needed for that day. God was teaching them that he would provide them all that they stood in need of, even in the wilderness, the desert that they walked through, God would give them all that they needed. He would not give them less than they needed, he would not give them more. He would give them their daily portion. And this is what we seek from God. As we pray, we ask that God would give us our daily portion, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Now, we should remember that God is certainly able to give more, and sometimes he does. He sometimes will withhold what may be more desired for a particular day. But we’re coming to God saying, “Whatever I have need of today to accomplish your purpose for me, please give it to me.” We shouldn’t, in other words, think that it’s only literal bread for which we pray. Bread was mentioned earlier as a way of referring to all of our basic needs. We have needs of food, and water, and clothing. Remember that Christ told us in his Word that if we have food, and water, and raiment or clothing, with these we should be content. And so, these are the basic needs for our body, for physical life in this world.

So as we think of what we need for life, we come to God and say, “God, I need you to give it to me.” Notice that Christ isn’t saying simply “what you want,” but “what you need.” And so, when we stand in need of shelter, or health, and whatever would be useful for health, we’re taught to come to God for the daily provision that we require.

Now, we realize that there’s a day coming for each of us when our lives shall end. And so, we acknowledge that God may withhold the restoration of health. But in praying, “God, give us this day our daily bread,” we’re saying, “To the end that I need strength to serve you in this life, give what I require.” When we understand this, we learn a key to contentment. Paul writes, in 1 Timothy 6, verse 8, “Having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” If we have sufficient food and clothing, we should be content—not worried, not anxious. God has promised and has provided then our day’s needs.

Now, many of us will have food laid out for a few days or a few weeks, and we should teach ourselves to say, “Look how rich God’s been to me!” He’s given me more than my daily provision

this day. We should also remember, if don't have for the next day food sufficient, we shouldn't worry. We should come in faith to our Father in heaven, "You've told us to come and ask, Give us this day our daily bread. And so I thank you that this day I've had what you've given, and I trust you for tomorrow as well." So our portion.

Well, second, *Our Merciful Gift*. There's a simple word used in this petition which reminds of how we receive these blessings. It's the word "give." It's a bold word, and simple. It's almost abrupt. However, we remember that we are approaching our Father in heaven, so we approach with holy reverence and confidence, and we acknowledge our daily needs. And we say, "Oh God, as you're the God who provides what is needed, and as you're my Father through Christ, I come and I ask, give us this day our daily bread."

Well, by teaching us to say "give," Christ is teaching us the reason we receive our daily portion, the way we receive our daily portion. It is, as the *Catechism* states, "of God's free gift." We do not receive our day's provision of food, and health, and comfort, and life, our needs met, and many times, far more than our needs, many comforts and luxuries are given to us—we don't receive these because we deserve them. We don't receive these because we've done something better than others. We receive them, rather, as free gifts. Everything we enjoy in this life comes from God. Every breath we take is a gift of God. Every morsel of food we eat is a gift of God. Every ounce of water we drink is a gift of God. Every second of sleep we enjoy is a gift of God. It all comes from God. And everything that God gives to us, he gives to us freely. We've not earned it. In fact, if we remember, our sins deserve God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in the life to come (Question #84). So when we experience good things from God, we're experiencing his great kindness. We do not come to God and say, "Give me what I deserve." Rather, we come in the simplicity of trust and faith, trusting that God is good and merciful. And we ask with humility, all holy reverence, and yet confidence, "give me this free gift."

Well, this may provoke a question in us. Does this mean that we should not work? Is it wrong for us to work, if we're seeking to receive these things freely? If God gives it freely, why then do we work? Well, we should clarify right away that it is expected, indeed commanded, that if we are healthy, we should work. And of course, if we work, it's right that we earn wages, whether that's financially, through money, or through provision—we work for food, we work for something else. Notice 2 Thessalonians 3, verses 10 through 12. Paul writes of his own example, and he says, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

Notice that statement in verse 10: "If any would not work, neither should he eat." In other words, if we have strength and ability, we ought to work, indeed we must work. It would be sinful for us not to work if we have the ability. You may be very young, but now your parents work on your behalf. Your dad goes to a job, and your mom perhaps keeps the home and does much work around the home. They're working while you're learning, and you're playing and doing your chores and other things. Well, the time will come as you grow, that you'll need to work, and you'll need to earn, as it were, an income, so that you then can provide for yourself, and as Paul says, to those who once stole, steal no more, but work, and not only for yourself, but that you may have in order to give to others who stand in need (Ephesians 4:28). Our culture opposes this very much. Not just in my country, but in many countries. There is the thought that, if I can just live upon what the government gives, I'll be fine. But the Bible tells us we ought to work. And we should note,

there are some who cannot work. Maybe their bodies have been injured significantly, or they've aged to such an extent that they can no longer put in the time of a job. When it's that situation, family ought to care for them, or if members of a church, the church ought to assist them. Surely we ought to have compassion on those who truly can't work. However, if a person has health and opportunity and strength, they ought to work. To neglect this, whatever others may give them, to neglect it is sinful.

Well if this is the case, how then is it that we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"? It's because in asking for the desired end, "our daily bread," give us this, we are also asking that he would give us the ability to use the means to get the bread. You could think for a moment, in a very extraordinary situation, Elijah was fed bread by a raven bringing the bread from the king's table (1 Kings 17:2-6). That was a supernatural way of God giving bread. We've mentioned already from Exodus 16, God fed his people for forty years in the wilderness by manna. This was a supernatural way, an extraordinary way.

But the ordinary way is through our hard work, earning sufficient income to purchase food. But we should remember, who gives us strength to work? God does. Who gives us health that we can earn money? God does. Who gives us understanding that we can put our minds to difficult situations and labor? God does. Who gives us skills with our hands so that we can labor with our bodies? God does. Who gives us the opportunity to work? God does. So as we think about praying, "Give us this day our daily bread," we're also asking, "Give us strength to work. Restore my health. Give me rest tonight that I can awaken refreshed and attend to the various parts of my calling." So in other words, even when we work and fulfill our jobs, God is giving that freely, so that when we receive our money, or receive payment in different forms, we should say, "Thank you, God for giving us these things." When we sit at our tables with food before us, we should truly and sincerely say, "Thank you for giving this to us. God, you've given the strength. God, you've given the finances, you've given the opportunity, and you've given this food. So we thank you for your merciful blessing."

Well, third, *Our Needed Blessing*. Every living creature depends upon God to give them what they need for life. Psalm 147, verses 8 and 9 remind us that our God is he "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." Indeed, every living creature receives its food from God, both man and animal. Psalm 145, verses 15 and 16, "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Well, this means that even his enemies, his disobedient creatures receive good things from him. Christ expresses this when he exhorts us to love our enemies, and says, in Matthew 5:45, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." God is good and merciful, freely giving, not only to his children, but even to his enemies.

Some might think then, "Well, why then should we pray? Why should we ask, Give us this day our daily bread? He's giving gifts to sinners. Well, won't he just give us the same?" We pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" as an expression of a desire in seeking it from our Father in heaven. Even though he gives daily bread to animals and enemies who never ask, we ask because we desire it from him. We acknowledge it comes from him. Certainly, we do this as an expression of humility and faith, but it also cultivates thanksgiving. We're asking also that we might also receive, not only the outward provision of health, food, and clothing, water, and whatever else our bodies require

for that day, we're doing it in fellowship with God, and seeking that we would enjoy his kindness and blessing with it.

Notice how the answer concludes, "That of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them." We're not coming with, as it were, a casual indifference to God. We're not coming commanding God. We're not coming presuming upon God. We're coming with faith, as children to a Father able and willing to provide us this day our daily bread. It's in the context of fellowship, and so we receive it as a good gift from him, and desire the goodness of that gift from him. We're acknowledging that "Every good gift and every perfect is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

So as we ask it from him, we're lovingly desiring, not only the gift, but the blessing that is given through the gift—the expression of his goodness. We're captivated with him. Think of it this way. It's not just that we're looking at what's in his hand. We're looking, as it were, into his heart, and we're seeing the love and kindness he has in giving us these good things, and we're enjoying that. The Father loves to give his children good gifts. Christ reminds us of this, when he speaks to people and he says, "If you, being evil, know how to give your children good gifts, how much more your Father in heaven?" (Matthew 7:11). Well, as a father in this life has joy in giving his child good things, it's an expression and a little whisper of the joy that our Father has in giving his children good things. And so as we ask it, we ask it of him who gladly gives it, as an expression, not only of necessity, meeting those needs for us, but as a delight the Father has toward us. And this we seek from him, which, of course, is a great privilege.

Well, as we close, here's something we must pray and ought to pray every day. Every day we have new needs. It may be that our cupboard is full, we have a full refrigerator, we have a store of food or water. It may be that we don't have much. Perhaps our storage is empty. But whether it's full or empty, the whole of our day needs God's portion given to us. We need help and strength, we need food, we need rest, and all this comes from God. And so if we realize that every day, it will lead us to pray. And so it's not just something we need to realize, it's something we need to ask. We need to go to God and say, "Lord, give us this day our daily bread." Perhaps we've awakened and we're sick, and certainly we long to be relieved of that illness immediately. Well, God's able to do that. But we may also pray in faith, "Lord, give us this day our daily bread, to the extent that I need rest, give me rest. If I need medicine, please provide the medicine. If I need to see a doctor, please provide the doctor." We approach our Father in heaven and say, "Give me what's needed." Why do we ask that? We ask it so that he would supply us what is needed for our strength, that we then, by his provision, may hallow his name, enjoy the coming of his kingdom, and do his will in earth as it is in heaven. So you can see a connection. The Lord remembers our frame, and he provides us the strength that we need, in order to honor him. What an encouragement to see the way these connect.

Well, here's something as well for which we should give thanks every day. In Luke 17, there were ten lepers who asked Christ for mercy that they would be healed. Christ sent them on their way and healed them. You would think that such a generous and kind mercy would cause all of them to return with gratitude. However, we find that only one of the ten returned to give thanks to Christ. And in response, Christ said, as recorded in Luke 17:17, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" How many times have we been as the nine lepers. We're fed, we're healed, we're cared for, but we do not return to give Christ thanks. And this is why we should regularly give thanks to Christ. We wake up in the morning, and what should we say? "Thank you, Christ, for giving me rest." We're able to drink a cup of water—"Thank you for this water." We're able to

eat some food—“Thank you for this food.” This is why we give thanks before every meal. It’s not because it’s merely a custom or a tradition. It’s an expression of believing gratitude. As we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” so now we enjoy the bread, what should we do? We should return to God and say “Thank you! O Father in heaven, we receive this food from your hand, and we thank you for it.”

Well as we’ve indicated to some extent, remember that as God gives you kind, good things, that this goodness is meant to lead us to repentance and to a loving service. And so, let his provision to you, by his grace, be a motive toward you to serve him with gladness. He gives you these things with delight. Ought we not then to serve him with delight? Always in fellowship through Christ, only by the grace of Christ, and yet strengthened and encouraged by his kind gift. May we, through Christ, give ourselves in service, glad service to him who has so kindly treated us. Well, whatever your day’s needs are now, may it be that you seek them of your Father in heaven, for Christ’s sake, providing you all that you need, that you, to his glory, would both glorify him and enjoy him forever.