

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 42 (Q4LES3) - ESCAPING THE WRATH & CURSE

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Romans 3:19 - 31**
3. **Review:** We have begun our study of the last 25 questions of the SC. These questions deal with the application of what man is to believe concerning God, and the duty God requires of man. In question 83 we learned that some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others; some by reason of the sin itself, and some as a result of several aggravations associated with the sin. We also learned that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.
4. **Introduction:** In this lesson, we will begin our discussion of the solution to this problem. As no man can perfectly keep the commandments of God, and every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, including eternally, this puts man in a difficult situation. But God has given us a solution, and that is what we will talk about today.
5. **Questions & Answers:**
 - Question 85:** What does God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?
 - Answer:** To escape the wrath and curse of God, due to us for sin, God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.
 - Question 85:** What is faith in Jesus Christ?
 - Answer:** Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.
6. **The SC, LC, and WCF**

- a. The correlation between the LC and the SC jumps around at this point. SC question 85 has a direct counterpart in the LC, question 153. The answer is essentially the same, citing Faith in Jesus Christ, Repentance unto life (God), and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption. The shorter catechism follows in the next three questions with the answers to what each of these are. The LC, however, has already answered the first two points, (what is faith in Jesus Christ & what is repentance unto life) and goes directly into the outward means. Faith in Jesus Christ was covered way back in LC question 72. WCF chapter 14, Of Saving Faith, is also directly applicable.

7. ESCAPING GOD'S WRATH AND CURSE (Q85)

- a. This question is an introductory question to the rest of the questions in the shorter catechism. Faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life are covered in the next two questions. The diligent use of the outward means is introduced in SC q88, and covered in questions 89 through 107.
- b. What doth God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse, due to us for sin?
 - Faith in Jesus Christ
 - Repentance unto life
 - The diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.
- c. Q33 asks: "What is justification?" *"Justification is an act of God's free grace, whereby he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed in us, and received by faith alone."*

Remember justification is the milestone, the point when our calling to God becomes effectual.

Q86 says: *"Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace"*.

We have always been taught that salvation requires only one thing, faith in Jesus Christ. This question seems to indicate that three things are required. Is this a conflict? What is going on here?

Take all things in context, and remember God's Word. These three things naturally go together. You can't have one without the other. When God grants you true faith, and you are **justified**, you will repent, and will naturally go to God's Word for your direction in life.

Chapter 14, para 1 & 2 of the WCF says: ***"1. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of the souls, is the work of the***

Spirit of Christ in their hearts (remember SC q 31, “effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit”); ***and is ordinarily wrought by the minister of the Word*** (remember SC q31 on effectual calling says “enlightening out minds in the knowledge of Christ” and “as he is offered to us in the gospel.”): ***by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened*** (Sanctification, SC q35). **2. *By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein*** (repeat), ***and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.***”

8. RECAP ON REDEMPTION

- a. We are talking here of redemption. Let’s take a look at what God thinks man is to believe concerning redemption, as we have previously learned from the SC.
 1. In question 20, we learned that God, having out of his own good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver us out of the estate of sin and misery, and into a state of salvation, by a redeemer.
 2. In question 21, we learned that our redeemer is Jesus Christ, and that he is the only redeemer.

9. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

- a. Why does God require from us faith in Jesus Christ for our salvation?

TV says: ***“God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ to escape his wrath and curse, because, by faith in Jesus Christ we have an interest in Jesus Christ and his imputed righteousness, and the promise he hath made of remission and salvation unto us.” (Acts 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.)***

- By interest here, he is not talking of us being interested in Jesus, but “interest” in terms of an investment.
- Note the “righteousness” referred to is “imputed”. Anyone remember the use of that term before? SC q 33 asks: “What is justification?” and answers: ***“Justification is an act of God’s free grace, whereby he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.”***

10. WHAT IS FAITH?

a. What is the definition of “faith”?

My “Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary” says, in part:

- Unquestioning belief
- Complete trust, confidence, or reliance: as children usually have faith in their parents. (see SC q 100 What doth the preface of the Lord’s prayer teach us? The preface to 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.)

b. Are either definitions of “faith” a good definition?

c. The New Testament concept of “faith” is compatible with “reason”.

- The Greek word for faith is “pistis”, and is related to the verb “pisteuo” (to believe).
- Its connotation is never to “believe 6 impossible things before breakfast” or “blind faith”.
- It is used as “being sure of what we hope³ for, and certain of what we do not see. (**Heb 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”**)

d. So faith, as used here, does not mean “unquestionable faith”, but trust, confidence, reliance based on evidence. (**1 Peter 3:15 says: “But sanctify the Lord in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:”**)

11. HOW IS FAITH A SAVING GRACE?

a. My “Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary” says of “grace”.

- disposition to grant something freely.
- In theology, (a) the free, unmerited love and favor of God. (b) divine influence acting in man to restrain him from sin. (c) a state of reconciliation to God. (d) Spiritual instruction, improvement, edification.

b. The LC and SC scripture proof for this question is (**Heb 10:39 (vs 38 is also applicable, so is include here “⁽³⁸⁾Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. ⁽³⁹⁾But we are not of**

them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”)

c. What is the definition of perdition? Again from my “Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary”:

- Complete and irreparable loss, ruin
- In theology, loss of the soul or of hope for salvation; damnation; the place or condition of damnation, hell

d. I like TV’s answer. It is a little complicated, but should be good for discussion. TV says:

“faith is a saving grace, not by the act of believing, as an act, for then it would save as a work; whereas we are saved by faith in opposition to all works; but faith is a saving grace, as an instrument apprehending and applying Jesus Christ and his perfect righteousness, whereby alone we are saved”

apprehending and applying – what does question 85 say?

“To escape the wrath and curse of God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life (**applying**), and the diligent use (**apprehending**) of all the outward means.....”

12. MORE ON FAITH.

a. How does God work this grace of faith in the souls of men?

By hearing the Word preached. (**Rom 10:17 “So then faith come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**)

b. Who is the author of faith in Jesus Christ?

The author of faith in Jesus Christ is God, whose gift it is, and who works this gift of faith in the soul, by his Spirit. (**Eph 2:8 “For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God;”**)

c. The last part of the answer to SC q 85 says: “as he is offered to us in the Gospel”. How is Christ offered to us in the gospel?

Remember SC question 23? What offices doth Christ execute as our redeemer? The answer:

- A Prophet

- A Priest
 - A king
- c. TV ends his discussion of SC q86 with this question and answer.

When doth the soul rest upon him for salvation:

- The soul doth rest upon Christ for salvation when, being convinced of it's lost condition by reason of sin, and it's own inability, together with all creatures insufficiency, to recover it out of this estate, and having a discovery and persuasion of Christ's ability and willingness to save, it doth let go all hold on the creatures, and renounce it's own righteousness, and so lay hold on Christ, rely upon him, and put confidence in him, and in him alone, for salvation."
 - What is this process called? Remember SC q31. What is effectual calling?
Ans. Effectual calling is the act of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the Gospel.
- d. Is the process of sanctification always in a forward direction?

This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory; growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith."

13. Summary

- a. We are helpless sinners, fit for nothing in God's eyes but condemnation to hell for eternity. But there is a way out. To escape God's wrath and curse, God requires of three things; faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption. The first of these, faith in Jesus Christ, is a free gift from God, a saving grace, by the working of His Spirit, and the application of his Word."