

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 43 (Q4LES4) - REPENTANCE & OUTWARD MEANS

1. **Bible Prayer**

2. **reading: Psalm 51: 1 - 19**

3. **Review:** SC q 85 taught us that to escape the wrath and curse of God, due to us for sin, God requires of us three things. These are Faith in Jesus Christ, Repentance unto Life, and the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of salvation. We learned that Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from God, and requires that we receive and rest on him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel. We also learned that the faith we are to have is not blind faith, but a faith based on trust, confidence, and reliance based on evidence..

3. **Introduction:** In this lesson, we will discuss SC questions 87 and 88. These deal with the second two of God's requirements to escape his wrath and curse. SC q 87 covers repentance unto life, while q 88 covers the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption. Q88 introduces God's ordinances, which are then detailed in the next 19 questions.

4. **Questions & Answers:**

Question 87: What is repentance unto life?

Answer: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

Question 85: What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?

Answer: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer, all which are made available to the elect for salvation.

5. **The SC, LC, and WCF**

- a. As with SC q 86, the LC equivalent of SC q87 is located in the LC section concerning what man is to believe concerning God, LC q 76. The question and answer in the LC and SC are essentially the same. The presentation in the LC is more comprehensive, so we will base our discussion on it. WCF chapter 15 “Of Saving Faith”, deals directly with this subject. SC q 88 and LC q 154 are identical. The answers are also almost the same, identifying the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption as his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer. The WCF, Chapter 21, addresses prayer, and the Word. The Word, each of the sacraments, and prayer are each discussed in detail in various chapters of the WCF.

6. REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE (Q87)

- a. In response to this question, the LC, q 76 says: *“Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and the word of God, whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God’s mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieved for and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.”*
- b. Last week we learned that grace can be defined as:
- 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.
- c. Repentance unto life is a saving grace. It is the second saving grace, Faith in Jesus Christ being the first.
- d. WCF, chapter 15, para 1 says: *“Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.” (Acts 11:18 “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”)*

7. WHAT IS REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE?

- a. Repentance unto life consists of a number of aspects, or parts.
- TV says,

- In turning from sin and forsaking it.
- In turning unto God.

➤ This fits in nicely with the answer to SC q87.

b. Part of turning from sin is recognizing yourself as a sinner.

- The SC says “out of a true sense of his sin,” (**Ezek 36:31** *“Then ye shall remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your adominations.”*)
- The LC expands on this. It says: “wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and the Word of God,” (**Zech 12:10** *“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*
- Can we repent of our sins by ourselves? No. (**Ezek 36: 26 – 27** *“(26)A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27)And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them.”*)

c. The SC q 87 says: “and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ,” What does this mean?

- Back to words. Would someone like to take a shot at apprehension. Apprehension is usually taken to mean, and is defined as: “A fearful or uneasy anticipation of the future; dread.” But it can also mean “**Ability to understand**”. (**Rom 2:4** *“Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”*)
- Does it make any more sense if the SC phrase reads: “and the ability to understand the mercy of God in Christ”? (**Joel 2:12 - 13** *“(12)Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: (13)And rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”*)
- Why do we need an understanding of God’s mercy in Christ to obtain repentance? TV says; “because without the apprehension of this mercy of God, and willingness through His Son to be reconciled unto us, upon our conviction of and contrition for sin, we shall either cast off our trouble, and run more eagerly unto the commission of sin than before; or if we cannot cast off our trouble, we will sink under tormenting despair, and be in danger of making away with ourselves, as Judas did: whereas the apprehension of God’s mercy

- in Christ is an encouragement to us to forsake our sins, and to turn unto Him, and a means to affect our hearts with kindle and godly sorrow for sin.”* (Q87q9[p229])
- In LC q 76, it adds when talking about the man’s sin: *“out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger...”* Here we are talking about the danger of remaining in the state of sin, as the scripture proof verifies: **(Ezek 18:30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”)**
 - The WCF continues in Ch 15, p2; *“as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God: and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent,”*
- d. With grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God.
- We are talking here about an honest, true repentance, not a façade of repentance.
 - WCF Ch2, p2 continues: *“so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.”*
 - And WCF Ch3, p3 says: *“Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God’s free grace in Christ; yet is it of such necessity to all sinner, that none may expect pardon without it.”*
 - TV says, *“Hatred of sin, which is requisite to true repentance, is an inward, deep loathing and adoration of sin, as the most odious thing in the world, which is accompanied by a loathing of ourselves, as being rendered by sin most loathsome and abominable in the eyes of God.”* **(Ezek 36:31 “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.”)**
- e. With full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.
- LC q 76 adds: *“purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.”*
 - Actions are stronger than words. The truly repentant will have a full purpose, and endeavor after, new obedience. **(2 Cor 7: 10 – 11 ^{“(10)}For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death: ⁽¹¹⁾For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”)**
 - What is “new obedience”? Why not just “obedience”?

TV says, *“The obedience which we must deliver up ourselves unto, in our returning to the Lord, is the new obedience, because it is required in the new covenant, and because it must proceed from newness of spirit, the new nature or new principle of grace and spiritual life, which is put into the soul by the Spirit of God. (Rom 7:6 **“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”**)*

- f. The WCF, chapter 15, adds to this, with paragraphs 4, 5, & 6.
- Para 4 says: *“As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation, so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.” (Rom 8:1 **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”**)*
 - Para 5 says: *“Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man’s duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly.” (Luke 19:8 **“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold.”**)*
 - Para 6 says: *“As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy: so, he that scandalizeth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.”*

8. THE OUTWARD MEANS

- a. This is also an introductory question, and all the remaining questions of the SC deal with these “outward means”.
- b. The outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances.
- c. What is meant by “Christ’s ordinances”, or “the ordinances of the Lord”?
- TV says: *“By the ordinances of the Lord are meant those means of grace and salvation which are of the Lords institution, which He hath appointed and commanded in His Word, and no other.” (Matt 28:20 **“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. A-men”**)*
- d. What are Christ’s ordinances?
- The Word
 - The Sacraments –

- Baptism
- The Lord's supper
- Prayer

(Acts 2: 41 – 42 ⁽⁴¹⁾Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ⁽⁴²⁾And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”)

- e. This next point is interesting. The answer to this question in both the LC and SC include the word “ordinary”. What is the use of this word in this application? Why is it included?
- TV says, *“The ordinances are called “ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth the benefits of redemption”, because the Lord hath not wholly limited and bound up Himself unto His ordinances; for he can in an extraordinary way bring some out of a state of nature into a state of grace; as Paul, who was converted by a light and voice from heaven: but the ordinances are the most usual way of conversion and salvation, without the use of which we cannot, upon good ground, expect that any benefit of redemption should be communicated to us.”*
- f. To whom are the ordinances made effectual?
- To the elect only. **(Acts 2: 46 – 47 ⁽⁴⁶⁾And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁽⁴⁷⁾Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”)**

9. SUMMARY

- a. The second thing required by God, that we may escape His wrath and curse, is repentance unto life. (anyone remember the first?) This is a true repentance, whereby understanding our true status as sinners, and understanding of the mercy of God in Christ, turn from sin unto God, with a full purpose and endeavor after new obedience. Christ also requires of us the diligent use of his outward means, which consist of the Word, sacraments, and prayer.