

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 29. *How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?*

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

Q. 30. *How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?*

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

In 1955, theologian John Murray first published his little book titled *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. As the title implies, our redemption is accomplished by Christ in his work as our Mediator, and yet, it still needs to be applied, or, in other words, received and experienced. In some senses, Murray expands on this section of the Shorter Catechism: what Christ accomplished (questions 21-28) and how we receive what Christ accomplished (questions 29-38).

Jesus Christ has worked "such a great salvation" (Heb. 2:4). How are we "made partakers" in this salvation? Enter the Holy Spirit.

Notice how Question 29 is phrased. The writers are careful not to ask what we *need to do* to be saved. Salvation is "not a result of works; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8-9). The Holy Spirit applies this great salvation to us by making us "partakers" What's involved in this?

1. The Washing of Regeneration. Paul says in Titus 3:5 that God "saved us...by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." We, who "were dead in the trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), need to be washed and renewed in our inner being before we ever respond to the truth of the gospel. In our sin we do not seek God or understand the gospel (cf. Rom. 3:10-12). We need the new birth of the Spirit first (John 3:1-8; Ez. 36:25-27).

2. Working Faith in Us. The Holy Spirit's work of regeneration lays the foundation for faith. With a new heart, the Spirit helps us understand the Gospel (1 Cor. 2:12) and respond in faith (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 2:8). Experientially, we may feel that faith is our own, but, without the Spirit's assistance, we would never believe.

3. Uniting Us to Christ. Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). Thankfully God has called us "into the fellowship of his Son" (1 Cor. 1:9) by the work of the Holy Spirit. God strengthens us "through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:16-17). As RC Sproul said, "We are secure, not because we hold tightly to Jesus, but because he holds tightly to us." And he does that through the "effectual application" of the Spirit.