

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. 83. *Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?*

A. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Q. 84. *What does every sin deserve?*

A. Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.

Having established that all people are sinners (Q. 82), we are now faced with the consequences of our sin. This is all preparation for the gospel invitation to repentance and faith (Qs. 85-87). We are left with no hope in ourselves and despairing under the just penalty for our sin.

Romans 1:18 says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." And Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." Paul even confirms that the Old Testament communicated such a sentence against sin. "All who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them'" (Gal. 3:10).

The plain message of Scripture, from the very beginning, is that "in the day that you {sin} you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). God does not delight in wickedness; he hates all evildoers (Ps. 5:4-5). Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse because every sin is a rebellion against God and his will. The Catechism has already addressed sin and its effects (Qs. 14-19). Question 84 states the just penalty for sin. Sin, and all who have committed sin*, are destined for the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

What about Question 83? If every sin deserves God's wrath, why even speak about some sins being "more heinous in the sight of God"? Scripture speaks like this in several places. In Leviticus 4 and 5, God makes a distinction for unintentional sins. In Matthew 12:31-32 Jesus says "the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." And in speaking to Pilate, Jesus differentiates sin when he says, "He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin" (John 19:11).

Jesus gives us a hint on why some sins are "more heinous" than others. He says in Matthew 15:18, "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person." An unintentional sin, or a sin of ignorance, hardly is deeply rooted in the heart. But sin that proceeds from a hardened heart (Heb. 3:13) reveals an idolatrous rebellion against God and his ways. These, certainly, are more heinous and detrimental to the spiritual welfare of the sinner.

*Whoa! Is there not an "escape clause"? Yes, but you must wait until next week (Q. 85). It is okay to feel the gravity of the situation of your sin. You deserve God's wrath because of your sin. It makes the rescue all the sweeter.