

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](http://oakhillpca.com/wsc)

Q. 85. *What does God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse, due to us for sin?*

A. To escape the wrath and curse of God, due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

An escape plan! Praise God!

Last week we learned from Q. 84 that the just penalty of sin is God's wrath and curse. And I said, "Sin, and all who have committed sin, are destined for the eternal lake of fire." I so badly wanted to continue writing, "but..." The glorious, hopeful message of Scripture is that there is an escape plan! I, however, chose to focus on Q. 84 last week and wait for Q. 85 to celebrate. We cannot celebrate redemption unless we understand the depth of our misery.

In one sense, the Catechism is repeating a cycle from Questions 14-36. In those questions we learned about sin, its effects, God redemption through Christ, Christ's saving work, and the application of that work by the Holy Spirit. The focus of Questions 20-36, or the primary "subject" or actor, is God (Qs. 14-19 focus on human sinfulness). God made a covenant of grace. God sent the Redeemer. God the Son, as the Redeemer, completed the work of redemption. God the Holy Spirit applies that redemption to us.

Questions 85-107 (through the end) all focus on our role and responsibility to receive and enjoy that redemption. Q. 85 summarizes what the rest of the Catechism will address. God requires faith, repentance, and the "diligent use" of the means of grace (Word, sacrament, and prayer).

Only in Jesus Christ is there redemption and rescue from the just wrath due our sin. As Paul says in Ephesians 1:7, "In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." The key phrase in this verse are the two words "In Christ."

In a nutshell, Q. 85 says we "escape" by being "in Christ." Jesus says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you (i.e. cannot escape the wrath of God by oneself), unless you abide in me" (John 15:4). We abide in Christ through faith, repentance, and the use of the means of grace. The Catechism unpacks these in the remainder of the questions.