

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. 94. *What is baptism?*

A. Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, does signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

Q. 95. *To whom is baptism to be administered?*

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized.

The Sacraments are part of the means of grace God extends to us to help us "escape the wrath and curse" due our sin (Q. 91). We now turn our attention specifically to baptism.

Jesus commands that all disciples should be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Baptism is an initiation rite, symbolizing our "ingrafting into Christ." This language is important because "ingrafting" communicates more than a relationship. Relationships we enter and exit at will. Being ingrafted into Christ communicates our dependence upon Christ for salvation and eternal life. If we are not ingrafted in Christ, we die (cf. John 15:4-5; Rom. 11:17-24).

Baptism *signifies* this ingrafting. We are "in Christ" only by faith in his work on our behalf. As Paul explains in Titus 3:5-6, "he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Ingrafting into Christ occurs when the Holy Spirit washes away our sin, by the blood of Jesus' sacrificial death, and regenerates our hearts so we can place faith in Christ.

So, the water in baptism symbolizes the "washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit," which is the grounds of our ingrafting into Christ. God gives us baptism to assure us of his saving work through Christ. If you are baptized, as you have faith in Christ you can be confident that you are Christ's. He has you. And all the benefits of the covenant of grace are yours.

Our Catechism also teaches that infant children of believers should be baptized. Even though our children have not put their faith in Christ yet, they are members of the covenant community because God has promised to be God to not only believers, but also their children (Cf. Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39). Baptism does not save the child, but points the child to the one who does save.