

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 76 & 87.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #76. *What is repentance unto life?*

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace,¹ wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit² and word of God,³ whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger,⁴ but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins,⁵ and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent,⁶ he so grieves for⁷ and hates his sins,⁸ as that he turns from them all to God,⁹ purposing and endeavouring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.¹⁰

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #87. *What is repentance unto life?*

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace,¹¹ whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin,¹² and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ,¹³ doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God,¹⁴ with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.¹⁵

Question 1—*What are the kinds of repentance?*

Answer—There are two kinds of repentance:

First, there is that legal repentance, such as was in Judas, and may be in other reprobates, and so is not saving, Matt. 27:3. This is that repentance which is produced by law terrors, without the Gospel grace changing the heart, Job 20:5, 15-29. It is a legal repentance whose sorrows are those which are unto death, 2 Cor. 7:10.

Second, there is an evangelical repentance, peculiar to the elect, which is the only true and saving repentance, Acts 11:18. The general difference between them lies in this, repentance unto life is that wherein one repents of his sin as it is sin, or offensive to God, as David, Ps. 51:4; the former brings with it only the wrath of God on him, Gen. 4:13.

¹ 2 Tim. 2:25.

² Zech. 12:10.

³ Acts 11:18, 20, 21.

⁴ Ezek. 18:28, 30, 32; Luke 15:17, 18; Hos. 2:6, 7.

⁵ Ezek. 36:31; Isa. 30:22.

⁶ Joel 2:12, 13.

⁷ Jer. 31:18, 19.

⁸ 2 Cor. 7:11.

⁹ Acts 26:18; Ezek. 14:6; 1 Kings 8:47, 48.

¹⁰ Ps. 119:6, 59, 128; Luke 1:6; 2 Kings 23:25.

¹¹ Acts 11:18.

¹² Acts 2:37, 38.

¹³ Joel 2:12; Jer. 3:22.

¹⁴ Jer. 31:18, 19; Ezek. 36:31.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 7:11; Isa. 1:16, 17.

Question 2—*What is the nature of repentance unto life?*

Answer—Repentance unto life is a saving grace, which disposes the soul unto all acts of turning from sin unto God, 2 Tim. 2:25.

First, it is not a transient action, a sigh for sin, or pang of sorrow which goes away, *cf.* Acts 24:25; it is an abiding grace, a new frame and disposition, fixed in the heart by the Spirit, disposing one to turn from sin to God on all occasions, Zech. 12:10.

Second, it is not a passing work of the first days of one's religion, Col. 3:9; but a grace in the heart, setting one to an answerable working all their days, Eph. 4:22-24. The heart being smitten with repentance at conversion, the wound is never bound up to bleed no more, until the bandage of glory is put upon it, Tit. 3:2-5.

Third, this is not a common grace, as legal repentance is, *cf.* Jas. 2:19; but a saving one, whereby one is distinguished from a hypocrite, and having a necessary connection to eternal life, Tit. 3:7.

Question 3—*Who is the author of repentance unto life?*

Answer—The author of repentance unto life is:

First, it is not the men themselves, nor is it owing to one's natural powers, Jer. 13:23. The stony heart is beyond man's power to remove, *cf.* Ezek. 11:19.

Second, it is God's free gift, and wrought by the power of the Spirit in the heart, Ezek. 36:26, 27; whereby the sinner, though most notorious, is made penitent, Luke 15:17, 18.

The means the Spirit uses is that of the Word, wherefore we read of the preaching of repentance, Luke 24:47; Acts 11:18, 20, 21. 1.) The law serves to break the hard heart, Jer. 23:29. It is like the Baptist preparing the way for the Messiah's coming, *cf.* Matt. 3:1-3. For this reason, the law is called the spirit of bondage, Rom. 8:15. 2.) The Gospel serves to melt the hard heart, like fire, Jer. 23:29; and so bow and bend it from sin unto God, 1 Thess. 1:9. The soul is driven by the law, Gal. 3:24; but drawn by the Gospel, John 6:44.

Question 4—*Whence springs this repentance unto life?*

Answer—This repentance unto life arise from two springs:

First, from a true sense of sin, Lam. 3:29; which carries in it: 1.) A clear sight of sin, so that a man's eyes are opened, and he sees his sinfulness of nature, heart, lip and life, Ps. 51:3; he sees the evil of his sin, in the misery and danger of it to himself, and the dishonor it does to God, Lam. 1:14; Rom. 2:23. 2.) A painful feeling of that sin, Acts 2:37. The sin which sat light on them before, becomes a burden which they are not able to bear and they are filled with terror, anguish and remorse, at its sight, Acts 16:29, 30. This is necessary for repentance, because otherwise the sinner will never part with his sin or prize Christ and his grace, *cf.* Rev. 3:17.

Second, an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, Joel 2:12, 13; Jer. 3:22. The eye of faith is opened to see and believe that there is forgiveness and mercy to a poor sinner, that though the sinner be destroyed in himself, Hos. 13:9; yet in God is his help, Deut. 33:27. Without this apprehension of the mercy of God, one will either: 1.) Go on in secret despair, casting off thoughts of his case, making the best of it he can, Jer. 2:25. 2.) Lie down in tormenting despair, like Judas, Matt. 27:3-5. Both of which will fix sin in the heart, and bar out repentance, John 8:24.

Question 5—*What are the parts of this repentance unto life?*

Answer—*First*, there is humiliation, wherein a sinner, who has gone from God by the highway of pride and self-conceit, comes back by the low way of humiliation, Jer. 31:18, 19. Grace pulls him down from the seat of the scorner, and lays him at the Lord's feet, Hos. 2:6,

7. It convinces him of his danger before God, and the need of making a supplicating return, Ezek. 18:28, 30, 32. In it there is: 1.) Sorrow for sin, a kindly sorrow for the offense and dishonor done to a holy and gracious God, *cf.* Gen. 39:9. 2.) Shame, even a holy shame for sin, Rom. 6:21. By repentance unto life, the sinner is made to apprehend the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, Isa. 30:22; whereby he is made to hate all sin as sin, 2 Cor. 7:11. 3.) Self-loathing, when the sinner remembers his own evil ways and comes to despise himself for them in his own sight, Ezek. 36:31. They see the fullness of sin in them, and the complicated aggravation of their sins, which make them to smite on their breast, as the publican did, Luke 18:13. 4.) Penitent confession, accusing and condemning themselves, Jer. 3:13.

Second, there is a conversion, or returning, which consists in two parts: 1.) Turning from sin, 2 Tim. 2:19. Which turning is both in heart, by a hearty and sincere hatred of it, Ps. 119:104; as well as in their life and conversation, turning from gross pollutions of the outward man and the habitual practice of them, Ps. 24:3, 4. A profane life is the mark of an impenitent state, Gal. 5:21. Such a turning makes one tender with respect to sins of common infirmity, making conscience of words and actions, even as Paul, Acts 24:16. What others count light, they count great, even as burdens from which to be relived, Rom. 7:24. 2.) There is a turning to God himself, Acts 26:18. Sinners departing from God, dislike not only their service, but their Master, Luke 19:14. But returning, they reject their old masters, Ezek. 14:6; and, they are disposed to love him and like him as Master, 1 Kings 8:47, 48. As such, they seek to practice every known duty, and spirituality in that duty, Acts 9:6; 2 Kings 23:25. This is a new obedience which the penitent turns to in full purpose, Ps. 119:106; without any sense of shame, hesitance or confusion as to what is right, Ps. 119:6, 59, 128. Rather there is an endeavoring to a constancy in this walk, Luke 1:6; wherein the penitent studies that which is acceptable to God, Isa. 1:16, 17.