

## LESSON 3:

# How Serious is Sin?

---

## Summary

The good news of the Gospel cannot be adequately appreciated without understanding the seriousness of Adam's sin and our sins as a direct affront to our Most Holy God.

### REQUIRED READINGS:

WCF ch. 6, "Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof," WLC 21-30, WSC 13-20

## What Happened in the Fall of Man? (WCF 6, WLC 21-30, WSC 13-20)

### Westminster Confession of Faith

#### CHAPTER VI—*Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof*

1. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. <sup>(a)</sup> This their sin, God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory. <sup>(b)</sup>
2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, <sup>(c)</sup> and so became dead in sin, <sup>(d)</sup> and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. <sup>(e)</sup>
3. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; <sup>(f)</sup> and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. <sup>(g)</sup>
4. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, <sup>(h)</sup> and wholly inclined to all evil, <sup>(i)</sup> do proceed all actual transgressions. <sup>(j)</sup>
5. This corruption of nature, during this life, does remain in those that are regenerated; <sup>(k)</sup> and although it be through Christ pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin. <sup>(l)</sup>
6. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, <sup>(m)</sup> does in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, <sup>(n)</sup> whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, <sup>(o)</sup> and curse of the law, <sup>(p)</sup> and so made subject to death, <sup>(q)</sup> with all miseries spiritual, <sup>(r)</sup> temporal, <sup>(s)</sup> and eternal. <sup>(t)</sup>

(a) Gen. 3:13, 2 Cor. 11:3

(b) Rom. 11:32

(c) Gen. 3:6-8, Eccl. 7:29, Rom. 3:23

(d) Gen. 2:17, Eph. 2:1

(e) Tit. 1:15, Jer. 17:9, Rom. 3:10-18

(f) Gen. 1:27-28, Gen. 2:16-17, Acts 17:26,  
Rom. 5:12, 15-19, 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45, 49

(g) Ps. 51:5, Gen. 5:3, Job 14:4, Job 15:14

(h) Rom. 5:6, Rom. 8:7, Rom. 7:18, Col. 1:21

(i) Gen. 6:5, Gen. 8:21, Rom. 3:10-12

(j) James 1:14-15, Eph. 2:2-3, Matt. 15:19

(k) 1 John 1:8, 10, Rom. 7:14, 17-18, 23,  
James 3:2, Prov. 20:9, Eccl. 7:20

(l) Rom. 7:5-8, 25, Gal. 5:17

(m) 1 John 3:4

(n) Rom. 2:15, Rom. 3:9, 19

(o) Eph. 2:3

(p) Gal. 3:10

(q) Rom. 6:23

(r) Eph. 4:18

(s) Rom. 8:20, Lam. 3:39

(t) Matt. 25:41, 2 Thess. 1:9

Westminster Larger Catechism	Westminster Shorter Catechism
<p><b>Question 21</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Did man continue in that estate wherein God at first created him?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God in eating the forbidden fruit; and thereby fell from the estate of innocency wherein they were created. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> Gen. 3:6-8,13, Eccl. 7:29, 2 Cor. 11:3</p>	<p><b>Question 13</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p><b>Question 15</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit. <sup>(b)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> Gen. 3:6-8,13, Eccl. 7:29 <sup>(b)</sup> Gen. 3:6</p>
<p><b>Question 22</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, <sup>(a)</sup> sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression. <sup>(b)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> Acts 17:26 <sup>(b)</sup> Gen. 2:16-17, Rom. 5:12-20, 1 Cor. 15:21-22</p>	<p><b>Question 16</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> Gen. 2:16-17, Rom. 5:12, 1 Cor. 15:21-22</p>
<p><b>Question 23</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> Rom. 5:12, Rom. 3:23</p>	<p><b>Question 17</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> Rom. 5:12</p>
<p><b>Question 24</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>What is sin?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> 1 John 3:4, Gal. 3:10, 12</p>	<p><b>Question 14</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>What is sin?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p><sup>(a)</sup> 1 John 3:4</p>

Westminster Larger Catechism	Westminster Shorter Catechism
<p><b>Question 25</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, <sup>(a)</sup> the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; <sup>(b)</sup> which is commonly called Original Sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions. <sup>(c)</sup></p> <p>(a) Rom. 5:12, 19  (b) Rom. 3:10-19, Eph. 2:1-3, Rom. 5:6, Rom. 8:7-8, Gen. 6:5  (c) James 1:14-15, Matt. 15:19</p>	<p><b>Question 18</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p>(a) Rom. 5:12, 19, Rom. 5:10-20, Eph. 2:1-3, James 1:14-15, Matt. 15:19</p>
<p><b>Question 26</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p>(a) Ps. 51:5, Job 14:4, Job 15:14, John 3:6</p>	
<p><b>Question 27</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>What misery did the fall bring upon mankind?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> The fall brought upon mankind the loss of communion with God, <sup>(a)</sup> his displeasure and curse; so as we are by nature children of wrath, <sup>(b)</sup> bond slaves to Satan, <sup>(c)</sup> and justly liable to all punishments in this world, and that which is to come. <sup>(d)</sup></p> <p>(a) Gen. 3:8,10, 24  (b) Eph. 2:2-3  (c) 2 Tim. 2:26  (d) Gen. 2:17, Lam. 3:39, Rom. 6:23, Matt. 25:41, 46, Jude 7</p>	<p><b>Question 19</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, <sup>(a)</sup> are under his wrath and curse, <sup>(b)</sup> and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever. <sup>(c)</sup></p> <p>(a) Gen. 3:8,10,24  (b) Eph. 2:2-3, Gal. 3:10  (c) Lam. 3:39, Rom. 6:23, Matt. 25:41, 46</p>

Westminster Larger Catechism

**Question 28**

**Q.** *What are the punishments of sin in this world?*

**A.** The punishments of sin in this world are either inward, as blindness of mind, <sup>(a)</sup> a reprobate sense, <sup>(b)</sup> strong delusions, <sup>(c)</sup> hardness of heart, <sup>(d)</sup> horror of conscience, <sup>(e)</sup> and vile affections; <sup>(f)</sup> or outward, as the curse of God upon the creatures of our sakes, <sup>(g)</sup> and all other evils that befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations, and employments; <sup>(h)</sup> together with death itself. <sup>(i)</sup>

(a) Eph. 4:18

(b) Rom. 1:28

(c) 2 Thess. 2:11

(d) Rom. 2:5

(e) Isa. 33:14, Gen. 4:13, Matt. 27:4

(f) Rom. 1:26

(g) Gen. 3:17

(h) Deut. 28:15-18

(i) Rom. 6:21, 23

**Question 29**

**Q.** *What are the punishments of sin in the world to come?*

**A.** The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hellfire forever. <sup>(a)</sup>

(a) 2 Thess. 1:9, Mark 9:43-44,46,48, Luke 16:24

Westminster Larger Catechism

**Question 30**

**Q.** *Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

**A.** God did not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery, <sup>(a)</sup> into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Works; <sup>(b)</sup> but of his mere love and mercy delivers his elect out of it, and bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Grace. <sup>(c)</sup>

(a) 1 Thess. 5:9

(b) Gal. 3:10, 12

(c) Tit. 3:4-7, Gal. 3:21, Rom. 3:20, 8-9

Westminster Shorter Catechism

**Question 20**

**Q.** *Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

**A.** God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, <sup>(a)</sup> did enter into a Covenant of Grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer. <sup>(b)</sup>

(a) Eph. 1:4

(b) Rom. 3:20-22, Gal. 3:21-22

Westminster Larger Catechism	Westminster Shorter Catechism
<p><b>Question 149</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> No man is able, either of himself, <sup>(a)</sup> or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; <sup>(b)</sup> but does daily break them in thought, <sup>(c)</sup> word, and deed. <sup>(d)</sup></p> <p>(a) James 3:2, John 15:5, Rom. 8:3  (b) Eccl. 7:20, 1 John 1:8,10, Gal. 5:17, Rom. 7:18-19  (c) Gen. 6:5, Gen. 8:21  (d) Rom. 3:9-19, James 3:2-13</p>	<p><b>Question 82</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God; <sup>(a)</sup> but does daily break them in thought, word, and deed. <sup>(b)</sup></p> <p>(a) Eccl. 7:20, 1 John 1:8, 10, Gal. 5:17  (b) Gen. 6:5, Gen. 8:21, Rom. 3:9-19, James 3:2-13</p>
<p><b>Question 150</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves, and in the sight of God?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> All transgressions of the law of God are not equally heinous; but some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p>(a) John 19:11, Ezek. 8:6,13,15, 1 John 5:16, Ps. 78:17, 32, 56</p>	<p><b>Question 83</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p>(a) Ezek. 8:6,13,15, 1 John 5:16, Ps. 78:17, 32, 56</p>
Westminster Larger Catechism	
<p><b>Question 151</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> <i>What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?</i></p> <p><b>A.</b> Sins receive their aggravations,</p> <p>1. <u>From the persons offending:</u> <sup>(a)</sup> they be of riper age, <sup>(b)</sup> greater experience of grace, <sup>(c)</sup> eminent for profession, <sup>(d)</sup> gifts, <sup>(e)</sup> place, <sup>(f)</sup> office, <sup>(g)</sup> guide to others, <sup>(h)</sup> and whose example is likely to be followed by others. <sup>(i)</sup></p> <p>(a) Jer. 2:8  (b) Job 32:7, 9, Eccl. 4:13  (c) 1 Kings 11:4,9  (d) 2 Sam. 12:14, 1 Cor. 5:1  (e) James 4:17, Luke 12:47-48  (f) Jer. 5:4-5  (g) 2 Sam. 12:7-9, Ezek. 8:11-12  (h) Rom. 2:17-24  (i) Gal. 2:11-14</p> <p>2. <u>From the parties offended:</u> <sup>(a)</sup> if immediately against God, <sup>(b)</sup> his attributes, <sup>(c)</sup> and worship; <sup>(d)</sup> against Christ, and his grace; <sup>(e)</sup> the Holy Spirit, <sup>(f)</sup> his witness, <sup>(g)</sup> and workings <sup>(h)</sup> against superiors, men of eminency, <sup>(i)</sup> and such as we stand especially related and engaged</p>	

unto; <sup>(i)</sup> against any of the saints, <sup>(k)</sup> particularly weak brethren, <sup>(l)</sup> the souls of them, or any other, <sup>(m)</sup> and the common good of all or many. <sup>(n)</sup>

(a) Matt. 21:38-39

(h) Heb. 6:4-6

(b) 1 Sam. 2:25, Acts 5:4, Ps. 51:4

(i) Jude 8, Numb. 12:8,9, Isa. 3:5

(c) Rom. 2:4

(j) Prov. 30:17, 2 Cor. 12:15, Ps. 55:12-15

(d) Mal. 1:8,14

(k) Zeph. 2:8,10-11, Matt. 18:6, 1 Cor. 6:8, Rev. 17:6

(e) Heb. 2:2-3, Heb. 12:25

(l) 1 Cor. 8:11-12, Rom. 14:13, 15, 21

(f) Heb. 10:29, Matt. 12:31-32

(m) Ezek. 13:19, 1 Cor. 8:12, Rev. 18:12-13, Matt. 23:15

(g) Eph. 4:30

(n) 1 Thess. 2:15-16, Josh. 22:20

3. From the nature and quality of the offense: <sup>(a)</sup> if it be against the express letter of the law, <sup>(b)</sup> break many commandments, contain in it many sins; <sup>(c)</sup> if not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, <sup>(d)</sup> scandalize others, <sup>(e)</sup> and admit of no reparation: <sup>(f)</sup> if against means, <sup>(g)</sup> mercies, <sup>(h)</sup> judgments, <sup>(i)</sup> light of nature, <sup>(j)</sup> conviction of conscience, <sup>(k)</sup> public or private admonition, <sup>(l)</sup> censures of the church, <sup>(m)</sup> civil punishments; <sup>(n)</sup> and our prayers, purposes, promises, <sup>(o)</sup> vows, <sup>(p)</sup> covenants, <sup>(q)</sup> and engagements to God of men: <sup>(r)</sup> if done deliberately, <sup>(s)</sup> willfully, <sup>(t)</sup> presumptuously, <sup>(u)</sup> impudently, <sup>(v)</sup> boastingly, <sup>(w)</sup> maliciously, <sup>(x)</sup> frequently, <sup>(y)</sup> obstinately, <sup>(z)</sup> with delight, <sup>(a')</sup> continuance, <sup>(b')</sup> or relapsing after repentance. <sup>(c')</sup>

(a) Prov. 6:30-33

(o) Ps. 78:34-37, Jer. 2:20, Jer. 42:5-6,20-21

(b) Ezra 9:10-12, 1 Kings 11:9-10

(p) Eccl. 5:4-6, Prov. 20:25

(c) Col. 3:5, 1 Tim. 6:10, Prov. 5:8-12, Prov. 6:32-33, Josh. 7:21

(q) Lev. 26:25

(d) James 1:14-15, Matt. 5:22, Micah 2:1

(r) Prov. 2:17, Ezek. 17:18-19

(e) Matt. 18:7, Rom. 2:23-24

(s) Ps. 36:4

(f) Deut. 22:22,28-29, Prov. 6:32-35

(t) Jer. 6:16

(g) Matt. 11:21-24, John 15:22

(u) Numb. 15:30, Exod. 21:14

(h) Isa. 1:3, Deut. 32:6

(v) Jer. 3:3, Prov. 7:13

(i) Amos 4:8-11, Jer. 5:3

(w) Ps. 52:1

(j) Rom. 1:26-27

(x) 3 John 10

(k) Rom. 1:32, Dan. 5:22, Tit. 3:10-11

(y) Numb. 14:22

(l) Prov. 29:1

(z) Zech. 7:11-12

(m) Tit. 3:10, Matt. 18:17

(a') Prov. 2:14

(n) Prov. 27:22, Prov. 23:35

(b') Isa. 57:17

(c') Jer. 34:8-11, 2 Pet. 2:20-22

4. From circumstances of time <sup>(a)</sup> and place: <sup>(b)</sup> if on the Lord' s day, <sup>(c)</sup> or other times of divine worship; <sup>(d)</sup> or immediately before <sup>(e)</sup> or after these, <sup>(f)</sup> or other helps to prevent or remedy such miscarriages; <sup>(g)</sup> if in public, or in the presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled. <sup>(h)</sup>

(a) 2 Kings 5:26

(e) 1 Cor. 11:20-21)

(b) Jer. 7:10, Isa. 26:10

(f) Jer. 7:8-10, Prov. 7:14-15, John 13:27, 30

(c) Ezek. 23:37-39

(g) Ezra 9:13-14

(d) Isa. 58:3-5, Numb. 25:6-7

(h) 2 Sam. 16:22, 1 Sam. 2:22-24

Westminster Larger Catechism	Westminster Shorter Catechism
<p><b>Question 152</b></p> <p><b>Q. What does every sin deserve at the hands of God?</b></p> <p><b>A.</b> Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, <sup>(a)</sup> goodness, <sup>(b)</sup> and holiness of God, <sup>(c)</sup> and against his righteous law, <sup>(d)</sup> deserved his wrath and curse, <sup>(e)</sup> both in this life, <sup>(f)</sup> and that which is to come; <sup>(g)</sup> and cannot be expiated but by the blood of Christ. <sup>(h)</sup></p> <p>(a) James 2:10-11                      (b) Exod. 20:1-2  (c) Hab. 1:13, Lev. 10:3, Lev. 11:44-45  (d) 1 John 3:4, Rom. 7:12      (e) Eph. 5:6, Gal. 3:10  (f) Lam. 3:39, Deut. 28:15-20  (g) Matt. 25:41                      (h) Heb. 9:22, 1 Pet. 1:18-19</p>	<p><b>Question 84</b></p> <p><b>Q. What does every sin deserve?</b></p> <p><b>A.</b> Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come. <sup>(a)</sup></p> <p>(a) Eph. 5:6, Gal. 3:10, Lam. 3:39, Matt. 25:41</p>
<p><b>Question 153</b></p> <p><b>Q. What does God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us by reason of the transgression of the law?</b></p> <p><b>A.</b> That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he requires of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>(a)</sup> and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation. <sup>(b)</sup></p> <p>(a) Acts 20:21, Matt. 3:7-8, Luke 13:3,5, Acts 16:30-31, John 3:16, 18  (b) Prov. 2:1-5, Prov. 8:33-36</p>	<p><b>Question 85</b></p> <p><b>Q. What does God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?</b></p> <p><b>A.</b> To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, <sup>(a)</sup> with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption. <sup>(b)</sup></p> <p>(a) Acts 20:21  (b) Prov. 2:1-5, Prov. 8:33-36, Isa. 55:3</p>

# Study Questions

## Preparation

1. How do people understand the concept of sin in our culture today?

## Observation

2. Look at WCF 6, WLC 21-30, WSC 13-20 and Rom. 3:10-18. What are the results of sin? What is at the root of sin?
3. According to WCF 6.3, what three things are conveyed to all people because of Adam's sin?
4. What is "Original Sin" according to WLC 25, 16, and WSC 18? How does that differ from our sins?
5. Are all sins equal? Compare WLC 150, 151, and 152.

## Reflection

6. What are some reasons people give for rejecting the notion of God as a righteous judge? How would you counter those claims?