

# WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

## SHORTER CATECHISM

### LESSON # 40 (Q4LES1) - KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: 1 John 1: 1 - 10**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we discussed the tenth, and final, commandment, which deals with coveting. We learned that if we covet anything that belongs to another, we are display discontentment with our conditions, and therefore God's will, and that the Word requires that we be content with our own condition. This contentment includes no envying or grieving at anything that our neighbor has, wealth, health, fame, etc. This completes our discussion of the ten commandments. The ten commandments are God's will, and contain the duty that God requires of man. Remembering that in Christ's own words, the sum of the ten commandments is love.
3. **Introduction:** This week we begin the final section of the Shorter Catechism. First, we will look at what this section contain, it's continuity, and where we are going. Then we will discuss the SC question 82, which begins this final section.
4. **Questions & Answers:**

**Question 82: Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?**

**Answer: No mere man, since the fall, is able perfectly, in this life, to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed.**

5. **The SC, questions 82 through 107**
  - a. First, let's look at where we have come. The first six SC questions introduced us to God. As we remember from SC question 3, (What do the Scriptures principally teach) the Scriptures principally teach two things, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. SC questions 7 through 38 covered what man is to believe concerning God. Questions 39 through 81 covered the duty God requires of man.
  - b. Questions 82 through 107 cover the application of what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. Where does it go, and what does it cover? We need to take an overview of this final section because it

needs to be understood as a whole. Each point is interwoven, working toward the end.

- It starts with a reminder, in the question we will discuss today, that we are sinners, and there is no way, because of Adam's sin, that we can, while on earth, lead a life acceptable to God. Remember the "T" in the TULIP doctrine.
- Sin is then discussed, followed by what God requires of us, that we may escape the justice due us for that sin. Remember, what man is to believe concerning sin is covered way back in SC q's 13 through 19. Now we will cover what we are to do about it. This section notes three things that God requires of us, that we may escape His wrath. These are:
  1. Faith in Jesus Christ
  2. Repentance unto life
  3. The diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

Each of these will be discussed in detail.

- The third item, the "*outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption*" introduces the remainder of the SC (and LC) questions. These outward means are his ordinances. God's ordinances are identified as:
    1. The Word (God's Word) Remember SC q2 (What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?)
    2. Sacraments (not previously covered)
    3. Prayer
  - Each of these three sacraments is then discussed in detail, ending with an extensive discussion of the Lords prayer.
- c. This is what we will discuss in the next 13 lessons.

## **6. Obeying the commandments of God.**

- a. SC question 82 and LC question 149 ask the identical question: "Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God? The answers are almost identical. The LC answer to q149 says, "*No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace*

*received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.”*

The WCF addresses this point in a couple of places, which we'll look at shortly.

b. What is required to “perfectly keep the commandments of God?”

TV says: *“To keep perfectly the commandments of God, is to keep all the commandments of God, and at all times, without the least breach of them, in regard of disposition, inclination, thought, affection, word, or conversation.”*

c. Can any man perfectly keep the commandments of God?

- Does anyone remember SC q16? (Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression? Ans: 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.)
- The WCF, Chapter 6, para's 3 & 4 says, speaking of Adam and Eve, and their first sin: (p3) *“They [A&E] being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.”* (p4) *“From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”* (Rom 5:12 ***“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”***)

Because of Adam & Eve's original sin, man has inherited a sinful nature, and is incapable of perfect obedience to God's law.

- The WCF, Chapter 9, para 3 amplifies: *“Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether adverse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”* John 6:44 ***“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”***

There is nothing man can do to convert himself to do good for his salvation.

d. Was any man ever able to perfectly keep God's commandments? This is a very interesting and difficult question. We can have some fun here.

- TV says (SCq82q2): *“Before the fall, ... Adam was able to able perfectly to keep God's commandments, he having power given unto him in the first*

*creation, to fulfil the condition of the first covenant of works, which required perfect obedience; but since the fall no mere man is able to do this.”*

TV gives no scripture passage to back up this statement.

Can anyone think of a scripture passage that would back up that Adam & Eve could perfectly keep the commandments of God? **(Gen 1:26 “<sup>(26)</sup>And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. <sup>(27)</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”)**

If they were created in God’s image (SCq10, How did God create man? Ans: God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.), then they were not capable of sin.

And he ends this particular passage, **(Gen 1:31 “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”)**

If Adam was created in God’s image, and able to perfectly keep God’s commandments, why did he not resist the serpent? How is it that he gave in to temptation?

- TV says: *“The Lord Jesus Christ was both able and also did perfectly keep the commandments of God; but he was not a mere man, being both God and man in one person.”* **(Heb 4:15 “For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”)**

Christ fulfilled the covenant of works perfectly, but he was both man and God.

- e. Will mere man ever be able to perfectly keep God’s commandments?

The SC & LC both state in both question and answer, “, in this life”. **(Heb 12: 22 – 23 “<sup>(22)</sup>But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. <sup>(23)</sup>To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in the heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”**

Only in heaven will the saints be capable of perfect obedience.

f. **(1 John 3:9)** says: ***“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*** If the saved cannot sin, are they not perfect in obedience to God?

- Each passage must be taken in context, and in relation to the rest of the Word. The Scriptures record many instances of the saved sinning, therefore, that the saved cannot sin, cannot be the meaning of this passage.
- Those that are saved, in relation to sin (TV):
  1. Do not commit sin with the full consent of their will, which is in part renewed, and which, so far as it is renewed, doth oppose sin, though, sometimes it may be overpowered by .....temptation.
  2. Do not live in the course of sin as the unregenerate do.
  3. Do not commit sin unto death
- Is it possible that, because the saved are washed of their sin, that, even though we sin, we are sinless and righteous in God’s sight?

g. Are thought of sin breaches of God’s commandments, when they are without evil words or actions? **(Matt 5:28 *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*)**

Yes.

## 7. SUMMARY:

a. Because of Adam’s fall, mankind has inherited a sin debt to God, and continues down a sinful path. Only three humans have been able to perfectly keep the commandments of God: Adam and Eve, who were created in God’s image before the fall, and Christ, who was both man and God and perfectly completed God’s requirements of perfect sinlessness required by the first covenant. Only after death, when the saints are with God, will they be perfectly able of keeping all the commandments of God.