

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 41 (Q4LES2) - OF SIN

1. **Prayer**

2. **Bible reading: 2 Samuel 12: 1 - 14**

3. **Review:** In our last lesson we began our study of the application of what man is to believe concerning God, and the duty that God requires of man. We started with SC question 82, which asks if any man can perfectly keep the commandments of God. We learned that no mere man can, in this life, perfectly keep the commandments of God, but does daily break them in thought, word and deed. Only three people were capable of keeping God's commandments perfectly, Adam and Eve, up to the fall, and Jesus Christ, being both God and man.

3. **Introduction:** This week we are going to talk about sin. Remember back in some early lessons, we learned about sin, what it is, and where the fall brought mankind. Today we will discuss SC questions 83 and 84.

4. **Questions & Answers:**

Question 83: Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

Answer: Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Question 84: What doth every sin deserve?

Answer: Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.

5. **The SC, LC, and WCF**

a. SC question 83's counter parts in the LC, are questions 150 and 151. SC question 83 and LC question 150 are essentially the same. While the SC and LC both note that some sins are worse than others, The LC, in question 151 defines exactly what makes some sins worse than others. SC question 84 and LC question 152 ask essentially the same question, although the LC expands upon the answer. The WCF, chapter 6 (Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof), para 6, is directly applicable to these questions.

6. Sin, a review

- a. What is sin? (SC q14) Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.
- b. Question 16 teaches us that God's covenant with Adam was made for his posterity, and that all mankind, by the fall, fell with him.
- c. In questions 17, 18 & 19, we learned that the fall brought us into an estate of sin and misery. The estates of sin and misery were then defined, including original sin, which is the sin debt that every man inherits at birth.
- d. Question 20 gives us the good news. God did not leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery, but provided us with a redeemer.
- e. The WCF, chapter 6, para 6 says of sin: ***“Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner; whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.”***

7. Are all sins equally heinous in God's sight?

- a. What makes some sins more heinous than others?
 - The sin itself
 - Several aggravations
- b. It must be noted that the circumstances of sin outlined below are all taken from God's Word.
- c. The sin itself – how do we know that some sins are worse than others?
 - God, in his word, (the book of the law, Leviticus) God prescribes different penalties for different offences. This tells us that some sins are considered more serious by God than others.
 - The moral law, the ten commandments, has two sections, those sins against God, and those sins against man. The seriousness of the sins against the moral law are to be taken in order, with the sins against God being the most serious, and the breaking of the first commandment, (thou shalt have no other god's before me) the most serious. Then the sins against man, with honoring your father and mother being the most serious, and coveting the least. **(1 Sam 2:25 *“But if one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.”***

- Sins against the Gospel. Means sins against Jesus. TV says: “The punishment of gospel-sinners will be greater than the punishment of the most notoriously wicked heathens.” (Matt 11: 21 – 24 “⁽²⁰⁾Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: ⁽²¹⁾Woe unto thee Chorazin! Woe unto thee Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ⁽²²⁾But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgement, than for you. ⁽²³⁾An thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been don in Sodem, it would have remained until this day. ⁽²⁴⁾But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement, than for thee.”)

d. Several aggravations – What do you think they mean by “aggravations”, as applied here? TV defines these as: *The aggravations which render some sins more heinous than others, are the circumstances which do attend them.*”

e. What circumstances, what “aggravations”, can make a sin worse in God’s eyes? LC q 151 goes into this in detail. To the question “What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?” it answers, “Sins receive their aggravations, 1. From the persons offending; if they be of riper age, greater experience or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others. 2. From the parties offended: if immediately against God, his attributes, and worship; against Christ, and his grace; the Holy Spirit, his witness, and workings; against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them, or any other, and the common good of all or many. 3. From the nature and quality of the offence: if it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments contain in it many sins: if not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation: if against means, mercies, judgements, light of nature, conviction of conscience, public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments; and our prayers, purposed, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men: if done deliberately, willfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance. 4. From circumstances, presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled.”)

- The person offending. LC Q151 lists the following, with scripture proofs:
 1. If they be of riper age. (Job 32:7, 9 “⁽⁷⁾I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. ⁽⁹⁾Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgement.”)

2. Greater experience or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place office, guides to others. (1 Kings 11:4, 9 ***“(4)For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. (9)And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,”***)
 3. Whose example is likely to be followed by others. (Gal 2:11 – 14 ***(11)But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. (12)For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. (13)And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (14)But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”***)
 4. TV adds: *“Thus the sins also of professors and God’s people are more heinous than the sins of the wicked and ungodly in the same kind, because the name of God is hereby more blasphemed, and the wicked are hereby more hardened in their sins.”* (Rom 2: 23 – 24 ***“(23)Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? (24)For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.”***)
- The parties offended.
 1. If immediately against God, his attributes, and worship:
 2. Against Christ, and his grace
 3. The Holy Spirit, his witness, and workings
 4. Against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto
 5. Against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them, or any other, and the common good of all or many. (Mal 1:8, 14 ***“(8)And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? Saith the Lord of hosts. (14)But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.”***)
 - From the nature and quality of the offence.
 1. If it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many it many sins
 2. If not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation

3. If against means, mercies, judgements, light of nature, conviction of conscience, public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments.
 4. If against our prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men.
 5. If done deliberately, willfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance.
- From the circumstances of time and place
 1. If on the Lord's day, or other times of divine worship.
 2. Or Immediately before or after these, or other helps to prevent or remedy such miscarriages.
 3. In a house of worship
 4. If in public, or in the presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled.
 5. **(Ezek 23: 37 – 39 “³⁷That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them. ³⁸Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. ³⁹For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.”)**

8. What do we deserve for our sins?

- a. While the SC q84 simply says, *“Every sin deserveth God’s wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.”* The LC, q152 expands slightly, saying *“Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, deserveth his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come: and cannot be expiated but by the blood of Christ.”*

Are all sins heinous in God’s sight? Yes.

- b. What do all sins deserve? God’s wrath and curse. **(Eph 5:6 “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Gal 3:10 “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”)**
- c. What do we mean by “God’s wrath and curse”? The punishments which God has threatened to impose on sinners for their sins.

- d. God's punishment will be delivered in this life, and that which is to come.
- In this life. Deuteronomy, chapter 28 makes this very clear. (**Deut 28: 15 – 68** *"¹⁵But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: ¹⁶Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. ¹⁷Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. ¹⁸Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kind, and the flocks of thy sheep.and onward to verse 68.)* There can be no question God will punish us in this life.
 - The life to come. (**Matt 25:41** *"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"*)
- e. LC question 151 adds to the answer, this phrase, which is not contained in it's SC equivalent: *"and cannot be expiated but by the blood of Christ."*
- f. Remember SC q 19. (what is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?) The answer to the question is, *"All mankind by there fall lost communion with God, are under his **wrath and curse**, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever."*

Wrath and curse, life and death. Sounds like the answer to this question.

9. Summary

- a. No mere man can perfectly keep God's law, no more that Adam perfectly completed the first covenant. All transactions of God's law are heinous in His sight, but some sins, both of their own nature, and because of circumstances accompanying them, are more heinous than others. Every sin, no matter how small, deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and the life to come. There is a way out, and we will begin our coverage of this in our next lesson.