

—A Study of the Westminster Confession of Faith—
*The Fall of Man, Sin, and the Punishment Thereof and
God's Covenant With Man, WCF 6 & 7*

The Fall of Man, Sin, and Its Punishment

I. The nature of the first sin §1

- A. The entrance of sin into the world is to be traced to the seduction and disobedience of our first parents. They “sinned in eating the forbidden fruit” (Gen 3.13; 2Cor 11.3).
1. The moral law was impressed upon the heart of man by nature and conformity to it was his indispensable duty. However, besides this *natural* law, God was pleased to give man a *positive* law, restricting him from eating of a particular tree in the garden. God summed up the whole duty of man in this single positive injunction, and constituted his abstaining from a certain tree the test of his obedience.
 2. This does not imply any imperfection in the work of God. Immutability is an infinite and incommunicable attribute and cannot be communicated to finite creature (WSC 4).
 3. God could have provided man with such assistance by the influence of His Spirit that no temptation would overcome him and he would enjoy perpetual stability in his habits of holiness. But it would still be true, that in himself, he was subject to change. Mutability is inseparable from the idea of a created free agent.
 4. The tree of life was so named because it was the symbol and seal of eternal life. If Adam had obeyed God, he would have been allowed to eat of it as a pledge or earnest of the life to which he had obtained a right.
 5. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was so named because man would come to know good and evil by it—good by the loss of it and evil by painful experience; or because if he abstained from eating it, he would know or continue to enjoy good; but otherwise, he would know the evil of the threatening.
- B. The fruit of the tree of knowledge was as good for food as that of any other tree, and as pleasant to the eye. It was therefore the most proper method of trying man's obedience.
1. God's prohibition was not a tyrannical exercise of authority and was perfectly fitted to see whether His simple command would be enough to govern man's obedience.
 2. **Dick**, “It is not a proper trial of reverence for a superior, when the action which he prescribes is recommended by other considerations. It is when it stands upon the sole foundation of His authority; when, having no intrinsic goodness, it becomes good only by its positive injunction; when the sole inducement to perform it is His command; it is in *these* circumstances that it is known whether we duly feel and recognize our moral dependence upon Him.... The injunction, therefore, to abstain from the tree of knowledge, was a proper trial of the obedience of our first parent; and the violation of it deserved the dreadful punishment which was denounced and executed. He was put to the test, whether the will of God was sacred in his eyes; and he was punished because he gave preference to his own.”
 3. **Shaw**, “The thing forbidden was in its own nature quite indifferent, neither good nor evil; the prohibition was founded solely on the sovereign will of God; it was, therefore, a most proper trial of man's obedience to the divine authority.”
 4. **Peck**, “The tree of knowledge of good and evil” was so called because it was the symbol of God's supreme authority, which makes good and evil to man. Whatever God commands is good because he commands it, and whatever he forbids is evil because he forbids it. Man, in eating the forbidden fruit, emphatically denies this great principle, and claims by his own will to know (or make) good an evil for himself, becomes “as one of us,” or makes himself a god. The “tree of life” was so called because it was the sacramental sign and seal of the promise of life, which belonged to the covenant of works, and which would have been fulfilled to man if he had

performed the condition of the covenant. If he had acknowledged God to be the all-disposing Lord, he should have had God for his all-comprehending Good. But man failed. He made his own will his law, and yet he attempted to seize [Gen 3.22] upon the promise of life by stretching out his hand to its sacramental sign, as if the promise of life were so bound up with, or so inherent in, its visible sign and seal that the possession of the last necessarily implied the possession of the first. In short, the delusion under which he labored, and which God mercifully rebuked and defeated by putting the tree beyond his reach, was the delusion of an efficacy in the sacraments *ex opere operato*.”

- C. The occasion of man’s violating this positive law was the temptation of Satan.
1. Scripture clearly affirms that Satan was our parents’ tempter, Jn 8.44; Rev 12.9; 20.2. He made use of a serpent as his instrument, causing its own organs and mouth to make sounds which the woman heard as words. Being an irrational creature, the serpent of course had no knowledge of the words it was speaking.
 2. Although cast out of heaven and reserved in chains until the day of judgement (2Pet 2.4; Jude 6), the fallen angels are permitted to visit and roam the earth (Job 1.7). Satan used this liberty to carry on his hostile designs against God, upon whom he wished vengeance. This motive caused him to envy man, who enjoyed the favor of God and whose happiness in paradise was an image of the heavenly bliss from which he had himself been excluded.
 3. Satan’s subtlety is seen in addressing himself to our parents’ noble desire for knowledge rather than trying to appeal to any sensual desires—which were not yet tainted and so easy to tempt as they are now.
- D. By what process did sin find access into a holy soul?
1. Man was endowed with the knowledge of his duty and a fixed inclination towards it. But, being created in the image of God, he was also endowed with various appetites, affections, and desires. These were innocent in themselves and would have been innocently gratified as long as they remained subject to his superior principles of a conscionable obedience to God’s law. In other words, he was to find joy and satisfaction and maintain a clean conscience in obedience to God’s law.
 2. However if conscience was hindered by any means from doing its duty, and if an appetite aroused by an “apparent good” were permitted for a moment to exist without the proper check, the harmony in the soul between the appetites and the conscience would be immediately disturbed, and the appetite would have acquired new strength, would press forward to its gratification without waiting for the approbation of conscience. This, then, is what happened with our first parents.
 3. In their innocence, our first parents naturally and innocently desired knowledge—for they were capable of the increase and delighted in that with which they were created. All that was necessary is that they gratify this desire in a way pleasing to God.
 - a) In this state of mind, the prospect of acquiring knowledge would naturally excite their desire. Virtue consisted in checking the means of acquiring it, whether it was an obedient means.
 4. When the serpent told them that the fruit would increase their knowledge, their desire was awakened.
 - a) They should have considered that the suggested means was in direct violation of God’s command; but the longer they reflected on the serpent’s words, the more their desire grew and became urgent, which caught their moral principle (conscience) so off guard, that their will lost all power of resistance and they yielded to the temptation. Their desire perverted their judgment, as it still does when we come to believe according to our wishes and call evil good and good evil.
 - b) **Hodge** says their sin originated “in the temporary ascendancy of the natural and innocent appetites of the body or constitutional tendencies of the soul over the higher powers of conscience.”

5. Thus our parents were guilty of sin in their hearts before they committed it with their hands. Their desire of knowledge by unlawful means disordered their whole moral constitution and this rebellion against God in their hearts led to the open violation of His law, Js 1.15
 - a) **Hodge**, “The external influences and the subjective motives which prompted our first parents to this dreadful sin did not in the first instance imply sin in them, but became the occasion of sin upon being allowed to occupy their minds and to sway their wills in despite of the divine prohibition.”
 6. God could have so strengthened him that he was invincible to the temptation, but as He had already imparted to him sufficient strength for it, He was not bound to give him any more.
 - a) In other words, had Adam merely exerted the power which he possessed as a holy creature, he would have stood. God had done all for him which either justice or goodness required Him to do; the failure was wholly on Adam’s part. His fall was therefore not the consequence of inability.
 - b) **Dwight**, “He did not withdraw from man that ability with which He had furnished Him for his duty, nor did He infuse any vicious inclinations into his heart—He only withheld that further grace that would have infallibly prevented his fall.”
- E. Adam’s sin was a subversion of the whole law because it was rebellion against the authority upon which it was founded, Js 2.10.
1. **Dick**, “It was the revolt of man from his Creator. It was an explicit declaration that he would no longer be subject to Him, that his own will was his law, and that, instead of submitting to divine guidance and control, he would walk according to the sight of his eyes and the desires of his heart.
 2. “It was an avowed insurrection against the supremacy of God and an attempt to establish a separate and independent dominion upon earth; to wrest the scepter from the hands of the Almighty, and commit it to the erring reason and wayward passions of His creatures.
 3. “Trifling, therefore, as the act may seem to the thoughtless and profane, it implied all the guilt of the most daring impiety, and merited the dreadful punishment which ensued.”
- F. God was pleased to permit this sin because He “purposed to order it to His own glory”
1. Notice, the purposing comes before the permitting; the decree necessarily precedes the providence.
 - a) **Ferguson**, “The divine purpose uses the things intending to destroy his glory to manifest his glory.”
 2. God was pleased to permit it. Not because He found any pleasure in the sin, but only because He had purposed to overrule it for the accomplishments of His glory and His people’s redemption. And this was according to His wise and holy counsel, beyond or above which we cannot and dare not attempt to go (Eph 1.11).
 3. **Dwight**, “If it be inquired, “Why did God permit the fall of man to take place?” Probably the best answer ever given to this question in this present world is that which was given by Christ concerning one branch of the divine dispensations to mankind: “Even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” The fall of man was a dispensation approved by infinite wisdom and seen by the Omniscient Eye to be necessary towards that good which God purposed in creating the universe.”

II. The immediate consequences of sin upon our first parents §2

A. They were cut off from communion with God

1. Man’s communion with God, which he benevolently enjoyed by his creation in covenant with God (cf. Chapter 7), depended upon man’s obedience and continuance in holiness.
2. When man sinned, he was instantly cut off from this happy and loving communion with God’s Spirit, Ecc 7.29 They forfeited His favor and incurred His righteous displeasure. This was their greatest loss of all—communion with God.

3. This separation was signified by their being expelled from the garden sanctuary of God and sent into the world, which had been itself cursed for his sake, Gen 3.22-24. God would neither allow him to abide in His holy sanctuary nor allow him to presumptuously put forth his hand and pluck the fruit of the tree of life, the symbol and seal of the eternal life which he forfeited by sin.
- B. They lost their original righteousness
1. They were no longer holy and no longer delighted in God’s holiness. Instead, they hid from God, afraid because they were naked—not naked in body, for they were naked in their innocence, but naked in soul. They were conscious of guilt and could not bear a meeting with their Judge, Gen 3.6-8
- C. They became dead in sin and wholly defiled
1. His apostasy from God was complete and total. He became a rebel in God’s world, Gen 2.17; Eph 2.1
 2. Death was now his due. He had forfeited life in all its fullness and was now subject to death in all its fullness: temporal death, spiritual death, and eternal death, Rom 6.23
 - a) Spiritual death took place immediately
 - b) Temporal death (or mortality) set in and was only delayed according to God’s good purpose to raise up a posterity through them still.
 - c) Eternal death was their immediate sentence and would only be arrested by the intervention of divine grace.
- D. This moral corruption extended to all the faculties and parts of the soul and body
1. The understanding, once a lamp of light, was now overwhelmed in darkness. The will, once faithful for God and regulated by His will, was now perverse and rebellious. The affections, once pure and regular, now became vitiated and disordered. The body was also corrupted, with its members becoming slaves of unrighteousness.
 2. Every part of him was fallen and corrupted by sin. He was totally/comprehensively depraved, Tit 1.15; Gen 6.5; Jer 17.9; Rom 3.10-18.
 3. The image of God was left, but only a vestige of it, as a reminder of the place from which he had fallen and as the seat of his conscience, God’s ineradicable deputy in his soul, left as a condemning voice of accusation for his rebellion—though even this can become so callous that it will call good evil and evil good.
 4. **Dick**, “His sin shed a baneful influence over his soul, and, in a moment, turned its beauty into deformity. The moment the principle of rebellion was admitted, the principle of obedience was expelled; as soon as he began to love earthly things, the love of God was extinguished. Nothing remained but his natural faculties, weakened and corrupted: a darkened understanding, a wayward will, sensual appetites, and irregular affections. The change was sudden, but it was complete. Human nature was essentially the same, but it was divested of its brightest ornaments. All its glory was gone, and it was now poor, miserable, and disgusting; an object from which He, who had lately pronounced it to be “very good,” turned away His eyes with abhorrence.”
- III. The just imputation and conveyance of this sin to all mankind §3
- A. The effects of the fall did not terminate upon our first parents. Adam was created as the *federal head* of the human race, a *public person*, and, as his obedience would have ensured the happiness of all his descendants, so his transgression involved them all in the guilt and perdition which he incurred (WSC 16; WLC 22)
1. **Hodge**, “Adam, by a divine constitution, so represented and acted for all his posterity that they are fairly responsible for his action, and are worthy of punishment on account of it.”
 2. **Shaw**, “Adam is not merely the corrupt parent of a corrupt offspring, who sin because of the depravity wherewith he has tainted all the families of the earth; but who have themselves sinned in him as their federal head.”

3. His being a *federal* head is very different from his being a *natural* head. He was the natural head of the human race, as the first man, from whom all other men were to proceed; but this relation is not the ground on which his actions were imputable to his posterity.
 - a) All men are not sinners because they are merely sons of Adam, their *natural* head. Rather, all men are sinners because Adam was their *federal* head and they were judged by God as being in and of him while he was on probation.
 - B. The consequences are restricted to those who descend from Adam by ordinary generation and therefore exclude Jesus Christ, Lk 1.35; Heb 7.26, and to Adam's first sin.
 1. **Hodge**, "His first sin, by incurring the penalty, necessarily and instantly closed his probation and ours, and he immediately became a *private person*."
 - C. Being our federal representative by God's appointment, his sin was counted as ours and is therefore justly credited to us, one and all, concomitant with our creation/conception in our mother's womb.
 1. What the Catechism refers to as "original sin" which we inherited from Adam refers to "the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of our whole nature."
 - a) We all deserve the punishment which Adam's first sin deserved, Eph 2.1-3
 - b) We are all born dead in sin and void of all holiness, Ps 51.5; Rom 3.23
 - c) We are all totally corrupt in every area of our humanity, Gen 6.5; Rom 3.10-18
 2. Because of Adam's sin death has ever since been wreaking havoc on mankind and sweeping one generation after another into the grave. Because of Adam's sin holiness has been banished from the earth and crimes and miseries have been multiplied from age to age. Because of Adam's sin billions of people, capable of immortal happiness, have been lost and are doomed to spend an eternity in sorrow and despair, Rom 5.12-21
- IV. The all-pervasiveness of sin's fruit in our lives §4
- A. The universal corruption of mankind is amply confirmed by the Scriptures, Gen 8.21; Ps 51.5; Ps 58.3; Jn 3.6; Rom 8.7. That Adam's apostasy was the cause for this universal corruption is clear from Gen 5.3 and Rom 5.12-14
 - B. We are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good and are instead wholly inclined to all evil, Rom 7
 1. **Ferguson**, "the depravity of man is total in that it is all-pervasive and permanent."
 2. Arminians are therefore in error when they teach that man's nature is not totally corrupt and that he has not lost the ability to do good, i.e., to choose Christ of his own will.
 - C. From this natural corruption proceeds all actual transgressions; *actual sins* proceed from *original sin*, Rom 7.5-17. Man sins because he is by nature a sinner. His actual transgressions flow out of and prove who and what he is: a guilty son of Adam.
- V. The permanence of sin's influences in our lives §5
- A. Is the regenerated believer still totally depraved? The corruption of our nature remains with us until we die, 1Jn 1.8, 10; Rom 7.14, 17-18, 23; Js 3.2; Prov 20.9; Ecc 7.20.
 1. Thus, while faith in Jesus Christ makes us new creatures (participants in the new creation in Jesus) and the old passes away (2Cor 5.17), our participation is not final until the resurrection.
 2. **Ferguson**, "In the ultimate sense, regeneration is as total as depravation but that regeneration hasn't reached its *telos* or *end* until the resurrection of the body. Until then, believers remain influenced by the effects of total depravity."
 - B. This means there is no such thing as perfectionism in this life, Gal 5.17. Perfection must await heaven, Eph 5.25-27. The new creature in Christ remains a sinner until sin is eradicated. By regeneration, the power and tyranny of sin is broken (Rom 6.14), but the presence and effects of sin will remain (as a means to accomplish our sanctification) until we die. The only deliverance for God's people from this body of death is the death of this body.
 - C. Thus original sin and all its motions continues in the regenerated all their lives. The guilt of it is removed by the blood of Christ and the power of it is subdued by His Spirit and grace, but in itself it retains the character of sin, Rom 7.17

VI. What sin deserves §6

- A. Being a transgression of the law of God, sin cannot but bring guilt upon the sinner and make him deserving of punishment, WLC 28-29
 - 1. It subjects him to the curse of the law of God, Gal 3.10, and to the wrath of God, Eph 2.3
 - 2. It exposes him to the miseries, both spiritual (Eph 4.18), temporal (Rom 8.20; Lam 3.39), and eternal (Mt 25.41; 2Th 1.9)
- B. When we reflect on the loss which Adam sustained by his fall, and on the guilty and corrupted state in which we are thereby involved, and on the many miseries to which we are liable, both here and in eternity...
 - 1. Let us be deeply impressed with a sense of the dreadful malignity and demerit of sin, the cause of all our woe
 - 2. Let us not question God's goodness in permitting sin to enter the world and making us responsible for the transgression of Adam, but rather let us admire His wisdom and grace displayed in providing the second Adam, by whose obedience we may be made righteous
 - 3. Let us believe upon Christ, that we may be acquitted from the guilt of the first Adam and receive the reward of the second Adam.

God's Covenant with Man

I. God's Willing Condescension with Man §1

- A. The point of this first section is to provide the rationale behind the character and nature of all divine-human relationship, which in Scripture is one of God's giving and man's receiving, one of God as man's Benefactor and man as God's beneficiary.
 - 1. Because God is the Creator and man is the creature, man is naturally and necessarily under a law to God. God owes man nothing and man owes God everything, Job 22.2-3; 35.7-8; Acts 17.24-25
 - 2. If it pleased Him, He might have demanded all obedience possible from man without making or offering any return of reward for his doing so. And though man might have rendered such obedience in full and for a long time, without a single failure, he could at no point have laid his Creator under any obligation to him or been entitled to any recompense because it was his duty to obey, Lk 17.10
 - 3. Therefore if man is to expect or receive any good or blessing from God then it cannot be based upon the Creator-creature relationship, which exists naturally, but must be based on an *additional* activity of God, "some voluntary condescension on God's part," which puts Himself in the position of Benefactor and man in the position of beneficiary.
- B. It has pleased God to put Himself in the position to give good to man and to put man in the position to receive good from Him, by way of a *covenant*.
 - 1. A covenant is an agreement between two parties on certain terms. In a covenant between two parties there are two parts: a condition to be met and a promise of reward to be given upon the meeting of that condition.
 - 2. Although it is not essential to a covenant, a penalty is often added if either party is fallible and breaches the agreement.
- C. God made two such covenants with man, a covenant of works and a covenant of grace:

II. The Covenant of Works §2

- A. The covenant of works was the first covenant God made with man. It was initiated solely and freely by God and sovereignly imposed upon Adam in his creation. In other words, Adam was not consulted in the making of it, but was created "in covenant" with God. Nevertheless, Adam fully consented to the covenant and its terms, Gen 3.2-3. Thus God and Adam were the two parties to the covenant.
 - 1. However, Adam was not a private person in this covenant, but a *public* person, 1Cor 15.45 ,47; Rom 5.14. He was created as the federal representative of the entire human race and, being created in covenant with God, represented the entire human race in the covenant of works. His

actions would be counted for theirs and his subsequent reward or penalty would be equally borne by them all.

- B. The covenant of works promised eternal life, Gal 3.12; Rom 10.5; Mt 19.17; Rom 7.10. Hence, this covenant is also called the covenant of life. Theologians have disagreed whether God was promising life in the garden or life in heaven. But it does not matter, because at the center of the promise was life in the society of God.
 - 1. But this promise was nowhere explicitly stated. Instead, it was implied by the explicit statement of the penalty for breaching the covenant, which was death or exclusion from the communion of God, Gen 2.15-17
- C. The promise of the covenant was conditioned upon man's perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to the negative command of the covenant, viz., not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Gen 2.17
 - 1. Thus Adam's obedience in the covenant of works would have merited eternal life for both himself and all his posterity. He would have acquired "a right to expect from God and demand of God" the fulfillment of the promise of the covenant—not because of any inherently meritorious worth in his obedience, but only because of the voluntary condescension of God to make Himself a debtor to His own goodness, justice, and truthfulness in a covenant relation with man.

III. The Covenant of Grace §§3-4

- A. Adam broke the covenant of works by his disobedience, Gen 3.6-11
 - 1. As the federal head of the human race, this plunged his entire posterity—though yet unborn—into spiritual and eternal ruin, into an estate of sin and misery, and under the curse and condemnation of the covenant of works and the wrath of God, from which he had no right to expect any recovery, Rom 5.12; Gal 3.10
 - 2. Having broken the covenant of works, Adam made himself and his race utterly incapable of acquiring life by it again, because they all rested permanently and irrecoverably under its curse as sinners, Ps 58.3; Job 14.4
 - 3. All his posterity are conceived and born into the world as condemned, sinful, covenant breakers, Eph 2.1-3
- B. **If mankind is to be saved, there must be a new and gracious intervention on the part of God, there must be a new covenant made for the repair of the breach made by man and the reconciliation of man with God.
 - 1. But with whom is God to make this covenant? All men are under sin and utterly incapable of meeting any conditions placed upon them.
 - 2. Are the conditions to be lowered now that man is fallen? Or is there another who can represent fallen man in the broken covenant and not only recover man but honor the Law of God?
- C. God was pleased, for His own glory, to make a second covenant for the recovery of fallen man. This covenant is called the covenant of grace because it is made in free grace and from no obligation on God's part, Eph 1.3-6
 - 1. This covenant was made between God and His Son, who acted as the Mediator between God and sinners, Job 9.32-33; 1Tim 2.5; Heb 9.15; 12.24; Ps 40.7.
 - a) The design of the covenant was to reconcile God with His fallen elect among mankind and in it the Father acted for the honor of the Godhead while the Son acted for the salvation of the elect, Eph 1.4
 - (1) The covenant was not made on behalf of all Adam's fallen race, but only for a select, an elect, portion chosen by the Father, entrusted to the Son to redeem, and placed in the hands of the Spirit to regenerate, Isa 53.10-12; Acts 13.48; Jn 6.37-39; 17.6-9
 - b) Christ was appointed as the sole Mediator of the covenant on behalf of the elect and as a Second Adam federally representing the elect before God.
 - c) Upon Him would fall all the obligations demanded of them, and to Him, upon His obedience in their place, would be entrusted all the promises and rewards intended for them. The elect

- were considered as His seed and spiritual offspring just as the human race was the seed and literal offspring of the first Adam.
- d) The Father would look to Christ for all obedience and the elect would look to Christ for all blessings. Christ would give to the Father all that was demanded and in turn give to the elect all that was graciously promised, Isa 53.10; Jn 17.2, 24
 - e) Thus this covenant was made, not directly with sinners, but with Christ on behalf of and for the elect, Isa 53.10. When the Scripture and the Confession refer to it being made with sinners, we must understand this only indirectly.
2. The conditions of the covenant made with Christ were essentially the same as those made with Adam, but with a single addition.
 - a) Christ was to render the perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience demanded of the Law of God that Adam failed to render. But in addition, Christ was to satisfy the penalty of the Law of God incurred by Adam on behalf of the elect.
 - b) **Hodge**, “Christ suffered the penalty and extinguished in behalf of all whom he represented the claims of the old covenant; and at the same time he rendered a perfect vicarious obedience, which was the very condition upon which eternal life had been originally offered.”
 - c) Christ is therefore called the Surety of the covenant (Heb 7.22). A surety is one who engages to satisfy his creditors by paying his debts. Therefore Christ undertook to discharge the debts which His people owe to the Law and justice of God, both the debt of obedience and the debt of suffering. Thus the promises of the covenant are made to Him and received by Him upon His payment.
 3. The covenant was made in eternity as an intratrinitarian covenant.
 - a) Though in time it succeeded the covenant of works (Gen 2.17; 3.15), in reality, it preceded it and served as the basis for it, Pr 8.23 30-31; Tit 1.2; Heb 13.20
 4. The Father promised the Son the salvation of His seed on the condition of His obedience, Isa 53.10-11; 42.6-7; Ps 89.3-4
- D. Standing as the sole Mediator of the covenant of grace, in whom all its blessings inhere, Christ Himself is the one who administers its blessings and benefits to His people
1. By His providence, Word, and Spirit He causes his people to become recipients of these blessings.
 2. He offers the blessings to all men on the condition of faith in Him and promises to make them good to all who believe, Mt 11.28; Jn 6.35; Rom 10.9-11.
 - a) But rather than being a lower condition which they can meet as sinners, it is the precedent condition and instrument upon which He has determined to give salvation. It is to say, in effect, that all who believe on Christ as Saviour will be saved and in order to be saved a man must first believe on Christ as Saviour.
 - b) As a sinner, no man can or desires to meet this condition of believing on Christ in order to receive salvation, Rom 8.7-8; Mk 10.25-27. He is at enmity with God and content to remain so.
 - c) Thus this condition is a condition for which the sinner must look outside of himself to God, Phil 1.29
 3. But to His elect, Christ additionally promises in the covenant itself that this condition of faith *will* be given; and by His Spirit and Word He works this required faith in them, Acts 13.48; 16.14; Jn 6.37-40, 44-45; Ezk 36.26-27
 - a) Therefore, instead of being the condition of the covenant of grace in the absolute sense, faith belongs to the promissory part of the covenant (Rom 15.12). It is the gift of God, who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, Eph 2.8-9; Phil 2.13

- b) **This reveals a most important principle in the covenant of grace: every Christian duty is also a Christian grace. That is to say, the covenant of grace is so full of grace that everything God requires of us in it He also gives us as a part of it.
- c) **Hodge**, “Christ at once purchases salvation for us and applies salvation to us; commands us to do, and works in us to obey; offers us grace and eternal life on conditions and gives us the conditions and the grace and the eternal life. What he gives he expects us to exercise. What he demands of us he at once gives us. Viewed on God’s side, faith and repentance are the gifts of his Son. Viewed on our side, they are duties and gracious experiences, the first symptoms of salvation begun—instruments wherewith further grace may be attained. Viewed in connection with the covenant of grace, they are elements of the promise of the Father to the Son, conditioned upon his mediatorial work. Viewed in relation to salvation, they are indices of its commencement and conditions *sine qua non* of its completion.”

E. Note:

1. It is important to understand, from what has been said above, that the covenant of grace by which we enjoy our salvation is rooted, not in time with man subsequent to the Fall, but in eternity with God precedent to the Fall.
2. An eternal covenant of redemption between the members of the Trinity—and specifically between the Father representing the Godhead and the Son acting as the Mediator of the elect—provide the foundation and cause for the temporal covenant of grace. So that what is true in the pre-temporal realm becomes true in the temporal realm; the blessings in eternity are appropriated in time.
3. But rather than being two different covenants in which our salvation is grounded, it may be best to understand that the covenant of grace is the temporal administration of the pre-temporal covenant of redemption. By the covenant of redemption our Mediator infallibly secured the blessings of grace for all His elect and by the covenant of grace He infallibly administers and communicates its blessings to all those for whom they are intended.

IV. The Administration of the Covenant of Grace in the OT §5

- A. The section begins with “This covenant...” and makes clear 1) that the covenant of grace introduced in §3 is the covenant administered by Christ in the OT for the salvation and sanctification of the elect, and 2) the covenant of grace has from the beginning remained in all essential respects the same, in spite of all outward changes in the mode of administration. It indeed differed in degree between the OT and NT, but it never differed in kind.
 1. Christ was promised to Adam in Gen 3.15 and to Abraham in Gen 17.7; 22.18
 2. Christ was symbolically exhibited and typically prophesied by all the ceremonial and especially the sacrificial system of the temple, Col 2.17; Heb 10.1-10
 3. Christ was witnessed to as the Saviour from sin by all the prophets, Acts 10.43
 4. Thus Christ was the Saviour of the OT saints and saved them upon the same grounds as He does those of the NT
 - a) Rom 3.25—in exercising mercy towards those who lived before Christ’s coming, God had a respect to Christ’s atonement in the NT and acted towards them as a Creditor who let them go free, although payment was not yet made by their Surety, because He had full confidence in Him that He would fulfill His engagement in the fullness of time.
 - b) Heb 9.15—the OT saints were forgiven their sins upon the ground of Christ’s sacrifice which was to be offered in due time. Thus those who lived under the law of Moses were saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as those who lived under the gospel.
- B. The covenant of grace was administered in the OT with increasing clarity and precision until Christ came in person to answer and abolish its administration, Jn 1.29-30.
 1. Every successive administration and unfolding of the covenant of grace in the OT gave greater light as to the identity of the Saviour of sinners.
 2. **Dick**, “The information communicated to the people of God [in the OT] was obscure and imperfect; but still there was a revelation that sufficed “for the time then present,” as it enabled

them, through faith in the promised Redeemer, to obtain eternal salvation. Some degree of light was thrown upon the figures of the law by the prophecies, which became clearer and clearer as the time drew nearer for his manifestation in the flesh.”

V. The Administration of the Covenant of Grace in the NT §6

A. The current administration of the covenant of grace is superior because it is its final and full administration

1. It brings the substance at last, viz., Christ Himself (Col 2.17); it signifies and seals the benefits of the covenant of grace to us by more plain and simple but also more full, evidential, and efficacious sacraments (Mt 28.19-20; 1Cor 11.23-25); it extends to include the Gentiles (Eph 2.12-19); and it provides a more intensive, more extensive, and more glorious work of the Spirit (Acts 2.33).

B. Thus there are not two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations as it pleased our Lord to make the former preparatory and the latter substantial.

C. **It concerns every person therefore to inquire whether he has an interest in this one covenant of grace. Let us therefore take hold of God’s covenant by faith in Christ and let us labor after the fullest evidence of our interest in this blessed covenant.

Bibliography:

An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Robert Shaw

The Confession of Faith, A. A. Hodge

Confessing the Faith, Chad Van Dixhoorn

A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Louis Berkhof

Lectures on Theology, John Dick

Westminster Standards class at WTS 2001, Sinclair Ferguson

Assignments:

*Read Chapters Six and Seven in Hodge—the questions at the end of the chapter should be used as a review

*Read Chapters Six and Seven in the WCF, paying close attention to the Scripture proofs

*Memorize Shorter Catechism questions 12-21

—The next class will meet, DV, at 8AM on 9 May for a study of WCF 8: Christ the Mediator