

Foundations of Christian Theology

Lesson 9

Man in the state of sin

Goal: To explore the incredible transformation from the image bearing creatures God formed and placed in the garden to the creatures we have become because of our fall into sin.

1. Man has fundamentally changed because of the fall

When we speak of the fall of man it is a literal movement of man from a higher station or condition to a completely other inferior condition in which he now suffers. It is the movement from spiritual life to spiritual death.

Man's movement from life to death

Gen 2:15-17 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

What does the death of sin look like if it is not simply physical?

Rom 3:9-18 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

*12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good, not even one."*

*13 "Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive."*

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 in their paths are ruin and misery,

17 and the way of peace they have not known."

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Mt 6:22 & 23 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

Discussion pause – Why can’t we just fix what is broken about man?

Chapter six of the confession is dedicated to this fallen condition of man.

WCF CHAPTER 6

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. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.

God ordained the fall for a glory beyond anything we could imagine.

1 Cor 1:7&8 there is a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Acts 2:23 But Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, to be crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

It should not be a difficult thing for us to reconcile this truth, that not a fraction of the sins of men are out from under the sovereign control of God. **God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit sin to enter the world, having purposed to order it to His own glory.**

2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became **dead in sin**, (notice the way the framers understand death as this new condition of humanity. They became dead in sin.) **and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.**
3. They 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.
4. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

2. From original righteousness to original sin

- **Original sin** - a term which defines the nature and origin of mankind's sinful condition.
- 4 From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

Concupiscence – the disordered inclinations and desires of the heart resulting from the fall

Our nature is not only destitute and empty of good, but so fertile and fruitful of every evil that it cannot be idle. Those who have said that original sin is concupiscence have used an appropriate word, if only it be added – something that most will by no means concede – that whatever is in man, from the understanding to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, has been defiled and crammed with this concupiscence. Or, to put it more briefly, the whole man is of himself nothing but concupiscence. Calvin's Institutes 2/1/8

- **Reformed and Roman Catholic difference**

Roman Catholic view: *Donum superadditum* – an added grace which enabled Adam to keep the holy demands of God.

Reformed view: Adam was created holy and therefore fit for communion with his Creator.

Each view precipitates a different view of the fall.

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.

Discussion Pause – If all of this is what happened to Adam and Eve, why are we automatically attributing it to the whole human race?

3. The human race under Adam's sin

Paragraph 3 speaks of the imputation of Adam and Eve's sin to all their posterity.

3. They 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.

Therefore, all of us , who have descended from impure seed, are born infected with the contagion of sin. In fact, before we saw the light of this life we were soiled and spotted in God's sight. Calvin's Institutes 2/1/54

*Rom 5:12-21 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men because all sinned**— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet **death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.***

*15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if **many died through one man's trespass**, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, **because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man**, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for fall men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

4. The characteristics of man's fallen condition

Paragraph 4 speaks of Adam and Eve's conveyed corruption to all their posterity.

4. From this **original corruption**, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

The ways in which our nature has changed in the fall

- Our **innocence** has changed

Gen 3:7-8 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

- Our **perception** has changed.

2 Cor 4:3&4 ... if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Rom 1:18-23 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

- Our **spirituality** has changed.

Rom 8:5-7 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Spiritually, man enters this world belonging to another family.

Jn 8:44&45 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

The spiritual impotence of our fallen nature keeps us from seeing Christ, or the spiritual realities of Christ.

1 Cor 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Cor 2:10-14 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

- Our **abilities** have changed

Our wills are in bondage to the desires of our nature

"None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one."

Long my imprisoned spirit lay

Fast bound in sin and nature's night;

Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;

My chains fell off, my heart was free;

I rose, went forth and followed Thee. Charles Wesley, And Can It Be

Discussion pause – In what other ways might we speak of man's nature changing in the fall?

5. Four-fold state of man

- The state of innocence – man’s condition before the fall, what we looked at last week.
- The state of nature – man’s condition after the fall, which we have been talking about tonight. But there is also a:
- The state of grace – man’s redeemed condition
- The state of eternity – man’s glorified condition

Rev 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Discussion Questions

- **Inward Application:** How does your fallen condition as a sinner affect how you pray for yourself and those you love?
- **Outward Application:** How does the fallen state of mankind affect the way you view and communicate to unbelievers, especially in understanding how they view Jesus?
- **Basic Understanding:** Clarifying questions.
- **Further Understanding:** In what ways does fallen man still retain the image of God? In what ways has fallen man lost the image of God?
- **Reading Scripture:** Romans 1:18-32. How does this shape what we believe about fallen humanity?