

Lesson 10: 2LCF Chapter 6: Of The Fall of Man, of Sin and of the Punishment Thereof

*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*

Romans 5:12

Chapter 6 of the Confession addresses the fall of man, the theme of sin, and the ensuing punishment. A few outlines of chapter 6 have been offered; however, one the most basic outlines divides the chapter into two sections:

1. The Nature of the Fall (Paragraph 1)
 - i) Integrity
 - ii) Contingency
 - iii) Brevity
2. The Results of the Fall (Paragraphs 2-5)
 - i) Representative Sin (Paragraph 2)
 - ii) Original Sin (Paragraph 3)
 - iii) Actual Sin (Paragraph 4)
 - iv) Remaining Sin (Paragraph 5)

In the first half of this lesson, we will look at the first paragraph of the Confession and consider the nature of the fall, including the “Covenant of Works” that man entered into and violated in the garden. In the second half, we will consider the results of the fall.

Paragraph 1.

Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honor; Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given to them, in eating the forbidden fruit, which God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory.
Gen. 2:16,17; Gen. 3:12,13; 2 Cor. 11:3

Exposition

“Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law... without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation.”

As the Confession introduces the origins of sin, it rightly points out that, at the time of creation, man was without sin and was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Prior to the fall, man was not acquainted with guilt and corruption that we know today, but existed in a state of innocence. Through the centuries, theologians have used two Latin phrases to describe this condition of man prior to the fall: “posse non peccare” (“able to not sin”) and “posse non mori” (“able to not die”).

This is a remarkable condition to find man in—a condition altogether different from his fallen state today. As Borgman and Ching point out, “All of [man’s] faculties, mind, will, and affections, were working in perfect harmony.”⁹¹ Similarly, the Puritan Thomas Boston commented:

There was light in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude in his affections; there was such a harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God.”⁹²

For a brief season in the history of humanity, there was a time when man possessed an unpolluted, undefiled nature. In that moment, he was fully capable of exercising a will free from the hindrances of indwelling sin and evil.

“... a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honor...”

In this condition, our first parents found themselves as participants in a covenant with their maker, Almighty God. Though this covenant is not explicitly named in Scripture, it has been referred to as the “Covenant of Creation,” the “Adamic Administration,” or, more commonly, the “Covenant of Works.”

Scripture makes explicit reference to this covenant in Hosea:

Hosea 6:7

But like Adam they transgressed the covenant...

Moreover, God’s Word regularly makes implicit reference to this covenant in several other places. Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 make use of covenantal language, identifying Adam as the covenant/federal head in humanity’s first covenant with God.

Romans 5:12

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...

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Grudem comments on Romans 5: “Paul sees both Adam and Christ as heads of a people whom they represent, something that would be entirely consistent with the idea of Adam being in a covenant before the fall.”⁹³

⁹¹ Brian Borgman and Jason Ching, “Chapter Six: Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof,” in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 126.

⁹² Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of the Late Reverend Thomas Boston, Ettrick*. Edited by the Reverend Samuel M’Millan (Published in 1843. Reprinted, Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1980), Vol. 1, 232.

⁹³ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England : Grand Rapids, Mich: Inter-Varsity Press ; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 516.

Moreover, we see this covenantal language referenced in the immediate context. First in Genesis 2:14, with the invocation of God's covenant name.

Genesis 2:14

"in the day the *Lord God* made the earth and heavens." (Lit. Yahweh Elohim)

Later in Genesis 6 and 9, we find the establishment or confirmation of a covenant, rather than the initiation of a covenant.

Genesis 6:18; 9:9; 9:11

"I will establish my covenant"

"I establish my covenant"

"I establish my covenant"

It is widely recognized that the language of Genesis 6 and 9 "heqim berit" means to establish a covenant. But, before a covenant can be established or confirmed, it must first be "cut" or initiated ("karat berit"). This suggests that a covenant already existed prior to Genesis 6, though the word covenant does not yet appear. On this point, Gentry and Wellum write:

Therefore, the construction "heqim merit" in Genesis 6 and 9 indicates that God is not initiating a covenant with Noah, but rather is affirming to Noah and his descendants a commitment in initiated previously... linguistic usage demonstrates that when God says that he is affirming his covenant with Noah, he is saying that his commitment initiated previously at creation to care for preserve, provide for and rule over all that he has made, including the blessings and ordinances that he gave to Adam and Eve and their family, is now to be with Noah and his descendants. This can be further supported by noting the parallels between Noah and Adam, and between the covenant terms given to Noah and the ordinances given to Adam and his family.⁹⁴

Lastly, the structure of Genesis 1-3 contains all of the elements of ancient covenant:

- 1) The presence of two parties, one of whom is also the divine witness;
- 2) A historical prologue of past benefactions;
- 3) Covenant stipulations;
- 4) Sanctions;
- 5) A ratifying oath or oath-sign⁹⁵

Waldron summarizes the argument with he adds:

A superficial reading of Genesis two and three might see there only a simple Bible story for children about a man, a woman, and a snake, and how God punished them for being naughty in His garden. A more thoughtful assessment begins to notice features of cosmic significance in this account. The Bible confirms this and regards the account of Genesis two and three as basic to its whole understanding of the world and redemption. The Puritans together with

⁹⁴ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2015), 60-61.

⁹⁵ Justin Taylor provides a detailed defence of the Covenant of Works in his article "Why I Believe in the Covenant of Works," <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/why-i-believe-in-the-covenant-of-works/>.

many other Reformed theologians recognized this unique significance and enshrined these chapters of Genesis in the theological formulation, "the Covenant of Works."⁹⁶

This means that Adam and Eve, while dwelling in the Garden of Eden, found themselves in a covenant relationship with God. If they obeyed God and the covenant stipulations, this would result in everlasting life. But, if they rejected God's covenant, they would experience the covenant sanctions: death. Theologians have recognized this as a divinely appointed probationary period, whereby Adam and Eve were placed in the garden with the sure promise of life if they successfully carried out the requirements of the covenant.

Richard Barcellos defines the covenant of works as follows:

The covenant of works is that divinely sanction commitment, or relationship with God, imposed upon Adam, who was a sinless representative of mankind (or public person), an image bearing son of God, conditioned upon his obedience, with a penalty for disobedience, all for the better of man's state.⁹⁷

Paragraph 2.

Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

Rom. 3:23; Rom 5:12; Titus 1:15; Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-19

Paragraph 3.

They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.

Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21,22,45,49; Ps. 51:5; Job 14:4; Eph. 2:3; Rom. 6:20, 5:12; Heb. 2:14,15; 1 Thess. 1:10

Exposition

Paragraphs 2 and 3 provide a treatment on both representative sin (Paragraph 2) and original sin (Paragraph 3).

⁹⁶ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 112.

⁹⁷ Richard C. Barcellos, *Getting the Garden Right* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017), 57.

Borgman and Ching summarize: In this state of misery and death, Adam and his posterity became holy defiled in all his faculties. No longer would he have a pure mind to perceive truth, a free will to follow God, fully, or holy affections to love what he ought to love and hate what he ought to hate.⁹⁸

Blaise Pascal issues this indictment: “What a chimera then is man! What a novelty! What a monster! What a chaos! What a contradiction! What a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the Earth; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the glory and scum of the universe.”⁹⁹

As a result of the fall, man went from “posse non peccary” (“able to not sin”) to “non posse non peccary” (“not able not to sin”). The confession includes

Paragraph 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.

Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21; James 1:14,15; Matt. 15:19

Paragraph 5.

The corruption of nature, during this life, does remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and the first motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.

Rom. 7:18,23; Eccles. 7:20; 1 John 1:8; Rom. 7:23-25; Gal. 5:17

Exposition

Paragraphs 4 and 5 deal with the doctrine of actual sin (Paragraph 4) and remaining sin (Paragraph 5). Here the confession lays out that our struggle with sin will never end on this side of eternity.

Borgman and Ching conclude:

Christians thus live in a great tension. Though their sin has been truly and totally pardoned in Christ’s once for all-time sacrifice, and through Christians they have crucified the flesh, yet they still commit and wrestled with acts that are truly sinful... Christians desperately need this understanding of their walk with the Lord. If a Christian is struggling in sin, the last thing they need on top of that struggle is to think that if they were truly saved, they would be living in sinless perfection. They need the sober hope of the Scriptures: Yes their sin is grievous and vile, yet their saviour had always planned on such sin and struggles. Though they sin, they are not outside the experience of the true believer.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Brian Borgman and Jason Ching, “Chapter Six: Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof,” in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 128.

⁹⁹ Blaise Pascal, *Pascal’s Pensees* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, 1958), 121.

¹⁰⁰ Brian Borgman and Jason Ching, “Chapter Six: Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof,” in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 131-32.