

Westminster Larger Catechism

Question 22

Halifax, 30 December 2007

Q. 22 Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?

A The covenant being made with Adam, as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in that first transgression.

Review:

A few weeks ago, when we looked at the covenant that God made with Adam in the garden (Q. 20),

- I introduced to you the idea that this covenant was in fact made with the whole human race—
 - that we were all “in Adam” as his descendents and that even though now that the covenant has been broken so that it is impossible for us to obtain life by it,
 - it still has very much to do with us because we still have many of the blessings that God gave to Adam (though they are corrupted by the curse)...
 - and it is still because of the breach of that covenant that we are condemned and it is because of the curse and condemnation of that covenant that Jesus had to die on the cross...

All of this is because of our connection with Adam as our federal head and representative.

- And this week we come to focus in on the fact that not only was the covenant made with all of us in Adam,
 - But that because Adam represented us all, his violation of the covenant condemns us all—
 - all who are born by ordinary generation—
 - the only one that is excluded by that phrase is Jesus Christ who was not born by ordinary generation, but of a virgin...
 - We will look at this doctrine in much more detail in the future, but for now I just want to state that one of the reasons Jesus was born of a virgin was that He might not be tainted by original sin from Adam.
 - But back to the main point—you see that we are said to have “sinned in” Adam and to have fallen “with him” in his first transgression.
 - As those bound up in Adam as destined to be born of him, we acted in him and received the consequences of his action.

- When the source sinned, the whole river that comes from it sinned...
- And when the source became corrupt, the whole river was corrupted.

That is a bit of a summary of this doctrine...Now let's turn to our scripture reading:

READ> Romans 5:12-21

Societal confusion...

- That describes modern man!
 - Few people in our society know where they fit in...
 - Few know how they are connected to other people in this world.

The only way we can know how we fit is to ask God.

- He knows because He is the One Who created us.
- And of course, we ask Him by consulting His word where He has graciously told us all that we need to know about loving Him and about loving one another.

What does God tell us about our relationship to one another?

- He tells us that we are one big family.
 - Acts 17:26 says:
 - **And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.**
- We have already looked at this in previous sermons when I spoke about creation...
 - We are a race rather than many independent creations.
 - Rather than creating 1000 people all at once,
 - God created one man and one woman who were able to reproduce themselves after their kind.
 - And even the woman was formed out of the man so that we are all related to each other.
 - We all have the same parents, we are all brothers and sisters!

But what does it mean to be a family, besides the biological fact that we all come from one blood?

It means that we are intertwined into each other's lives the same way God is intertwined in relationship with Himself in the Trinity.

- The family relationship involves honour (obedience, respect, responsible leadership)
 - The Father is head

- **1 Cor. 11:3: But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.**
 - You see in this verse how headship in the family is compared to headship in the Trinity.
- The family relationship involves love (fidelity, service, delight, giving)
 - **John 5:17: But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” 18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. 19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. 20 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. 21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”**
 - **Philippians 2:5-8: 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.**

God reflects these principles in the commandments He has given to us as human family...

- Honour—the fifth commandment
- Loving—the sixth commandment
- Fidelity—the seventh commandment
- Giving—the eighth commandment
- Communicating—the ninth commandment
- Delighting—the tenth commandment

The human family is supposed to be a lovely portrait of the Triune God.

- Here is the foundation of the One and the many...
 - One God—three persons, all working and dwelling together in unity under headship.
 - One family—many members, all working together in unity under headship.
 - We see this in other relationships that grow out of the family:
 - Civil magistrate
 - restraining society (Romans 13),
 - Judges are gods (Psalm 82)
 - The society is unified under their leaders.

- Church
 - redemptive society, Jesus is our head
 - **Eph 5: 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.* 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.**
- Commerce
 - serving society—extended family
 - **1 Tim 6:1: Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise *them* because they are brethren, but rather serve *them* because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,**

Sin has made us very uneasy about being a family, about these relationships.

Those in authority act selfishly and serve their own interests.

- Consequently, there is a general distrust of authority that works itself out in the rebellion, laziness, and ingratitude on the part of subordinates.

Those under authority act rebelliously and serve their own interests.

- Consequently, there is a general distrust of subordinates that works itself out in oppression, deprivation, and ingratitude on the part of those in authority.

In this you can see how we misrepresent the Trinity where there is perfect harmony—

- Christ obeys to the point of death on the cross,
 - the Father loves and gives all things to the Son.

Of course, our great problem is that we always want to focus on the other side of the relationship and blame them for the disharmony...

- The wife says, “You do not love me and care for me...”
- The husband says, “You won’t honour me or submit to me—you are always complaining.”

And because we are uneasy in these relationships...

- **There are efforts to deny the family structure that God has established for humankind.**

Societies generally swing back and forth from Unitarianism to Pluralism.

- In Unitarianism, everything is reduced into the Head so that diversity of relationship is lost. It leads to a very tightly controlled, oppressive society, with impersonal applications of binding laws.
- In Pluralism, there is no head so that everyone does his own thing. There is disrespect, chaos, slackness, and general apathy.

Unitarianism is the choice of those who have suffered under the ravages of pluralism—

- where there is no law, no order, but only chaos.
- People will follow a Nebuchadnezzar or a Hitler or a Stalin because they crave order.
- The role of government in such a society is to bring order to the chaos.
 - The Unitarian society always has one god, but a god who is rather impersonal (Islam, Deism).

Pluralism is the choice of those who have been bruised by the ravages of Unitarianism—

- The pluralist craves freedom, (individual expression), at the expense of order.
- An example of this kind of society is our own society where we have made individual choice sovereign, even to the point that indecent sexual behaviour and murder of the weak is tolerated.
- The role of government in such a society is thought to be “to guard the rights and freedoms of the individual,” but not “to promote unity and the interest of the general public.”
 - The pluralist society always has many religions and many gods and very little honour.

The history of Israel illustrates this—

- Under Pharaoh, they had oppressive order.
- God offered them biblical government under Moses,
 - but they rebelled so that every man did what was right in his own eyes...
 - After five centuries, this led to absolute chaos so that they couldn't even defend themselves! It was an intolerable situation...
- Then they wanted oppressive government again to bring order and security,
 - They were willing to give up freedom to have it!
 - “Make us a king like the nations,” they demanded of Samuel.

God first gave them a king like the nations,

- but then He graciously gave them David who was a man after His own heart.
- David led ministerially...the way a king is supposed to lead!
 - He exercised firm authority,
 - but always it was God's ways that he enforced.
 - He did not trust his own wisdom,
 - nor did he give way to his own selfishness (at least not ordinarily).
 - He did what was best for the people.
 - Under such government,
 - There is such order exercised that brings out the beauty of diversity in the people.
 - Personal expression is not crushed, but neither is it allowed to express itself outside of God's boundaries.
 - Learning music is a good illustration—
 - a person needs leadership to be instructed in the disciplines of music so that beautiful personal expression can ensue.
 - He is neither a child banging randomly on the keys, nor is he a computer mechanically playing the next note.

However, when fallen man tries to create this kind of society without turning to God, he always fails.

- When he pursues freedom, he always ends up as a slave.
 - The prodigal son pursued freedom but ended being a slave feeding pigs on a farm
 - He realised that his father's servants were freer than he was, so he longed to go home and become a servant.
- When man pursues order, he always ends up with rebellion in the ranks.
 - Rehoboam, the king who sought to control the people by oppression, soon found that his kingdom was the most disordered of all...
 - There was such division and strife that it could not be healed and his kingdom was torn in two, with the majority turning against him.
- The principle is that our true identity is found in unity with God.
 - Proper authority is exercised only when authorities enforce God's standard.
 - Proper subordination is exercised by submitting to authority that is lawful according to God's standard.

TRANS> It is to our own hurt that we avoid the way that God has appointed for the family. We are uneasy with it and so we attempt to deny it and live apart from it.

But no matter what you do, you can never get away from the family structure that God has established.

He has made us one family with many members,

- and we cannot change that, even though we may want to.
- The human race was created as one family, and we are called to reflect the beauty of God as we live in family relationships.
 - This does not mean that everyone must marry,
 - but it means you must learn to live in all your relationships in a family way—
 - with honour and love—
 - recognising that God has bound you together with others in federal relationships.

We often think of unity in a subjective sense today because we want to be sovereign over it—something we choose to have or not to have—

- but in the Bible it is actually objective—
- something that God has established and that cannot be changed.
 - The church is one body whether we admit it or not.

But nowhere is this God-given unity more clearly seen than with the fall.

- There is a unity and solidarity with Adam because he is our first father and our federal head.
 - As such, he was made the representative of the entire human family.
 - He acted as our representative just as fathers always act...
 - For example, when a man purchases a home, he acts for his family...
 - when he goes into debt to buy a fishing boat, he acts for the family...
 - when he worships idols, he represents his family.
 - I do not mean to say that we can't (and shouldn't) rebel against something like idolatry.
 - But a child is taken up into his father's idolatry until the child repents.
- Adam was like the head of a nation who signs a declaration of war or a declaration of peace for the entire nation.
 - It doesn't matter if you fully agree with the declaration, it still stands because it was made by the one who represents your nation—

- Of course, you can defect from your nation and withdraw your name as a citizen if you wish, but you cannot be a part of that nation and not be at war because the nation is at war as a nation.
- With Adam, it is a little different because you can't defect from the human race.
 - Moreover, none of the sons of Adam *want* to defect (until God changes them) because through Adam's act, they are born with a rebellious heart against God.
 - God must deliver us from our hopeless condition, because otherwise, we are not only guilty because of Adam's deed, but we are also wholeheartedly committed to the rebellion.

We are unified with our first father, and so when he acted, we acted with him and in him.

Romans 5 clearly testifies to this.

- In verse 12, Paul is starting to make a contrast,
 - He says:
 - **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned——**
 - but then he interrupts himself—
 - But you can tell what he was going to say...
 - He was going to say something like:
 - “even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life.”
 - Do you know how you can tell that?
 - You can tell because he starts over in verse 18 and this time he finishes the contrast:
 - He says:
 - **Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life.**

So what we get is two verses that tell us very definitely that the whole human race sinned in Adam, who acted for us all as a representative person.

- Listen to the clear statements again:
 - **v. 12: through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men.**

- **v. 18: through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation.**
- Both verses say that one man's act affected **all** men.
 - verse 12 tells us that it resulted in death for all men...
 - verse 18 tells us that it resulted in condemnation of all men...
 - And if you notice, verse 19 goes on to say it again in a slightly different way:
 - **v. 19: "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners"**
 - This verse is actually saying that we all became sinners when our first father sinned just as surely as if we had committed the act ourselves.
 - In other words, the entire human race, Adam and all his offspring were corrupted—their nature was spoiled—they became sinners.
- Now the reason Paul is saying this in all three verses is because he wants to go on to tell us that just as we sinned in Adam, even so we are made righteous by Christ.
 - But Paul knows what people are like...
 - He knows that a lot of people will have a hard time accepting the fact that we all bear the guilt of Adam's first sin.
 - He knows that people will say that it's not fair that God made us to be a family so that what our father Adam did has so much effect on the rest of us.
 - He knows that they will say that God should have made us all like the angels so that each one could decide for himself what he wanted to do.
- And so Paul sets out to prove that what he says is so...
 - That's why he interrupts himself in verse 13. He knows that he just made a statement that everyone won't accept,
 - so he sets out to prove what he says.
 - Look with me at his proof.
- In verse 13, he shows that it is evident that Adam's sin was surely imputed to his descendants because they all died...
 - They died even though they had not personally broken any particular law that told them they would die. Look at verse 13:
 - **13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam,**
 - In other words, they did not die because of what they did...
 - There was no law whose punishment was death that was stated at that time...
 - Adam had broken such a law, but from Adam to Moses,

- his descendants were given no such law to break!
- They died because of what Adam had done, not because of what they had done.
 - As verse 15 says,
 - “by the one man’s offense, many died.”

But then God sent Moses...

- And through Moses, He *did* give laws that carried the penalty of death.
 - He declared, “The sinful soul, it shall die.”
- Why did He give such a law since Adam’s descendants were already subject to death?
 - Verse 20 tells us why:
 - It says:
 - **v. 20: Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.**
- God wanted the descendants of Adam to see that their lives were unacceptable to Him,
 - He wanted them see more clearly what was wrong in their lives.
 - He wanted them to understand the damage that Adam’s sin had caused in bringing them all into this desperate condition where they could not live so as to please God.
 - He wanted them to know that they were personally worthy of death.
- So the law pointed the finger at them and showed them their corruption.
 - In this way, God made their sin abound...
 - By showing them what He expected of them, He showed them how much sin they had.
 - They should have been able to figure this out without having to have the Ten Commandments spelled out to them,
 - but because they were corrupt, they did not see their sin so clearly...
 - It was a mercy of God to spell it out to His people so they could understand.
 - Yet, even now, even though we have the Ten Commandments, it is one the hardest things in the world to get people to see their sin.
 - We should use the commandments because they are given to show us our sin, but even when we use them to show people their sin, people still have a very hard time seeing it.

- God has given it to make their sin abound in their own eyes—that they might see how they displease God, and that they do things directly against His will.

And there was only one purpose for making their sin abound...

- It was so that they might look to God for grace to help them in their need!
- The law was supposed to drive them to Christ by showing them their sin in a tangible way so that no one could suppose he could save himself.
 - **Ga 3:24: the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**
 - To the moral commandments, God also added the ceremonial law which was also designed to teach them that they needed atonement.
 - You had all that blood that was shed to atone for our sin, and every time it was shed, you were able to see what your sin deserved.
 - Everything was aimed at driving them out of all self-reliance and into Christ.

And that, of course, is what the law is supposed to do for you too!

- If you look at it and think, “I can do that,”
 - then you are looking at it all wrong—you are blind!
- Instead, you are supposed to look at it and say,
 - “I don’t do that, I can’t do that,”
 - And then you are supposed to run to Christ for grace!

Paul labours here to show you that salvation comes the same way that sin came into the world...

- It comes through the agency of one man!
- It comes through the agency of a new a federal head, Jesus Christ,
 - the one appointed by God to speak for us all and to represent us all!
- Verse 15-21 show that Jesus brings the gift of righteousness and the gift of life.

15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

17 For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

- 18** Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life.
- 19** For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.
- 20** Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,
- 21** so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It behoves us to accept the family structure of society that God has established, even though we don't like the consequences of Adam's fall—

- because our redemption comes by the same means—through a federal head, Jesus Christ, who represents the entire church.
- If He does not represent us, God's law shows us what is required of us, and it is obvious that we cannot meet that requirement independently of Christ (on our own).
 - So let us come joyfully to Jesus to live under His gracious headship!
 - It is not like the headship of Adam that brought sin and death—
 - It is a headship that brings life and righteousness.
 - We may be uneasy about having a head and giving ourselves to Him because of our past experience...
 - But we need not be uneasy about coming to Jesus Christ!
 - **1 Cor. 15:22: "In Adam, all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."**
 - Thank the Lord for federal headship!
 - Let us reflect the glory of federal relationships by following Christ, not Adam.