

# **TITLE: It Was Not and Shall Not Always Be So**

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM: Lord's Day 3

TEXT: Psalm 8

*O Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.  
Out of the mouth of babies and infants,  
you have established strength because of your foes,  
to still the enemy and the avenger.*

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?*

*Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.  
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet,  
all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

*O Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Psalm 8 ESV

Reader: The Word of the Lord

**People: Thanks be to God**

Prayer for Illumination

## **Introduction: No One Likes to Deliver Bad News**

This is something that most of us have to deal with on a regular basis. Whether it is something at work, or at home with our family, or at church. Bad news is a reality of life we are forced to deal with.

1. Having to share with someone that their Credit Card was declined.
2. Having to inform a family member that you won't be able to travel home for a holiday.
3. Hearing a friend lost their job - or finding out that you yourself will be laid off.

4. Having to deliver news of a serious illness.

In the same way, no one like to receive bad news.

Ignoring the reality does not make it go away. In fact, ignoring bad news often only makes it worse.

Sometime, sharing the bad news with someone is the most loving thing you could possibly do for them.

## **The Heidelberg Catechism: Lord's Day 3**

### **Q&A 6**

**Q: Did God create people  
so wicked and perverse?**

A: No.

God created them good and in his own image,  
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,  
so that they might  
truly know God their creator,  
love him with all their heart,  
and live with him in eternal happiness  
for his praise and glory.

### **Q&A 7**

**Q: Then where does this corrupt human nature  
come from?**

A: From the fall and disobedience of our first parents,  
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.  
This fall has so poisoned our nature  
that we are born sinners -  
corrupt from conception on.

### **Q&A 8**

**Q: But are we so corrupt  
that we are totally unable to do any good  
and inclined toward all evil?**

A: Yes, unless we are born again,  
by the spirit of God.

The Heidelberg Catechism uses a very devotional threefold outline: *guilt, grace, and gratitude*. First we understand our **sin**. Then we understand our **salvation**. And finally we understand how we are **sanctified** to serve.

Today we continue to come to understand our sin and guilt.

**Last Week:** Q&A 5 Taught us that we "have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor."

Zachariu Ursinus: Very intentionally contrast the misery of fallen man with that of our original excellence.

**Compare Q.5 vs. Q.6:** Doing this grants us perspective on how precious our rescue is and how great the evil we have been rescued from.

## I. Q&A 6

**Q: Did God create people so wicked and perverse?**

A: No.

God created them good and in his own image,  
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,  
so that they might  
truly know God their creator,  
love him with all their heart,  
and live with him in eternal happiness  
for his praise and glory.

### A. What was state in which God originally created man?

Scripture and the catechism declare that we were created in the image of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Material and non-material. We are more than a mass of mass of molecules. Of all God's creatures, man is unique in that:

1. we were created to know God
2. communicate with God
3. live in communion with God.

We were made to know God, look like God, and make God known. In some sense we come to see this perpetuated as we have children. As beings created to image or mirror

our creator, **we procreate in our own image**. There is often a likeness between parents, children, and siblings. **We are the spitting image of God**.

Psalm 8 offers us a glimpse of the care, dignity, and excellence of our creation:

*When I look at your heavens, **the work of your fingers**,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?*

*Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.*

Psalm 8:3-5 ESV

Two other important truths that we may draw from this question and answer:

1. Man was created sinless. By this we know that God is not the author of sin. (Who is to blame?)
2. We may see the height of our dignity and see what depth of misery we have fallen by sin.

This contrast is important so that we might:

- a. Acknowledge the great mercy of God
- b. Acknowledge the grace of God we receive in Christ and our unworthiness to be made recipient of such grace.
- c. Give thanks for our salvation and seek Christ and the recovery and restoration of what was lost. (e.g. God's original desire for man.)

## **B. For what end did God create man?**

The Catechism reveals that God created men and women in his image so that:

1. We might know God
2. Love him with all our heart
3. Live with him in eternal happiness for his praise and glory

As the first questions and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism tells us, *we were created to glorify God and enjoy him forever!*

## **II. Q&A 7**

**Q: Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?**

A: From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise.  
This fall has so poisoned our nature that we are born sinners - corrupt from conception on.

**Why are we the way we are? Why are we so self-centered, bitter, and filled with vain ambition?**

We can agree that things are not the way they are supposed to be. We know something is wrong. The pressing question is, what went wrong? Question and answer 7 answers that question.

**A. The Fall Our First Parents**

Adam's name means "man" or "mankind". As the first human being created, Adam stands as the head of the human race - our federal representative.

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was a probationary tree. It was there to test Adam. As the representative of the entire human race after him, **Adam was placed in the garden to act not only for himself, but for his future decedents; the whole human race.**

This was based on a covenant. In the gardens, God made a covenant with Adam. "Do this and live." Disobey and die."

The heart of the fall: A declaration of our independence from God!

That we suffer as a result of Adam's sin is explicitly taught in the New Testament. In Romans 5, Paul declares the following:

- "Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin" (v. 12)
- "By the one man's offense many died" (v. 15)
- "Through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation" (v. 18)
- "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (v. 19)

**B. Legal Example**

We have examples within our legal system that provide an example of guilt and representation. If I were to hire someone to commit a crime and that person was caught and found guilty, I would be tried and charged as well. The criminal was my representative, acting on my behalf.

When discussing Adam's Sin and Mine, author and theologian R.C. Sproul has this to say about objections to Adam's representation:

?The assumption many of us make when we struggle with the Fall is that, had we been there, we would have made a different choice. We would not have made a decision that would plunge the world into ruin. Such an assumption is just not possible given the character of God. God doesn't make mistakes. His choice of my representative is greater than my choice of my own.

Even if we grant that indeed we were perfectly represented by Adam, we still must ask if it is fair to be represented at all with such high stakes. I can only answer that it pleased the Lord to do this. We know that the world fell through Adam. We know that in some sense Adam represented us. We know that we did not choose him to be our representative. We know that God's selection of Adam was an infallible selection. But was the whole process just?

I can only answer this question ultimately by asking another question — one the Apostle Paul asked. "Is there unrighteousness in God?" The apostolic answer to this rhetorical question is as plain as it is emphatic. "God forbid!"

### **C. Original Sin and Total Depravity**

*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

Palm 51:5

"The catechism makes clear that we are not just imitators of our first parents, sinning like Adam and Eve. We are born with a warped nature, tainted with an inherent and inherited corruption for conception on. We absolutely must get this right if we are to make sense of the Catechism and Christianity. Our fundamental problem is not bad parents, bad schools, bad friends, or bad circumstances. Our fundamental problem is a bad heart. And every single one of us is born into the world with it."

DeYoung, Kevin, *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism*, pg. 30

Because Adam stood as our federal representative before God, acting on behalf of the entire human race:

This fall has so poisoned our nature  
that we are born sinners -  
corrupt from conception on.

1. Original Sin:

Q: How many times must someone commit a sin to be a sinner?

A: None.

It is not our sin that causes us to be a sinner; it is because we are a sinner that we sin.

2. Total Depravity:

a. Guilt

b. Pollution

Total depravity does not mean that we are bad all the time or that we are always as bad as we can be. It also does not mean that as sinners we are incapable of doing good things or morally outstanding acts.

**Total depravity primarily means two things:**

1. Our whole nature is corrupt. There is not part of our being that has not been corrupted as a result of the fall. (Mind, Will, Emotions)

2. We are unable to do anything truly righteous. What we do that we consider "good" does not come from faith and are not for the glory of God.

To elevate man's natural ability in our fallen state is to diminish God's holiness and righteousness.

We can not truly know God in our fallen state. We do not and can not love Him with all our heart. We are eternally separated from God and under His just wrath.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 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. 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. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

*Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth*

*about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

Romans 1:18-25

To summarize the law down to the commands of love for God and love for neighbor as Q&A 4 does, offers us no hope. It condemns us!

### III. Q&A 8

**Q: But are we so corrupt  
that we are totally unable to do any good  
and inclined toward all evil?**

A: Yes, unless we are born again,  
by the spirit of God.

Is it really that bad?!?! Yes!

#### **A. Unless!**

Unless someone intervened, nothing was going to change. The story would continue just as it had to that point. Nothing was going to change.

In our story we must ask unless who? Certainly not us. We have seen the vivid portrayal of our natural condition.

**B. Consider the terminal diagnosis:** With no hope - Unless!

**C. Unless God!** Here is the turning point in our story!

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his*

*workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:1-10 ESV

Unless God rescues us, bringing us from Death to Life. This is the beginning of God's purposes being restored.

**Rejoice Today!**

**To be brought from death to life is a gift of God's grace!**

**To be confronted with our sin, guilt, and misery is a God of grace!**