Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 6
Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof

This study will be on the Fall of Man from the Westminster Confession of Faith which we believe is a good summary of what Scriptures teach. But why do we use Creeds and Confessions? You will hear many Christians say, *"No Creed but Christ,"* that they prefer to focus on the truths from Scripture alone. R.C. Sproul wrote a book titled; *Everyone is a Theologian.* In this book, Sproul defines Theology as the study of God himself. In broad terms Sproul writes that *"It refers not only to God but to all that God has revealed to us in sacred Scripture . . . Theologians also speak of "theology proper," which has specific reference to the study of God Himself."* Everyone who studies Scripture is a Theologian because everyone has their interpretation of Holy Scripture which is God's revelation. The only difference from those who claim, "*No Creed but Christ,"* is that in the early church and Reformation, these doctrines from Scripture were written down. The Scriptures are our only infallible authority of faith and life and we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us in the Faith. The claim of *"No creed but Christ"* actually goes against Scripture. Ephesians 4:11-12 ESV states, *"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."*

When God finished His work of creation, He proclaimed that it was good. However, today we don't see that goodness because of the fall. The Confession states that God "*created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change."(WCF 4.2).*

Here we have the Confession restating from Romans 2:15, speaking of the Gentiles who did not have the law written on tablets, that *"the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.* This is commonly referred to as "*natural law."* That man has a conscience that bears witness on what is right or wrong. If your conscience forbids you to do something, you should not do it.*"* However, because of the Fall, mankind is polluted in all his faculties, this does not mean that we're as evil as we can be, but that we're to bind our conscience to the revealed will of God in Scripture. This is why we must send our conscience to the school of the Bible, Romans 12:2 ESV*, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* The WCF states says that *"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship" (WCF 20.2).*

The Covenant of Works

1) *"Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety 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" (WCF 6.1).*

    a) Here in section 6.1 of the Confession it states that God *permitted* the fall. God in His foreordination permitted the fall but God did not force Adam to sin. When God created Adam, He said that Adam was good. This is what makes sin so heinous, that God created Adam in *knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image.* Some people say that the Reformed faith has a very low view of man. Man was not created totally depraved; man FELL! The Reformed don't have a low view of man before the fall, we have a very high view of man before the fall. God created man in His image with glory, but Adam defied the living God and fell off that pedestal. The confession states that the moral law was written on the heart of man in creation and Adam and Eve owed God perfect obedience to it as a creature created in His image.

b) The Confession in section II of Creation states the following: *"Besides this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures."* Adam and Eve had that moral law written on their hearts with the ability to obey it or to disobey it, as Augustine said of state of Adam and Eve before the Fall *was posse peccare and posse non peccare*, that man had the ability to sin and the ability not to sin. After the Fall, man lost the moral ability to obey the law of God and we no longer have the ability not to sin. The apostle Paul writes in *Ephesians 2:1 ESV, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins."* We were not just wounded by the fall, but Paul writes that we're spiritual dead. This is why Jesus says in John 6:44, John 6:44 ESV, *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."* Jesus is describing our moral inability because of the fall – *no one can come to me* - that dead people cannot come to him *unless the Father draws them*. The Father draws people to His Son through the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of fallen men and women. This is referred to as the Effectual Call to faith in Jesus Christ where faith is a gift of God's grace alone (Eph 2:8-9).

c) The command to not eat of the forbidden fruit was accompanied by the promise of eternal life. We know this from Gen 2:9, *"The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* And Gen 3:22 ESV, *"Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—"* God protected Adam and Eve from an eternal bondage to sin, after the fall, that would result if they ate of the *tree of Life.*

d) In the Bible we have God's Redemptive Historical plan of salvation for His people. Where Adam failed in the garden, Jesus Christ fulfills the covenant of works for us in the covenant of grace. The *tree of life* that was promised in the garden to Adam and Eve before the fall is promised to God's people under the covenant of grace in Revelation 22:14 ESV, *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates."* This covenant of grace is often referred to as the *Immanuel principal,* that God will be with His people. *"I will be your God and you shall be my people"* (Jer 31:33, Jer 30:22, Ex 6:7).

The Law as Rule of Righteousness

a) After the fall, the law continued as a *rule of righteousness (WCF 19.2).* The law is an expression of God himself, as Holy, Righteous and Just. 1 Peter 2:9 ESV, "*you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* Peter quoting from Leviticus 19:2 writes in 1 Peter 1:15-16 ESV, *"but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."* Because of the fall, mankind changes but notice that God does not change. The Psalmist writes, Psalm 119:97 ESV, "*Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day."* The problem is not with the law, but it's our sinful hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 ESV, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"* The heart is our inner being, everything we think, desire, and choose flows from the heart by which *"flows the springs of life"* (Prov 4:23). Everything in the Christian Life is to flow from *"all your heart." (Deut. 10:12; 30:2; 1 Sam. 7:3; Ps. 86:12; 119:34; Prov. 3:5–6; 4:23; Isa. 38:3; Jer. 24:7; Matt. 22:37).*

b) Jesus does not give us a new law but gives us the true intent of the law, which is love. We read in Romans 13:9-10 ESV, *"For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."* This is why as believers,

the Scriptures call us in Ephesians 4:24 ESV, *"to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."* It was Jesus who said to His disciples before the crucifixion, John 13:34 ESV, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."* The commandments of God are the expression of who He is, for *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8).

Justification is not by the law

This obedience is not of a covenant works to be justified before a Holy God, for the WCF clearly states in WCF 19.6:

a) *"Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience."*

b) The apostle Paul writes, "Romans 3:20 ESV, *"For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."* And in Gal 3:24 Paul describes the law as a "*schoolmaster"* that drives us to Jesus Christ*, in order that we might be justified by faith."*

Original Sin

2. "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" (WCF 6.2).

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 (WCF 6.3).

a) The apostle Paul writes, "Romans 5:12 ESV*, "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—"* This is a radical thing to say, how can I be responsible for the sin of Adam? However, Paul understands this and continues to explain in vs. 13, 14, *"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."* We know from the Westminster Shorter Catechism that "*sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God" (WSC Q14)* and the *wages of sin is death* (Rom 6:23), so how could there be sin and death from Adam to Moses, before the law was given? Paul is giving us the doctrine of *original sin,* that when Adam fell, all of mankind fell with him and are guilty before God. David proclaims in Psalm 51:5 ESV, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."* Anyone who has children know this to be true, as children are by nature not innocent but we need to teach them to be obedient.

b) Paul continues in Romans 5:17-19 ESV*, "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. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 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.* The apostle Paul is making a comparison here of the two federal heads in Romans 5, which he calls Adam and the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

c) This is called the *active* and *passive* obedience of Christ. Jesus in his *passive obedience* removes the curse of the law, coming under all the penalties in our place, *"Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"* (Gal 3:13). In his

active obedience Jesus positively fulfills the covenant of works for us. Jesus takes upon himself our guilt, corruption and death, and gives us righteousness, restoration and resurrection life.

d) So, there are three imputations in Scripture, the imputation of the original sin of Adam to his *posterity,* the imputation of the sins of the believer (elect) to Jesus Christ at the cross, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to those who are united to him in faith. It's important to note that we're not saved by faith, rather we're saved by Christ through faith alone, that is the instrumental cause that unites us to Jesus Christ where we receive all our *spiritual blessing* (Eph 1:3).

Total Depravity

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." (WCF 6.4)

a) Mankind, apart from Christ, are already dead in sin under the penalty of the covenant of works (Eph 2:1), but this is not because they are in Moses but because they are in Adam.

b) When I was growing up, my dad would take me and my brothers bowling. In the bowling ball, we would insert counter weights to cause the bowling ball to curve. This is how we are in our total depravity; we're curved toward sin.

c) James 1:13-15 ESV*, "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*

5. "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin." (WCF 6.5)

a) Here we have the WCF affirming the doctrine of total depravity and rejecting perfectionism. That the corruption from the fall does remain in those that are regenerated. This is what the apostle Paul refers to as the struggle of the Christian life, Galatians 5:17 ESV, *"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."* We are to *mortify* the flesh, that old man that has been crucified with Christ and *walk in newness life*, according to the Spirit (Rom 6).

b) It's important to note that our obedience as a fruit of faith is never perfect in this life. However, they are accepted by our Father as we are united to His Son through faith alone. 1 Peter 2:5 ESV, *"you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* Christ is our mediator and high priest that offers our sacrifices to God.

Death

6. "Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal" (WCF 6.6)

a) We need to remember that we were all, at one time under the wrath of God because of *original sin.* The apostle Paul writes, "Ephesians 2:3 ESV, *"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."* There are no venial sins to

be paid for in purgatory. Sins may be in various degrees, but they are all deserving of hell. There is only one who meets the demand of the law perfectly on our behalf, this is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ If you are not in Christ, then you are still in Adam where there is only the second death. Romans 6:23 ESV, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* John Calvin writes, *"As the cause of death is sin, so righteousness, which we obtain through Christ, restores to us eternal life."* Jesus does not restores us the place of Adam and Eve in the garden before the fall, but fulfills the promise of eternal life for his people where we will eat of the *tree of life* (Rev 22:14).

b) After the fall of man, God in speaking to the serpent in Genesis 3:15 ESV, the promise of the covenant of grace is given to Adam and Eve, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* There are two people, those who are of their *father the Devil* (Jn 8:44) and those who are united to Christ through faith. By nature, we are all *children of wrath* until we're united to Christ by grace alone through the gift of faith alone (Eph 2:8-9), it is the empty hand of faith that receives Christ and his righteousness. By nature, we are at war with God (Rom 8:7); however, the promise in the garden is that by God's grace, His people will be reconciled to God and are now at war with Satan. The promise that from the seed of Eve, would come God's people and a Savior, "*he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

c) The covenant of grace is from Gen 3:15 to Rev 22, where Adam failed, the second Adam (Christ) merits the *tree of life* for his people. *Rev 22:1-4,14, "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… Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates"* May this promise comfort you by His grace.

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