

## *From Your Pastor* *A Study of the Shorter Catechism*

**Question:** Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?

**Answer:** Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God (Gen. 3:6,7,8,13; Eccl. 7:29).

**Scripture memory:** “See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes” – Ecclesiastes 7:29

**An explanation:** “Our first parents...fell...by sinning against God.” God called Adam to be covenant representative of all humanity. He was made upright in holiness and righteousness, but he sinned against God. Adam had not been perfect or completed in his walk before God. Adam was able to sin, and able to not sin. If he had kept the Covenant of Works through obedience, he would have been confirmed in an estate of perfect righteousness. Adam and Eve sinned, and caused all of humanity to be tainted by sinful guilt, pollution and brought us under God’s condemnation (Psa. 51): “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” (Gen. 3:6). Our first parents sinned against a holy and glorious God, who is perfect in His nature and must punish sin.

“...Being left to the freedom of their own will...” The freedom of the will is emphasized here to teach that Adam and Eve are alone guilty and culpable for their sins before God. God did not make Adam and Eve sin. God ordained their sin, but God did not cause them to sin; God is not the author of sin (see WCOF, chap. 3). John Flavel wrote that God did not make man sin, but withheld that further grace which he was not obliged to give to them. The will of man in the Garden of Eden, in the time of man’s probation according to the Covenant of Works, was free to do both good and evil (Eccl. 7:29). After the fall, man’s will was still free, but free only to do what is evil, and will freely choose the evil and sinful above God and His righteous good. Man’s will is enslaved by sin, and so now humanity is free only to sin against God and others.

God the Father sent the Lord Jesus Christ to come and to live perfectly obedient according to God’s Glorious Law! To be condemned for our sins in our place (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus came to reconcile God with man, and to free up the will of man to be able to do good, and resist evil. The Lord Jesus has sent for His Spirit to change our natures and wills to restore believing man to an estate of uprightness, holiness and righteousness, but conforming us into His image: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29); “...To be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness...” (Eph. 4:23-24). The glory of sanctification in our union with Christ is to be able to will the good for God, and to seek to be sincerely obedient to him by His grace and Spirit!

**A Prayer:** Thank you, dear Father that you have not left us in our sins without hope: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). You have sent Christ Jesus to earn perfect righteousness for us, and to deliver our enslaved wills from sin (Eph. 2:1-3), and empower us to fight our flesh and keep in step with the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:16-26).

In Christ’s love,  
Pastor Biggs

*“All knowledge which is unfelt and inoperative puffs up the mind and hardens the heart. It is better to have the workings of gracious affections than to be able to define them, or to speak ever so learnedly respecting them. The great use of a large part of divine truth is rightly to affect our minds and hearts, and so to control our practice.”*

- William Plumer (1759-1850)