

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 13. Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?

A. *Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.*

Q. 14. What is sin?

A. *Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.*

Q. 15. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

A. *The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.*

In his providential care for mankind, God not only set up Adam and Eve in a perfect paradise, but he also established a covenant with them. Did such paradise continue forever? No. Adam sinned against God and the covenant. Eating the forbidden fruit was the specific act, but the bigger picture here is the introduction of sin.

The definition in Answer 14 highlights two aspects of sin, like two sides of one coin. Sin is the lack of what God requires. Sin is the offense, or the breaking, of what God requires. Let's consider each of these in turn.

God lays out positive requirements that his creation and mankind ought to complete or do. For example, we are to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). We sin when we do not do this in its fullest sense. There is no partial credit with God. Paul emphasizes this truth in Romans 3:23, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." To fall short is to not measure up. Either we fulfill what God requires or we fall short; we sin.

The other side of sin is the transgression of God's law. When we actively go against God's designs, we transgress his law. For example, Jesus says, "everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery" (Matt. 5:28). A lustful look is a transgression of God's law to not commit adultery.

We sin in both ways. Therefore, our confession of sin often reflects both of these dynamics:

*We have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
And we have done those things which we ought not to have done.*