

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. 18. *Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?*

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. *What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?*

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

To truly appreciate the wonder and power of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, we must understand the utter destruction of sin. This is where the catechism guides us just before directing our attention to our Redeemer.

Question 17 stated that every human is in a "state of sin and misery," because of Adam's sin. Today's questions unpack what those two states are like. The state of sin speaks about the two effects of sin: guilt and corruption. Because of Adam's first sin, every single human being is counted guilty in sin, deserving of the just condemnation of God. Sin, as rebellion against a holy and just God, carries no soft punishment. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The guilt and penalty of sin cannot be ignored.

We are not only counted guilty because of Adam's first sin, but we are also corrupted by sin. J.I. Packer helps explain how the Puritans explained this devastating effect, "They saw sin as a perverted energy within people that enslaves them to God-defying, self-gratifying behavior, and by distraction, deceit, and direct opposition weakens and overthrows their purposes of righteousness."

Sin is a perverted energy that enslaves and weakens and overthrows. This corruption affects our whole being, including our minds, our hearts, and our wills, commonly known as our "inner man," the center of our being.

If Question 18 highlights the pervasive effects of sin, Question 19 explains the devastating consequences of sin. Because of sin, every human is subject to misery. The greatest misery we could ever suffer is the loss of communion with God. We were made to enjoy him. Sin breaks that and separates us from God and all his goodness. This misery is compounded by wrath the "miseries of life" and death.

Sin is powerful and devastating, but God's grace is more powerful. That comes next.