

Lesson 7 **THE FALL, ORIGINAL SIN**

7.1 The Fall

7.1.1 Covenant

Man was created to live in fellowship with the LORD. Of His own accord, in favour and kindness, God placed man in the relationship of fellowship called the **covenant**. As it was initiated entirely from God's side, without any merit or worth on the part of man, it is called a **covenant of favour**. In Christ, the covenant is maintained and renewed as the **covenant of grace**. The covenant has two (unequal) parties: God and man. The parties, both according to their different natures, take upon themselves mutual privileges and obligations in the covenant:

parts/parties	God	man
promises	blessings, life	faith, trust
obligations	faith, obedience	blessings, life fellowship
sanctions	life or death	-----

7.1.2 Sin

Genesis 3:1-7 describes our fall into sin: we fell by doing exactly what the LORD had forbidden us to do, Genesis 2:16-17. Sin implies transgression of God's law, and a breach of His covenant. In committing sin, man breaks the bond with God. Sin is referred to in the Bible as spiritual adultery, apostasy, unfaithfulness to the covenant, Hosea 6:7; 1 John 3:4; Jeremiah 3:1f; Hebrews 6:6.

Sin begins not with the desire to be wise, but the desire to be wiser than God, that is, above the limits that God allows, Genesis 3:6, James 1:14-16, 1 Timothy 2:13f.

7.1.3 Punishment

The punishment for sin is death, and this implies spiritual death first of all. Spiritual death is separation from God, 1 Corinthians 15:36; Psalm 30, 88. The punishment fulfils the stated sanctions of the covenant; even though man is unfaithful to the covenant, the LORD remains faithful, 2 Timothy 2:13. Genesis 3 tells us:

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| a. of man's unfaithfulness | 1-7 |
| b. of God's faithfulness and grace | 8-24 |

7.2 **Original Sin** (Article 15, Belgic Confession)

Because of the unique position that Adam had as head of the human race, his sin passed on to all mankind; thus his sin is called **original sin**, a corruption shared by the whole human race. According to the place Adam had in the covenant we distinguish two elements in original sin. In the covenant Adam was:

1. Our head, legal representative

As such, the guilt of Adam was imputed to us Romans 5:19; this is called **original guilt**. Imputation means that the error of our first parents legally applies to us as well. There is no transfer of guilt, but guilt is incurred to us by way of representation, that is, on the basis of the unique representative role that Adam had.

2. Our father, ancestor

As our father, the pollution of Adam was passed on to us, like a hereditary disease, Hebrews 7:10; Acts 17:26, 27. This is called **original pollution**. This original pollution proceeds out of our original guilt, even though we acquire both simultaneously.

Through the fall, man lost all his spiritual gifts, and became totally depraved Job 40:4; Jeremiah 17:9. He was totally inclined to evil, and incapable of doing any good, Romans 3:9f.

Lord's Day 4 distinguishes between:

1. Original sin

The fountain and source of all sin in our lives, that is, our sin in Adam and Eve.

2. Actual sin

The practice of sin, the sins we commit daily. Here one may speak of two kinds of sins:

- a. sins of commission: transgression of God's law

b. sins of omission: failure to keep God's law

In His obedience, our Lord Jesus Christ was not only perfectly free from sin and transgression; He also actively kept God's law every moment in His life.

Lord's Day 4 also speaks of temporal and eternal punishments. Just as there are degrees of sin, so there are also degrees of punishment, Matthew 10:15; Luke 12:47,48; John 19:11. The worst sin is the sin of hardening in sin, or persistent unbelief; this is the sin against the Holy Spirit, the sin to death, or the unforgivable sin, Matthew 12:31f; 1 John 5:16,17.

Exercises Lesson 7

I. Reference Passages

Study and Review: Belgic Confession Article 14,15.
Canons of Dort Chapter I.1,4; II.2; III/IV.1-6;
V. 2,3.
Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 2, 3, 4.

II. Review Questions

1. What is sin in relation to God's covenant? Why is it called apostasy and disobedience?
2. What was the essential issue at the tree of knowledge of good and evil?
3. Why does Adam's sin become our own? What two things do we share of his sin?
4. How is the cycle of sin broken?
5. How must we fight against sin today?
6. What is the sin against the Holy Spirit?

III. Extra Questions

1. What help does the light of nature give us with regard to our sin and corruption? (See Canons of Dort, III-IV. 4)

2. What role does the law of God have with regard to our sin?
See Romans 7.