

# Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

---

## STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 14. What is sin?

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

Scripture References: I Jn. 3:4. Jas. 4:17. Rom. 3:23. Rom 2:15.

### Questions:

1. What is the Law of God and where is it to be found?

The Law of God is the commandments God has given for man's rule of obedience. The Law of God is found written in the Word of God though there was a copy of it on the heart of man in his innocence before the fall. The Word teaches that some part of it is still written on the hearts of men, but to a great extent the knowledge of this Law has become marred or obliterated.

2. How does man show want of conformity unto the Law of God?

By not doing all the things written in the Book of the Law (Gal. 3:10).

3. What sins are included in lack of conformity unto the Law of God?

The sins included are (1) Original sin and that natural enmity in the heart against the Law of God. (2) All sins of omission and commission.

4. How can one prove that transgression of the law is sin?

The Bible teaches this in I John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth the law, for sin is the transgression of the law."

5. Are all the laws mentioned in the Old Testament to be kept today?

No, not all the laws of the Old Testament are to be kept. The ceremonial law is no longer binding since Christ came in the flesh, and many of the judicial laws — as they had reference to the state of the Jewish nation — are laid aside. But the moral law is binding on all mankind (Ps. 119:160).

6. Could you answer the question, "What is sin?" in words I might use in teaching my classes?

You might tell them as Dr. William Childs Robinson states it: "Sin is stepping across one of God's commandments." It is not simply a wrong done to one's fellow man but it includes both guilt and pollution. Sin involves not only outward acts but the thoughts, affections and intents of the heart as well.

## THE CHRISTIAN AND SIN

There is a delightful story told of the little boy who heard the thrilling story of Goliath in Sunday School. The next day he came to his Mother and said, "Mother, I am as tall as Goliath." Naturally his Mother answered him and told him that such would be impossible for Goliath was a giant of a man. But the little boy answered, "But Mother, the Bible says Goliath was six cubits and a span and I made a ruler and I'm six cubits and a span too, so I'm as tall as Goliath!"

Even as the little boy made the ruler himself and could be as tall as he wanted to be, so many Christians make their own yardsticks of measurement in regard to sin. They are very quick to recite what the Catechism says sin is, but in their actions they seem to have an amazing ability to forget God's definition of sin and make their own standards of right and wrong.

Many Bible scholars throughout the ages have agreed that God's definition of sin is found in Isaiah 53:6 — "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Or, as was illustrated so beautifully by J. Sidlow Baxter one time, "The best picture of sin is that of a little girl stomping her foot on the floor and saying, 'I want what I want when I want it!'"

So much for the outward manifestations of sin. What about the inward and negative sides of sin? Dr. James Benjamin Green once said that the inward and the negative sides of sin are too much ignored, too little regarded. As he put it, the absence of right feeling as well as the presence of wrong feeling is sin. So many Christians sin in failing to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The Christian is constrained to determine every thought, word and deed by the leading of the Spirit through the Word of God. The Christian's duty is to be constantly conducting himself in the sphere of the Spirit. Otherwise the Christian will be sinning against the Lord.

This is a high standard. This is "walking in the Spirit." This is our only standard of measurement and it is found in the Word of God. It does not change, it does not suit itself to the environment in which it lives. It leads us to depend solely on Him and such hinders us from "going our own way." (Rom. 8:1-14)

---

**Published By:**

**THE SHIELD and SWORD, INC.**

Dedicated to instruction in the Westminster Standards for use as a bulletin insert or other methods of distribution in Presbyterian churches.

For information write to: The Shield and Sword, Inc., Box 237, Port Gibson, Mississippi. A non-profit religious organization.

Vol. 2

No. 14

February, 1962

Price

Rev. Leonard T. Van Horn

To Churches — \$2.00 per 100

Individuals — \$1.35 per year

Editor

**Back Copies**

To Churches — \$2.25 per 100

Individuals — 15c each

