

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

- 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.

Scripture References: Gen. 3:6. II Cor. 11:3. Ps. 49:12.

Questions:

1. Why did God forbid our first parents to eat this fruit?
He forbade them because He was making a test of their obedience. It was not that the fruit had in itself any evil. It was God's method of seeing whether or not they recognized His Lordship over them.
2. Were our first parents guilty of sin before they tasted of the fruit? Yes, they were guilty of listening to the devil. But when they tasted of the fruit they completed the act of sin.
3. Where was the first sin committed?
The first sin was committed in Paradise where God had placed man and created woman.
4. Was Adam deceived in this first sin?
The Bible tells us that he was not deceived. Probably his love for Eve motivated him to join her in this transgression. But he suffered the consequence of this sin just the same and betrayed the whole human race whose representative he was.
5. What was involved in the eating of the forbidden fruit?
There were many sins involved in this act of disobedience. By eating they rebelled against their Sovereign God. By eating they were guilty of treason as they were in league with the devil. By eating they were gratifying ambition, to be as God. By eating they were guilty of unbelief because God had said it was wrong. By eating they were bringing death upon themselves and all their posterity.
6. If one word had to be used in describing this first sin, what word would be best?
Probably the word "pride" would come closer to describing it than any other one word. Calvin states, "Augustine is more correct, who says that pride was the beginning of all evils, and that by pride the human race was ruined. . ."

THE SECOND LOOK

One often wonders how much time Adam spent in meditation and prayer in the Garden when he was offered the forbidden fruit by his wife. He knew that it was forbidden. He knew the rule of obedience set up in the Garden. He had everything he wanted. And yet he disobeyed the command of his God and accepted the fruit as offered to him. One wonders whether or not Adam took a second look, whether or not he did much thinking about the step he was about to take.

A great lesson to be learned by God's children today from the trial in the Garden of Eden is the lesson of thinking twice, of praying twice, before taking important steps. God's children always need to learn the lesson of resistance, the resistance of the first temptation to sin in the heart. The hymn writer put it this way: "I want a principle within of watchful, godly fear. The sensibility of sin, the pain to feel it near." Yet so often God's children move into the realm of sin without giving it a second thought, without thinking the matter through, without praying to the Lord for help and guidance. Many times a second look would save them from sinning against God and thereby sinning against themselves and others.

Wordsworth has a few lines in one of his poems that has a great lesson in it which Christians might apply to the matter of temptation. "Look for the stars. You will say there are none; look up a second time, and one by one, you mark them twinkling out with silvery light, and wonder how they could elude the sight!"

Many times we wonder why we did not take that second look, why we could not see the evil surrounding the thought, the action, the word when we first saw it and it seemed good to our eyes. How can we be sure we take a second look? Only by recognizing that we are kept by the power of God and that power will be operative in us if we keep living close to Him and keep His commandments. We can not, we dare not, trust ourselves but only in Him. We must stay close to Him through the study of the Word, through prayer, through service to Him, all to His glory. May God help us ever to take the second look before we leap.
(2 Tim. 3:13-17)

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