

Beloved in the Lord,

The catechism (教理问答) picks up on this whole notion of our proneness (倾向) to hatred of God and neighbor and goes on to explain this whole notion on the basis of the Word of God. We recall that to live in the comfort of belonging to Jesus Christ in life and in death and in body and soul we need to know about our sin and misery. We need to know that without God we and all are sinful and miserable. We need to understand this reality confess this truth and then confess our sins and cry out to God to save us. Even after we are regenerated (被重生) and converted (被改变) by the power of the Holy Spirit we need to live out of a strong sense of sins and misery that is always around us and in us that we might be truly humble (谦卑的) before the Lord and thankful for the comfort He (alone) provides for us in Christ. Part of the wonder of the restoration of the image of God in us is that we come to a true and saving knowledge of God and knowledge of that truth. Through this knowledge we learn the value of salvation and the need to struggle against sin in our lives of gratitude (感恩) and worship to the Lord our God.

So the catechism searching the truth of the Word of God has us deal with human corruption 败坏 (the breaking down of the goodness and holiness of human nature) yet the Lord's Day does not leave us without hope. Do you know why? Because the Bible never leaves us without hope but always leaves us with the wonder of Christ and the hope of comfort for life and death!

So the passage we have just read together we learn of the devastating past but too the reality of hope in God. As Paul wrote to the Romans: 5:12-15:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned (掌了权) from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass (过犯). For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

I bring to you the word of the Lord as it is summarized for us in Lord's Day 3 under the theme:

**The Lord Reveals Mankind as a Sinner in Need of Regeneration:
The Created Man 2. The Fallen Man 3. The Hope for Man**

The Created Man What is Paul speaking about when he states that sin entered the world through the sin of one man? To answer that, we must head back to Genesis where too we must go if we are to understand how it is we are corrupt and how it is that we were originally created. In the beginning—the genesis of it all—Moses in Genesis lays out for us the creation of the world and the creation of humanity. In Genesis chapter 1 we read about the creation of man. Moses who is given this remarkable revelation from God by the Spirit of God tells us that God said, “Let us make man in our image.” So God created the man in His own image. In His image He made them, male and female He created them. Now what does all that mean? If we are going to understand who we are and what sin is then we are led to do a lot of work here on our day of rest!!! That is my work and your work of worship now.

There is a lot of discussion about what the image (or likeness) of God is and how we are to understand it. We will not deal in all the theological (神学的) and philosophical (哲学的) details right now. It is in the end not all that helpful, and to be honest, except for maybe some of ministers just a little bit boring. The catechism helps to get at the heart of it by appealing to scripture so we may learn.

The catechism speaks the Word of God: Col.3:10 "And have put on the new man, which is **renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him**": Eph.4:23-24 "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God **is created in righteousness (义) and true**

holiness."

So the Bible sets out for us that the image of God is true righteousness and holiness that Adam could rightly know God and live with and for God. The creating of this image is very much connected to the mandate (命令) that God gave to Adam and Eve as we read about it in Genesis 1:26- "Let us make man in our image in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Many environmentalist (环境保护主义者), evolutionists and in fact many Canadians do not hold to or even like the idea that God created man in His own image to give mankind dominion (统治权) (that is, domination) over the earth and to rule for God. As God's Prime Minister, so to speak, Adam was to rule over the creation. That means, the Prime Minister answers to the King. Man is to rule over the heavens and earth on God's behalf. Adam and Eve were given the image of God so that they would know who God is, love God and live good, right and true lives as they cared for the earth that God made. It was very good as Genesis 1:31 tells us.

In our culture of environmentalism, worries about global warming and pollution and in this culture of earth day, or mother earth contemplation we as God's people are very clear and must speak clearly about caring and tending the earth that God has made. It is sin's effect on the earth and mankind's own misuse and even abuse (滥用) of the creation that causes the corruption of the earth. But that was not how it would have been and was in the beginning. Now it pleased God to give Adam and Eve a special place in the world called the Garden of Eden to till and tend it and from there the whole planet for God's glory and as their spiritual act of the worship of God that Romans 12:1-2 teaches us.

We note then in Genesis 2 that Adam was created by God in a special way from the dust out of the earth and that God breathed into Adam, His own breath and then Adam became a living soul! We note that in chapter 1:24 that God said, "Let the land produce living creatures." They too were created from the earth and thus they were by the nature earthly so to speak in their organic make up. So is there a distinction to be made between animals and people?

For sure, Adam was formed out of the dust of the earth. God formed the body and the soul and then breathed into man the breath of life. Have you ever hear the story or the old spiritual song about the valley of dry bones? Ezekiel a prophet had a vision about a valley full of bleached dried bones, likely a valley filled with bleached and dried up skeletons left in the valley after a war. God told Ezekiel to prophesy to those old dried bones. Ezekiel preached: "Dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord. This is what the sovereign (掌管主权的) Lord says to these bones; I will make breath enter and you will come to life... then you will know that I am the Lord!"

Let's pull the two stories together. Human beings are as physical beings able to bear, or carry the image of God. Animals though they have warm blood, and eyes and ears and life cannot bear the image of God. Their bodies and souls, the brains and mind are not the same. They are lesser. But man was created a body- Adam formed from the dust- or those dry human bones capable to bear the image of God. Then God breathes- and the word in both Hebrew (希伯来文) and Greek for air or breath is the same word as Spirit! God gave His Spirit to the man. When we are born again God gives to us His Holy Spirit so we can be renewed after the image of God in Christ remember Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4?!

This is the way the Lord gives life and He speaks that way of life and the breath of life. The man Adam then was God breathed and in that way His creation differed from that of that living creatures produced from the land. In that creation the man was given the breath of God, the Spirit of God whereby Adam was created truly righteous and holy that he might rightly and fully love and know God. Adam was a perfect ethical (道德性的) being. He was perfect and righteous in His will. He was free to choose to do the will of God and to serve God. He was by his creation properly suited to live in fellowship with God.

So God lived covenant (约) with Adam in favor, friendship and life. But Adam and from Adam Eve, created in the image of God we created able to disobey God, to fall into sin and to, yes, hate God. So in that Relationship of friendship God asked Adam and by way of Adam—Eve—to love Him and not eat of the

tree of the fruit of good and evil- Genesis 2:17. There was of course that warning and the threat of death for disobedience. Adam was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But he was created able to keep that command. He specially created to live in covenant love and union with God. Adam was created good.

When we see the wickedness around us we cannot blame God. God created Adam good, holy righteous and true. Adam was created a union of body and soul in wholeness! In that day the Lord looked over all he had made and said, "It is very good."

So man was created to reflect the goodness and holiness of God. Adam was to be the representative of God in the creation and rule over the creation. Adam was to live a blameless and upright (正直的) life. Adam was to be prophet, priest and king, God's officer over the creation! Adam was created to love God! Adam was commanded to love God. Adam and his wife Eve failed miserably and so we live in that misery even today.

The Fallen Man Now that was a lot of work and yet we still must deal with the matter of sin. Where did it come from? Why are we, if Adam and Eve created holy and righteous, prone to the hatred of God and neighbor? How did things get so bad? We know that God cannot be blamed for the sinfulness of man. God certainly did not create man to be wicked and perverse (堕落的). God cannot be charged with evil. Still we understand that nothing happens by chance and nothing happens outside of the will of God. That man was created with the freedom to sin was an act of God. The command: "Do not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," too was an act of God. God was not simply predicting the future when He said, "In the day you eat of the fruit you will surely die," but rather was speaking covenant warning and justice (正义). He created the setting and He initiated the covenant of fellowship. God did His part, giving Adam and Eve, life, each other and a creation to live in and rule over. No God did break the covenant. It was mankind who broke the covenant. It was mankind who as the Canons of Dort (多特信经) puts it nicely:

....originally created in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and salutary (有益的) knowledge of his Creator and things spiritual, in his will and heart with righteousness, and in all his emotions with purity (纯净); indeed, the whole man was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation (煽动, 教唆) and by his own free will (自由意志), he deprived (剥夺) himself of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place he brought upon himself blindness, terrible darkness, futility (虚度生命), and distortion of judgment in his mind; perversity, defiance (挑衅), and hardness in his heart and will; and finally impurity in all his emotions.

Where did sin come from? The Bible from passages like Jude 6 teaches us that some time after the creation of the angels, Satan and his followers— angels who were created good and holy and pure, but also able to fall into sin, rebel against and hate God— left their proper domain (of light and heaven and goodness) as Jude tells us and entered into darkness. Revelation 12 tells us that it was Satan who used the serpent as an instrument to trick humanity into giving up the image of God for the image of the devil. He in disguise as the "crafty" (狡猾的) serpent went to the woman Eve and asked her why she did not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now Genesis 2 tells us that when God gave the command to Adam, Eve had not been created yet. Perhaps that is why Satan went to Eve who had not directly heard the command and appealed to her pride: she could be like God knowing good and evil. But she was like God! She was the image bearer of God. But she wanted to be god of her own life. She no longer wanted to body and soul to belong to Jesus but to be her own god. Eve rejected God. Eve hated God and the image in her died. Her husband Adam, the head of the covenant and the representative of all mankind, the first man who with her ate and as the head of the human race brought sin into the whole world.

And now we know what Paul meant when he said that sin entered into the world through the one man, Adam. No, God is not blame but neither did this happen out of His control. We need not justify (证明为合理) God but see Him for who He is. God created Adam and Ev to love Him and He would now use even

this sin to bring salvation (拯救) and hope and an even deeper relationship to His children. But sin means suffering and death. Sin is to live outside of the environment, the water of love and like fish out of water we die. We were the living dead. Then we see ourselves for who we are. We are the offspring of Adam who fell from grace. Mankind continued on as the potential image bearer. His nature is still adaptable to bear the image of God. But on that day that Adam ate of the fruit image of God died and the man existed outside of the fellowship of God. Paul writes this was about the children of Adam:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.
(Ephesians 2:1-3)

Mankind entered league (联盟) with the devil and became incapable of any good. He is now by nature prone to hate God and to hate his neighbor and this corruption comes because Adam as the head of the human race led us into sin and thus robbed himself and his progeny (后代) of the noble gifts of the image of God. Sin has brought storms and floods and disaster to the creation too. But Jesus would come to die on the cross to and live again to save sinful man and to save the creation. Breathe on us breath of God so that like those dry bones so long ago we may live again!

Now let us be clear- man is still restrained by God and is not able to do some good things. A muslim can help a person with a flat tire (爆胎), or an unbeliever become a good doctor or lawyer. Man is not absolutely depraved (败坏). God make sure of that or wicked man would wipe out the church. But a human being dead in sin can do nothing that is good and pleasing to God.

So then, what do we mean by good. The catechism asks the question: "**Question 91.** *But what are good works? Answer: Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to his glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men.*"

Man without God is incapable of true faith. Paul tells us that faith is a gift from God. Man in his sin is left to his sinning. Sin and its wages are God's punishment. Do you get that? Sin, a sinful act, to commit adultery is a punishment on breaking covenant with God. Satan may make it seem good but it is not. Nor is there any good in stealing a cookie, getting drunk or high or looking at those pictures of naked women on the computer. God punishes sinful man leaving them in the bondage (捆绑, 束缚) of their sin to make what a man or woman feels is freedom to choose. But a human without Jesus freely does what he desires to do and that is to be a slave of the devil and the wicked desire. He is dead to God and does not know God. He does not seek the things of God. He is not totally depraved that is he is totally incapable of doing anything that would please God. He is by nature an object of wrath and there is for him no hope unless he is born again by the will of God.

Sin, beloved is not a matter of choice but a matter of nature which is corrupt and dead. That is the sorrow of it all when we see all these potential image bearers who refuse to bear the image of God. There is sorrow and brokenness and death. But the Bible teaches us that there is hope!

The Hope for Man Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness? **Answer:** Indeed we are; except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Adam and Eve's eyes were open and they saw that they were naked. They died that day before God. The image of God was lost until God came to them once more to give them hope and faith. He did that again by the promise and the covenant of grace and redemption (救赎). He allowed for fellowship through the shedding of blood of a sacrificial animal that day which was symbolic of the bloody atonement (代赎) that was needed for the covering of the sins of mankind in order that a man might be born again! Adam and his wife left the garden in the hope of the coming saviour. Adam took God at his Word and named His wife Eve for she would be the mother of all the living! Blessed assurance was given to Adam who had in

his nakedness and death certainly come to know his misery. Certainly he was physically dying too and he would live in sin and struggle with rebellion every day but now he had faith and the hope of salvation! The new Adam would come!

As we read in God's word: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit!" As Romans 5 teaches us that the penalty of the one man's sin cannot compare to the salvation that has been given us in Christ. That is our hope as we live in our own sin in a sinful world! The law came to teach us of our rebellion against God. It came to teach us our sin and misery. I am not prone to love God or my neighbor. But as Romans 5 teaches us the grace of God is greater! He died and was raised to life that by His spirit the dry bones are raised to life that we may know that the LORD is God and love Him!

No man can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born again said Jesus. Wrote John, "Yet to all who receive him, to those that believe in His name He gave the right to become the children of God, children born not of natural descent nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." As Paul wrote in Romans 5: "If death reigned by one man's sin; how much more will the grace and eternal life be given through God's grace and provision of new life for us in Christ Jesus."

When we consider man then we can only say that he as potential image bearer must by the breath of God have that image remade in Christ Jesus. He cannot do that. Only God can do that. God does that in the new Adam Jesus Christ! What a comfort in life and in death! The breath of God has come upon us that we may breathe out the wonder of that Word to the dry bones in the valley of death. Fear no evil. The Lord is with us. Amen

Notice that God refers to himself as "us"- proof that God is three in one!

Romans 5 and LD 3: Human Corruption- Source and Hope